

# Teaching Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria: Principles and Practices

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*Paper for presentation at the Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy 2015, Berlin, Germany,  
December 10<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup>, 2015, organized by Institute for Cultural Diplomacy.  
Theme: Building Bridges of Peace and Reconciliation in Times of Greater Global Insecurity.*

## **Abstract**

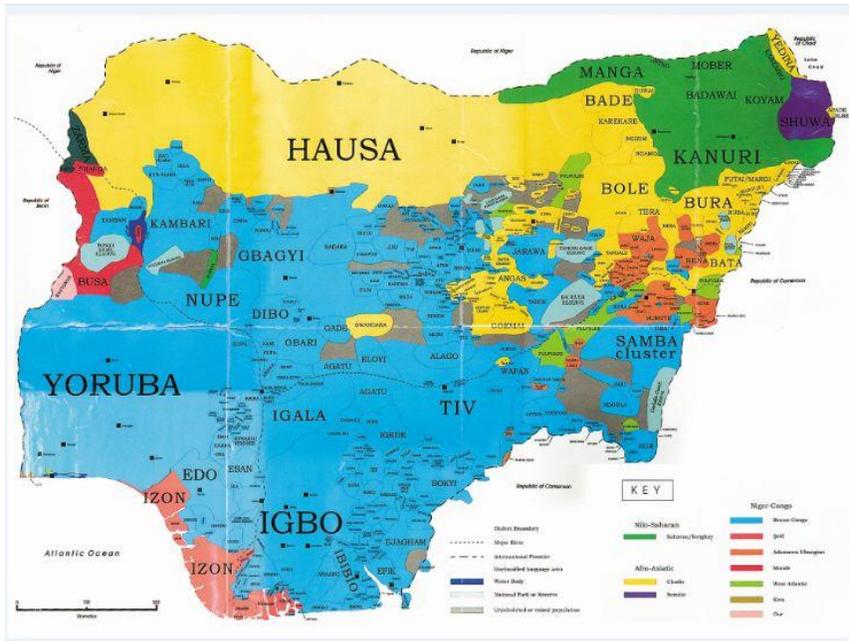
This paper describes the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of Nigeria. It also highlights the insecurity issues in Nigeria some of which are traceable to the multi-cultural condition of Nigeria. The belief in cultural diplomacy as a veritable tool for bridging gaps occasioned by ethnic violence is expressed in the paper. How Nigeria is teaching and practicing cultural diplomacy at informal and formal educational approaches are illustrated in the paper. An empirical study on cultural perspectives of children in Nigeria, as well as the importance of its findings to the teaching and learning of cultural diplomacy, is succinctly reported.

## Introduction

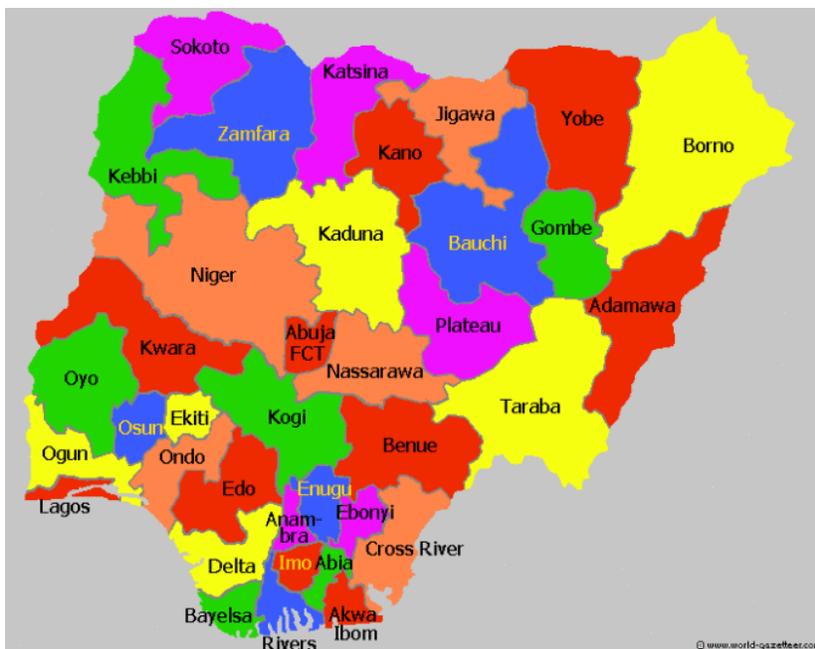
Nigeria got her independence in October 1960 as a Federation of three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern) under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and accounts for over half of West Africa's population. It borders the Gulf of Guinea (see fig.1). According to 2006 Population Census result, Nigeria has the population of 134 million people and has 250 ethnic groups. The most populous and politically influential include, Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4.0%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%<sup>9</sup> (Alagoa and Tamuno, 1989). Also languages spoken are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani and over 500 additional indigenous languages/dialects. The dominant ethnic group in the northern two-thirds of the country is the Hausa-Fulani, most of whom are Muslim. Other major ethnic groups of the north are the Nupe, Tiv and Kanuri. The Yoruba people are predominant in the Southwest. The Igbo (Ibo) are predominant in the Southeast (see figs.2 and 3). Others are Borgu, Igbira, Ora, Esan, Bini, Urhobo, Ishekiri, Ijaw, Egun, Fulani, Gwari, Nupe, Kanuri, Shuwa-Arab, Buma, Bironi, Angas, Igala, Idoma, Jukun, Ekoi, Ibibio, Efik, Annang to mention just a few(Ajala,2010).



**Fig. 1 MAP OF AFRICA**



**Fig.2 Map of Nigeria Showing Major Ethnic Groups**



**Fig. 3 Map of Nigeria Showing Political States**

Nigeria is a society with abundant rich cultural heritage that are spread across the diverse ethnic nationalities. The Nigerian culture is shaped by Nigeria’s multiple ethnic groups (Ogunbameru, 2008). These cultural heritages include language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion and other tangible cultural materials, natural sites and cultural landscapes. The culture of a particular group of people involves their handicraft, dress, song, music, dance etc. The Yoruba people of the Southwest Nigeria are known for their

attires such as *Agbada*, *Aso Oke*, *Dansiki*, *Buba* and *Soro*, *Iro* and *Buba*. The Igbo's are known for *George blouse*, *up and down attires* and the Hausa's are known for their *Babariga* e.t.c. The attires had on many occasions stood as a means of recognition although other tribes now adopt some alien cultural attire. Every ethnic group has its mode of dancing as well. Also musical instruments vary from one culture to another. Hausas dance is called *rawan – Hausawa*, while one of the Yorubas dances is called *Bata* (see figs.4,5,and 6).



**Fig.4: The Fulani in their native attires**





Fig.6: Yoruba in their dance

The presence of more than one ethnic group in Nigeria shows a great level of diversity and therefore there is bound to be conflict. The multiplicity of Nigeria ethnic groups and cultures has created violence and ethnic clashes at one time or the other. Ikwumelu (2010) observed that Nigeria has always been engulfed in series of conflicts that claimed so many lives and properties. Examples of such are the Nigerian Civil War (July 1967 – January 1970) whereby the Yorubas and the Hausas formed a group and were at war with the Igbos; Maitatsine war which was a religious sect conflict; Modakeke-Ife war who are both Yoruba of Osun State in Southwestern Nigeria but on conflict over land; Benue and Taraba conflict which was an inter-state and inter-ethnic conflict; Ijaws and Ilaje in Ondo State, which was a replay of the Warri mayhem; Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, which was a conflict over land starting from 1933 but it erupted again in 1964, 1995, and 1999 where it became more fierce with thousands of lives and properties destroyed, as more sophisticated weapons were used, and so many other major conflicts (Mudashiru, 2013).

Other minor ethnic clashes or aggressions are the Yoruba and Hausa clashes in Shagamu, in Ogun State; Eleme – Okrika conflict in Rivers state; Zango – Kataf in Kaduna State; Tiv and Jukuri in Wukari, Taraba State; Chamba – Kuteb in Taraba state, Itsekiri – Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta State, Basa-Egbura in Nasarawa State, Hausa Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi and so on. The recent activities of the Boko Haram have brought about a new dimension and new form of violence that has assumed the insurgency status in Nigeria (Izom, 2010). This has now become the major focus of attention in Nigeria's insecurity analysis. The sect through its various violence and dastardly

activities has unleashed terror and mayhem in the country, most especially in the North Eastern region of the country. Many villages and towns have been wiped off; lives and properties have been lost (Bright and Sebiomo, 2013). These occurrences have posed serious security challenges and retarded the rate of development in the country since productive activities can only take place under a secure atmosphere. These conflicts have provided a pattern that makes scholars to attribute their causes to greed, ethnic chauvinism, power and wealth distribution (Ogundare, 2013). The impacts of these crises have led to loss of lives, displacement of people, and destruction of properties. How has Nigeria been tackling the problem of ethnic conflicts? In what ways could cultural diplomacy be a veritable and effective bridge across the divides? These are the questions that this paper stands to address.



Fig. 7: Ethnic violence

### **Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria: Principles**

In Nigeria we accept cultural diplomacy as a philosophy and practice of instilling and embracing the culture of peace to diminish the culture of war. It is also the art of winning hearts and minds of others by attracting them through cultural activities and exchanges that include arts, beliefs, ways of life and customs (Arndt, 2010). The emphasis of Arndt is that cultural diplomacy begins with cultural relation, which happens by themselves, a mosaic of human encounters fostered by films and media, trade, tourism, intermarriage, the arts of imagination, foreign study, books, neighbourly gossip and chance encounters. Cultural Diplomacy provides for us the meeting point between culture and policy. It seeks to propagate a positive image towards a better mutual understanding by encouraging dialogue and value sharing. It is multi-dimensional, comprising public diplomacy, information management and relationship building. In Nigeria we see cultural

diplomacy as tool for unity within our nation as opposed to the views that anchor the concept only to international relations. For example, Appel, Irony, Schmerz and Ziv (2008) limit cultural diplomacy to the use of a country's culture to reach out to foreign audiences and to project a positive image in the international arena. For now this view is secondary to us.

Our conceptions of Cultural Diplomacy have made it obvious that in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation like Nigeria, one way to harmonize cultures and prevent inter-ethnic wars and conflicts is to bridge the gap of differences and open the door for cultural unity and oneness which would then serve as an instrument for growth and development. We hold it that through the interaction of peoples, the exchange of languages, religion, ideas, and the societal structures, the society will improve relationship between divergent groups. Also, we believe that cultural diplomacy may be one of the best actions which is based on and is utilized to exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity in order to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation or promote national interests.

Cultural diplomacy is of various significance and they range from economic, religious, social, educational to political importance. In Nigeria the economic importance of cultural diplomacy is one of the promptings of cultural diplomacy in that it seeks to propagate a positive image towards a better mutual understanding. This means that a good image of an ethnic group is projected to another. When different ethnic groups see each other in the same light there could not be chaos or conflicts and there would be opportunity of trading together which would boost the economy. Farmlands and settlements are destroyed in ethnic clashes and violence but if the causes of the war are taken care of, like seeing the lands as 'our land', this would prevent conflict that destroys properties and goods. Ethnic violence has hindered some ethnic groups in presenting their art works like clay works and sculptural works to be sold in other places thereby hindering a way of generating income. But effective Cultural Diplomacy would help in improving inter-state and intra-state trade.

**Religious Importance:** The growth of our religions depends solely on us; it should be noted that Africans and especially Nigerians are a powerfully religious people with powerful traditional religious practices. Cultural diplomacy would minimize differences and conflict and could therefore open door for ethnic participation in another ethnic's religion.

**Social Importance:** The social importance of cultural diplomacy can be said to be all-encompassing. Many a times the growth of our society has been greatly affected by our various ethnic clashes which could have made a Yoruba woman to decide not to have anything to do with a Fulani man and vice-versa. It could make a *Modakeke* woman, who is a boss to an *Ife* man to disallow the subordinate's promotion. This would not in any way help our harmonious living but the practice of Cultural Diplomacy can minimize this.

Political Importance: Many states in Nigeria consist of more than one cultural group and so when a leader is to be elected many questions are raised. This has prevented some credible leaders, who have the mind to serve the people, to be disqualified, or voted out. Some ethnic groups are in the minority and therefore when a candidate emerges from such, he or she might not be voted in. On the other hand, some others who have been chosen because of their ethnic affiliation have not performed creditably. This is not good for a developing country aiming to develop fast. A possible answer to this is the art of winning hearts and minds of others by attracting them through cultural activities and exchanges.

### **Cultural Diplomacy: Practices**

Cultural Diplomacy can be developed and practiced through several ways. This can be grouped into formal and informal approaches. The informal ways are obvious in business travelers, traders and artisans while the formal is the classroom educational way of acquiring knowledge about cultural diplomacy. Consequently, cultural diplomacy can be practiced by the general populace, individuals, the public sector and the private sector. Ardnt (2010) supports the value of education in cultural diplomacy. He argues that some cultural relations are teaching opportunities, others learning situations; both processes educate the “teachers” as much as the “students”.

***Informal cultural diplomacy*** In the present time Nigeria has tried to create informal cultural diplomacy avenues whereby the people from different ethnic groups come together, become sensitive to others’ culture, respect and unite them. Some of them are:

*The National Youth Service corps Scheme:* In Decree No 51 of 16th June 1973, the objectives of the NYSC scheme were listed out and the ones that have to do with our discussion are: To develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration; To remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and to develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria. The activities to achieve these aims in NYSC include: (1.) a three week orientation camp at the inception of the service year, which is always filled with people from all ethnic groups and which encourages making of friends, exchanging of numbers, becoming intimate friends e.t.c. (2) After the completion of the one year service, some corp member encouraged to permanently based in their places of service by offering some of them jobs. (3) Marriage across ethnic line is encouraged (4) corps members are made conversant with the culture of their host community by teaching them the language of their host thereby setting them free from ignorance of such an area (see figs.8,9 and 10).



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig.10

**NYSC PICTURES Figs. 8, 9 and 10**

*Intra-Nation Sport Activities:-* Here, various sports activities are organized for states to participate. The hosting of the sporting activities are rotated and participants drawn from all over the Federation. Various sports take place, varying from athletic to volleyball, basketball to football. Camping of participants is always across cultural groups except from sex distribution. Participants thereby meet with other people from other ethnic groups. Although it is a competition where every participant desires to take the medal home, even after the competition there is bound to be time to socialize and acculturate. Although sometimes competition veils some participants' eyes but there is still, to an extent, avenues whereby they can eat, talk and even initiate relationships. More importantly cultural diplomacy is exhibited through the opening and closing ceremonies which are characterized with cultural displays that imbue recognition, respect and admiration of others' culture.

*Cultural days in the Force:* The Nigerian security force comprises the police, military, civil defense, navy, customs and immigration units. The security force has been a tangible way in which people from different ethnic groups come together. These individual forces have barracks and offices in all the 36 states of the nation and have cultural days to showcase their rich culture.

*School Cultural Days:-* This is another avenue in which ethnic divide is being bridged in Nigeria through cultural diplomacy. Tertiary institutions have quotas for non-indigenes and do fulfill this to a great extent. From primary/elementary school to universities, a day is set aside in a month as a cultural day. The infants and youth love this day that promotes cultural understanding and respect. Attires, food, language songs of diverse groups are richly displayed.



**Fig.11 School children in cultural attires**



Fig.12



Fig.13

Fig.11, 12 and 13: school children in cultural days.

*Religious Centers' Cultural Displays:-* Religious centers are also places where people of different cultures meet and worship. Particularly in churches songs and choruses are rendered in different languages. Similarly, musical instruments and dresses show diversity in culture. Interestingly this has promoted the singing in others' people languages and wearing attires of other cultural groups.

*National Council for Arts and Culture:* The National Council for Arts and Culture was established and dedicated to the promotion and the preservation of the best of the living arts and cultures of the people of Nigeria using it as resources for national integration and unity as well as to serve as catalyst for sustainable growth and development of the nation. Its vision is to use culture as a cornerstone for building a solid nation where the citizens shall see its cultural diversity as a source of strength.



**Fig.14: Igbo cultural carnival**



**Fig. 15: Argungu Fishing festival**



*Fig.16: Ojude Oba Festival in Ijebu-Ode*



*Fig.17: 2009 Abuja Carnival*



**Fig.18: Iri-Ji Ndi-Igbo Nigeria Festival 2014**



**Fig.19: Lagos Eyo Festival**



**Fig.20: Osun Osogbo Festival**

Some of the functions of the Council as highlighted in its enabling Decree No. 3 of 1975 amended by Decree No. 5 of 1987, are:

- i. To promote and foster the appreciation, revival and development of Nigeria's Arts and Culture.
- ii. To plan and co-ordinate cultural activities in Nigeria and foster the development of Literary, Visual and Performing Arts in Nigeria.
- iii. To organize and promote exhibitions in Visual, Performing and Literary Arts
- iv. To coordinate inter-state cultural exchange activities.
- v. To render assistance to states in the fields of Arts and Culture.
- vi. To promote the development of music, traditional dance, drama, opera, cinema, film, photography, folklore, oral tradition, literature, poetry, painting and general arts, woodwork, embroidery, weaving and similar crafts.
- vii. To assist the Antiquities Commission established under section 3 of the Antiquities Act in the location, acquisition and preservation of artistic works, cultural monuments and depositories.
- viii. To enhance the preservation of all the materials on culture that contribute positively to the image and personality of Nigeria.

*Schedule of Duty*: Based on the statutory functions of the Council, as stated in Decree No. 3 of 1975 and amended by Decree No. 5 of 1987 **some** of the under-listed are the schedule of duty:-

- I. Establishing specialized Research Centres/Craft Development Centres/ Herbal Gardens Projects across Nigeria.
- ii. Organizing the yearly National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST)
- iii. Organizing the NCAC Honours Lecture/Awards
- iv. Organizing the National Culture Quiz Competition for Secondary Schools
- v. Organizing the Culture of Peace and Dialogue Forum for Secondary Schools
- vi. Promoting our indigenous dress, cultural and textiles traditions.
- vii. Promoting indigenous games.
- viii. Collaborating with relevant Non-Governmental Organizations and Consultancy services.
- ix. Coordinating inter-state cultural exchange activities
- x. rendering assistance to the states in the fields of Arts and Culture
- xi. Promoting the development of literary, visual and performing arts.

### ***Formal Teaching of Cultural Diplomacy***

The foundation of cultural diplomacy is the study of culture in terms of knowledge, attitude and practical skills. This is why culture is an important part of any social studies curriculum. Culture is studied in social studies largely because social studies is primarily culture-and society-bound. This means that most of the Social Studies curriculum contents are derived from the culture of a particular society (Ogunsanya,1980). The United States National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1991) position statement and guidelines on Social Studies in the Middle School stresses that there are four unifying motifs for a Social Studies curriculum. They are:

- I. Concern with self: development of self-esteem and a strong sense of personal identity;
- II. Concern for right and wrong: the development of ethics;
- III. Concern for others: the development of group and other centeredness
- IV. Concern for the world: the development of global perspectives

The fourth motif anticipates the following student outcomes:

Respect for cultural diversity, knowledge of diverse cultures, and intercultural competencies;  
Understand and appreciate the delicate relationship between human and the natural world;

and knowledge of temporal and spatial relationships and of the world as a dynamic system (NCSS, 1991). These anticipated student outcomes underscore the importance of the study of culture as a cardinal part of Social Studies. The motif is a category of concern shared by individuals and society. Like other motifs, the cultural motif increases the relevance of Social Studies to the student and link to societal imperatives through cultural diplomacy

The major objectives of social studies in Nigeria are the inculcation of ideas of national consciousness and national unity; the creation of an awareness of physical and social resources of the country; inculcation of the right types of values, attitudes and socio-civic skills for survival of the individual; and an understanding of citizenship and moral education. Social studies education in Nigeria is aimed towards social attitude formation (Ogundare, 2010). These objectives have informed the selection and structuring of course content of social studies at primary, secondary, teachers' college and university levels of education

Social studies educators do not talk of culture and cultural diplomacy in a neutral descriptive sense. For them culture is a normative notion. According to Barrow Woods, (1975) a cultured man is not simply a man who abides by any code of living. Only a particular way of acting counts as culture in the educational use of the term. In the social studies curriculum, culture is conceived of in both the natural descriptive and the normative senses. The way of life or the code of living that is unique to a specific society is emphasized in a social studies program. Equally, what a society notices, ignores, intimates, avoids, promotes, and reinforces, are embedded in the cultural component of a social studies programme. Also, how culture can be used as a powerful and meaningful weapon of unity in a multi-cultural environment (cultural diplomacy) is also an important concern of social studies educators. However, in cultural studies, for the purpose of cultural diplomacy, we are cautious of selecting only the beneficial and attractive aspects of culture to another culture. Indeed, as noted by Adedigba and Wahab (2014), harmful cultural practices exist that may be repulsive to another culture and therefore which must first be modernized or repudiated before projecting such practices. A few of them are female genital cutting/ mutilation, early marriage, early pregnancy, nutritional taboos, virginity testing, gender based violence and femicide.

In Nigeria at the primary/elementary school we focus in our social and civic education programmes cultural issues such as people, places, and things to respect; our community and community leaders; respect for traditional matters and constituted authorities; our types of family; our religions and the concept of culture. These are developed in a spiral form, widening as pupils move from one class to the next higher class. At the secondary school level, cultural studies are both in Social Studies as well as in Cultural Creative Art. Examples of topics are: Nigerian art heritage, music in culture; dramatic art in culture; significance of arts in life and society; visual in festival theaters; ethnic groups in Nigeria and their characteristics; integration

in Nigeria through cultural awareness and recognition; and interdependence/universal cultural patterns of man.

At the university level, two major courses are taught in respect of cultural diplomacy: (a) Multi-cultural Education and (b) Character Education. The key topics in our Multi-cultural education are :

- ❖ The concept of culture;
- ❖ Multi-dimensional studies of different cultures in Nigeria
- ❖ Nigerian culture
- ❖ Nigeria culture in relation to the culture of African neighbouring culture e.g. Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, etc.
- ❖ African culture and the culture of the advanced countries of Europe and America,
- ❖ The concept and scope of multi-cultural education,
- ❖ Aims and objectives of multi-cultural education.
- ❖ Global Education, culture, and peace

The key topics in Character Education which enhance the educational concept of culture are: Concept and meaning of moral and character education; Aims and objectives of moral/character education; Relationship between moral education and social studies; Roles of moral/character education in building a just and egalitarian society; Problems of teaching moral/character education; Strategies/ methodologies of teaching moral and character education; Moral/character education and Nigerian youths; Philosophical approaches to moral education; and culture, peace and solidarity. In all this cultural examples are used to illustrate the contents.

### **An empirical study of pupils' cultural perspectives**

The multifaceted nature of culture has generated interest in the signs and attributes which exist conceptually in the minds of Nigerian elementary school children. It is easy to assume that what a teacher means is identical to what is evoked in a child's mind, but as Hawkins and Pratt (1988) note, anecdotal education literature is full of evidence of clear mismatches. This author conducted a study whose objectives were (i) to discover what signified culture to a sample of Nigerian children, (ii) to examine if they could make their understanding explicit, and (iii) to discover whether the socio-economic background of the children related to the attributes of culture that they identified. The study was, therefore, not an achievement evaluation, but one designed to explore pupils' perspectives on culture and the implications of these for classroom learning in cultural diplomacy.

### ***Method***

The study was based on a sample survey. The subjects were 250 pupils in Orogbun State Schools and Bereton Nursery and Primary Schools, all in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, whose average age was 10 years and two months. One hundred and twenty (120) of the subjects were male and 130 female. They were drawn from sixth year elementary classes. Ninety were from collar professional homes, 66 had parents who were in trade and business and another 94 came from the homes of artisans and fishermen. The instrument (see the box below) consisted of a short essay question which provided pupils with an opportunity to articulate their perception of culture.

Your pen friend in Canada has requested you to describe for him/her the culture of your people in your next letter. After your initial opening of the letter, explain what culture means to you, and illustrate with examples of things that signify the culture of your people.

Other items of the instrument asked pupils' characteristics sex: age, parents' occupation and school. The instrument took into consideration Cook's (1989) suggestion that we may learn more about students' construction of the social and political world by listening to their ideas without preconceived notions of the ideal or end result. Cook's instrument had earlier been adopted for another study in Nigeria (Ogundare, 1993). The test was administered during social studies lesson in each of the schools with the assistance of the class teacher and headmasters. Pupils had no prior knowledge of what they were require to do.

Data analysis focused on pupils' responses in their letters. The contents were analyzed by identifying ideas that corresponded to material culture, non-material culture, a general definition in which cultural attributes were not mentioned; and any other idea outside the three themes.

The author's analysis and coding were compared with those of two other social studies experts (at Rivers State College of Education, St. John's campus; Port Harcourt) who were requested individually to analyse and code the same pupil's responses, using the same parameters. The agreed analysis is reported in table 1. A total of 1,564 ideas, though not mutually exclusive, were generated by the 250 subjects. Having categorised them into themes, the percentage in each category of the total responses was then calculated. Chi-square analysis was used to determine any significant differences in the socio-economic background of the subjects.

### *Loss of nature culture*

The pupils perceived culture in the three broad areas of material culture, non-material culture and the general explanation of culture as shown in table 1. In addition a few of the children noted the idea of culture contact and loss of native culture. For example,

Chijindu Waraba wrote:

*Our contract [sic] with foreign countries has influenced our ways of life, for example, our type of dress, music, religion, and so on... indeed some parts of our culture are in danger of being lost after some years.*

Esse Eka wrote:

*Today our values and believes [sic] with foreign countries have been very much mixed with foreign countries, our contract [sic] with them has made our culture loose [sic] its values.*

Pupils' comments on the loss of native culture through contact with others merited qualitative analysis. While this idea might have been gained in classroom learning, it might also have been gained from the children's everyday experience. For example, pupils learn and communicate in school through the English language. Outside the school, especially at home, they communicate in native languages including Ikwerre, Ijaw, Igbe, and Kalabari.

TABLE I: Pupil's cultural perspectives

Cultural themes	Percentage responses
A. Material culture	
1. Dressing	11.25
2. Food	10.23
3. Building	4.86
4. Agriculture/craft implements	3.07
5. Housing equipment	2.56
	31.97
B. Non-material culture	
1. Practice and custom	11.06
2. Dancing	10.35
3. Music	8.95
4. Language	7.67
5. Types of work people do	4.47
6. Religion	3.84
7. Folklores	2.05
8. Education	1.92
9. Marriage	0.96
10. Traditional rulership	0.79

		52.06
C. General definition	11.50	
1. Way of life of people	4.47	
2. Life in the village		<u>15.97</u>
		100.00

**Material culture**

Table I shows that about 32 percent of the pupils’ ideas expressed culture in the sense of material production. In this category 11 per cent perceived culture as dressing. Some expressed it as ‘the way people dress in different attires of their tribes like *george*, blouse and the big head tie of the *ibos*’. About 10 per cent viewed culture as food. They wrote ‘culture is the type of food we eat in our various villages like *ewedu* and *amala* being eaten by the Yoruba, fresh fish soup by the rivers people etc’. Some said it was the type of building in their locality, while others said it was ‘agricultural work and the method of making hoe-handles’. Culture was also expressed as the art of moulding posts, the making of plate for eating and other household equipment. Cultural ideas expressed as material products clearly limited culture to objects that children see, use and associate with people.

**Non-material culture**

Over half of the pupils’ conceptions of culture (52 per cent) came under the non-material classification. In this class some said culture ‘is the different belief, practice, customs of people and their behaviour towards life in general’. About 10 per cent of this class said ‘culture is the type of dancing in our society; it could be masquerade or other dances’. Culture was also variously expressed as music, language, work people do in their homes, religion and marriage. A typical religious conception expressed culture as:

*The different types of worship: In Yoruba they worship god of creation, god of iron, but the Fulani worship devil owner. The traditional group worship their gods and goddesses. They use and wear charms and amulet..... we Christians worship in the church and give thanksgiving, fasting and worship God by praying and so on.*

The preponderance of ideas relating to non material culture is probably due to the influence of radio, television and cultural festivals which; school cultural days experiences usually depict culture as religion, music, dances, marriage practices and folklore.

**General definition of culture**

Table I shows that almost 16 per cent of the pupils’ conceptions of culture related to a general definition of culture, in which no specifications of the attributes of culture were made. In this sense culture was expressed as the way of life of people. A few, some 4 per cent, associated this

way of life with the geopolitical unit of the village. It was expressed as ‘the type of life we live in our various villages like frying *garri* and staying together with our elders’. While the perceptual origins of culture as a way of life may be traced to the common definition of culture in textbooks, connecting culture to village life may stem from equating culture with the communal life of the village as opposed to the impersonal life of the city.

The cultural perspectives of the pupils were compared according to their parental occupational backgrounds, using chi-square analysis. There was no significant difference in the views of the children on the basis of their backgrounds. A calculated chi-square of 3.74 is not significant at  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 2$ . Similarity of cultural perspectives across home backgrounds may be due to the pupils’ classroom teaching and learning experiences. It may also possibly be due to their near parity in mental development.

### ***Implications for Cultural Diplomacy***

An attempt was made to assess and describe the cultural perspectives of a sample of pupils in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. It was found that the pupils were aware of the various dimensions of culture, including its relativity, contagious potentiality and dynamism. Most conceptions, however, related to non-material aspects of culture. There was no discernible pattern of difference among pupils from different parental occupational backgrounds. The findings have implications for the teaching of cultural diplomacy.

The limited ability of many pupils to explain culture only in a summary term or common textbook definition might earn them full marks in a minor quiz but it will require further probing questions on the part of teachers if the understanding of the concept is to be further enhanced.

The pupils will need to demonstrate their deeper understanding by giving attributes, examples or other illustrations that differentiate rote learning from understanding and application of the concept. On the basis of this study, ideas relating culture to life in the village, though strictly limited, may help social studies teachers in a diagnostic setting more than the ideas relating culture to the way of life of people generally.

The conceptions of culture implied by dress and food and the example given by the pupils suggest an awareness of the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria. Dress and types of food were viewed as cultural imperatives of different ethnic groups. This suggests to social studies teachers that they can promote understanding of national cultural identity as well as ethnic group identity, and go beyond to promote cultural diplomacy.

The recognition of man-made materials as an aspect of culture suggests a consciousness of the distinguishing attributes of culture, in contrast to natural objects. This basic knowledge may constitute a strong facilitator of learning, which teachers can utilize in the teaching of the concept

of cultural diplomacy at higher levels of cognition such as the application of natural objects to solve human problems, and promote inter-cultural unity and peace. The quality of man-made materials can also be related to various levels of technology that are found in different countries. This, in turn, can also be related to the quality of life and material wealth. The fact, however, that barely 31 per cent of the total number of ideas generated by the subjects fell within the dimension of material culture indicates the need for more emphasis on this aspect in classroom teaching.

The children identified culture mostly within the confines of a wide variety of non-material area such as religion, marriage, education, language, and music. The strong emphasis on non-material aspects of culture suggests the need to investigate further from where pupils derive their ideas. The views of pupils elsewhere in Nigeria also need to be sampled to determine whether a national viewpoint exists which can, in turn, be compared with that in other countries. More importantly, teachers can explore these can conception as launched pad for cultural diplomacy.

Children need an appreciation of material culture in order to achieve an 'understanding of and appreciation for the delicate relationship between humans and the natural world'. The school could assist in promoting this through end-of-year activities including display of both material and non-material culture. As Bolewski (2008) remarks, intercultural training should be initiated at an early stage of cultural diplomacy and diplomatic education, as competence and understanding during intercultural exchanges unites societies and facilitates further intercultural interaction. This would help to remove the erroneous idea held by some pupil, that culture is limited to village life. The mass media also has a role to play in promoting a balance understanding of culture. The frequent emphasis on dances and music should be reviewed in order to ensure that all aspects of culture are emphasized and portrayed, for cultural diplomacy.

Government agencies, such as the Department of Arts and Culture, should be encouraged to diversify their activities during cultural festivals to show young people that culture should be broadly interpreted and that it can be preserved. Since primary pupils are usually curious about people, places, practices and material around them an emphasis on culture in the mass media and social studies lessons could foster a reasoned and sensitive concern for the quality of life of a people and lead to behavioral practices which enhance rather than erode their cultural identity dignity, and respect, all which facilitate cultural diplomacy eventually.

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