LAND TRANSPORT IN FOSTERING NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Land transport is the main form of transport in the world today as majority of the population move from one place to another on land than by air or water. Similarly in Nigeria it is the dominant form of transport using roads and railways. These two forms of land transport have for many years been used by the people and had contributed in fostering national integration in Nigeria by facilitating internal migration, carrying out Federal government Programmes aimed at national integration and through other services they rendered to the people. However the roads and railways have not been able to fully contribute in fostering national integration due to certain obstacles which include overuse and misuse of the roads, poor condition of many roads, high rates of accidents, neglect of railways, progressive decay of railways and inadequate railway network. It is therefore recommended that there should be improvement in the condition of the roads, rehabilitating and renewing the railways to effectively contribute in fostering national integration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Evaluation, contribution, national, integration

Introduction
As Nigeria goes up to celebrate its century which is 100 years of its existence as one united country, there is need to evaluate the contributions of one of the forces that fosters national integration in the country which is land transport.
Land transport involved movement of people and goods over land from one location to another. Land transport is the main form of transportation in the world today as people move on land under their own power, use domestic animals or use a combination of the wheel with electronic or fuel powered engines to move people and freight quickly and efficiently.

According to the 2010 Draft National Transport Policy of Nigeria, land transport include rail, road, rural accessibility, urban transportation and pipeline (FGN, 2010). The extent to which a nation’s land mass is covered by transport network is an index of the mobility of people, goods and services within the country (Olawole, et al., 2010). This mobility facilitated by transport network brings about national integration within a country. National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though the citizens belong to different caste, religion and regions and speak different languages they recognize the fact that they are one. This kind of integration is important in building a strong and prosperous nation (Khurana, 2010). The forces that promote national integration include national constitution which is the most important force. National festivals also act as an important unifying force such as Independence Day, Republic Day, Democracy Day etc. National symbols like the national flag, national anthem and the national emblem help to remind citizens of their common identity (Khurana, 2010). Other forces like transport and communication system, and the mass media help in the exposure to all the cultures of different regions of a country. Thus bringing the whole country together as one nation (Khurana, 2010).

This paper focuses on Nigeria, a country with land area of 923,760km² with only 1.4 per cent water. Nigeria shares a land border of 4,047 kms with Benin Republic, Niger (1,497km), Chad (87km), Cameroun (1,690km) and has a coastline of about 853km. The country lies between latitude 4o and 14oN
and longitude 3° and 15°E (Dingba and Adamu, 2007). The physical setting of Nigeria shows a varied landscape in terms of relief and drainage, climate and vegetation. In terms of population, the country is the most populous in the continent of Africa with a population of 170,123,740 based on 2012 estimates.

**Land transport in Nigeria**

Land transport is the dominant form of transportation in Nigeria and includes road, rail and pipelines. This paper will focus on road and railway transportation only as they are more relevant to national integration.

**Road Transport**

Road transportation has become a dominant mode of transport in Nigeria with patronage cutting across individual commuters, private, corporate and government organizations serves as coordinating basis for all kinds of transport system. The restrictive nature of the waterways, coupled with the near collapse of the railway system, and the high cost of air travels have further exerted a lot of pressure on the roads as over 75 per cent of the total movements in the country are made by roads (FRSC, 2010).

Nigeria has the largest road network in West Africa and the second largest south of the Sahara with roughly 108,000km of surface roads in 1990 which rose to about 200,000kms in 2013 (Oloniruha, 2013). There are different types of roads in Nigeria which are classified according to their quality. The quality is determined by the width, type of surface, number of lanes, facilities available etc. There are the high quality roads owned and maintained by the Federal Government. Some of these roads are dual carriages, or expressways examples include Lagos-Ibadan, Lagos-Ore-Benin, Port Harcourt-Enugu, Kano-Kaduna-Abuja. These roads and others that are not dual carriage link the states and the federal capital. There roads of high to average quality generally tarred that are owned and maintained by the state governments. They link local government areas with the state capitals. Example in Katsina state is the Katsina-Mani road constructed by the state government. There are the tarred/untarred roads constructed, owned and maintained by the local governments which link the communities with the local government headquarters (Ileoje, 2004).

Map 1: Map of Road Network of Nigeria
It must be acknowledged that since the return of democratic governance in the year 1999 many state governments have embarked on construction of roads to link up communities in rural areas, dualise existing urban and semi urban roads to ease movement of traffic and reconstruct/rehabilitate roads to provide accessibility to the state capitals and link up major roads. Examples of such states include Katsina, Kano. The Federal Government has also embarked on the dualisation of some roads. For example the Kano-Maiduguri road dualisation project, the Abuja-Lokoja, Ilaban-Ilorin, Onitsha-Owerri, Port Harcourt-Eket road projects which are at various stages of completion. Other roads to be dualised in the near future include the Abuja-Keffi-Makurdi road. The East-West road (Onitsha-Lagos) project started by the Goodluck administration is still ongoing (AIT, 2013). The rehabilitation of other roads has since been completed example include the Jibia-Kaura Namoda-Sokoto road along the extreme northern part.

The roads projects have increased the movement of people, goods and services between the different parts of Nigeria which have positive impact on national integration.

Rail transport
Railway transport was once the dominant form of land transport involved in the movement of freight and passengers across the country especially where the rail lines traverse from independence in 1960 to the 1980s (Obaleye, 2012). The railways also served as a major mode of transport used in facilitating the opening of several mineral producing and agricultural areas (Adesanya, 2010). Nigeria’s railway system is made up of 3505 route kilometers of narrow gauge (1067mm) track 30km of which is in double track while the rest is single tract. This consist the eastern railway line from Port Harcourt to Maiduguri and the western railway line from Lagos to Kano. Branch lines connect the western railway line to Kaura Namoda, Nguru, and Baro on River Niger. In addition to the above lines there is the 19km (1067mm) gauge extension from Port Harcourt to Onne deep sea port and the 277km standard gauge rail construction (1435mm) spanning from Itakpe to Ajaokuta and then to Warri (Ladan, 2010).

The narrow gauge track constructed during the colonial period moves on a maximum speed of 65km per hour which is too slow. This factor and the fact that successive administrations from the 1970 have failed to redesign and modify the narrow gauge to serve the Nigerian economy lead to the decline of the railways. The result is that passenger volume dropped significantly by the mid 1980s and services was poor (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013). In the mid 1990s the Abacha administration awarded rail rehabilitation contract aimed at resuscitating the Lagos-Kano rail line (Anagor, 2013). In August 2006, former President Olusegun Obasanjo announced a 25 years project implementation for the expansion and modernization of the railway system that will cost $8.3 billion. Obasanjo (2006), further stated that the project is a very bold and comprehensive agenda for the development, modernization and expansion of the national railway transportation system to meet socio-economic, political, cultural development and integration objectives. The project will stretch 8,000km to cover all state capitals, population centres and industrial areas all over the country (Obasanjo, 2006). However by the year 2008, the project ran into the problem of funding. Funding of the project has been identified as the biggest obstacles to its execution (Adigun, 2008).

The present administration of Goodluck Jonathan from the year 2009 has begun the rehabilitation of the railway system by replacing the narrow gauge with standard gauge and engaging the services of private firms for the maintenance of the infrastructures (Vanguard, 2013a). In line with this development, the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has conveyed over 4 million passengers between Lagos and Kano in 2012 and increase in the conveyance of raw materials, petroleum products and containers from the port to various parts of the country (Vanguard, 2013a).
The Federal Government is also undertaking the construction of Abuja-Kaduna fast railway whose speed will exceed 100km per hour in conjunction with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation scheduled for completion in December, 2013 (Zariya, 2013). Also feasibility studies had commenced since December 2012 for the construction of 10 new rail lines to cover other parts of the country currently not linked by rail. This can be seen on table 1 below.

Table 1: Ten new rail lines to be constructed by the Federal Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Propose Rail Line</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lagos-Shagamu-Ijebu Ode-Ore-Benin City</td>
<td>300km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Benin-Agbor-Onitsha-Nnewi-Abia</td>
<td>500km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Lagos-Abuja (Direct Line)</td>
<td>615km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ajaokuta, Obajana-Jakura-Baro-Abuja</td>
<td>533km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Zaria-Kaura Namoda-Sokoto-Illela-Birnin Koni</td>
<td>520km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ajaokuta-Eganyi-Lokoja-Abaji-Abuja Line</td>
<td>280km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Port Harcourt-Umuahia-Enugu-Makurdi-Lafia-Kaduna-Bauchi-Gombe-Biu-Maiduguri</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ikom-Ogoja-Wukari-Jalingo-Yola-Maiduguri</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Kani-Nguru-Gashua-Damaturu-Maiduguri-Gamborun-Ngala</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Federal Ministry of Transport (2012)

The aim of constructing these lines is to improve the railway network which presently is grossly inadequate as it covers only 19 out of the 36 states capitals and many population centres were not linked by rails. These lines when constructed will ensure that more State capitals and other settlements not linked by rail are linked.

The Federal Government has also obtained a loan facility in 2013 and has started the construction of Abuja light rail to improve commuting within the federal capital especially for those in the lower socio-economic groups who travel 20-30 km daily to reach their places of work. In the mega city of Lagos, the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) has commenced the construction for a seven-line rail network totaling 246km in order to meet the city’s long-term requirement due to be completed by 2025 (Oni and Okanlawon, 2011).

**Contribution of land transport in fostering national integration**

Land transport in general has over the years contributed immensely towards fostering national integration in Nigeria. The two forms of land transport road and railway have played distinct roles which are better appreciated when discussed separately.

**Road transport**

Road transportation has contributed in fostering national integration in Nigeria as all state capitals, the federal capital territory and the local government areas are linked by roads and people move from one state to another, one local government to another and all to the federal capital tagged the centre of unity. The Y-shape pattern of rivers Niger and Benue have naturally divided Nigeria into three parts but road bridges were built over these rivers to facilitate movement of people from one region to the other. The movement of people using road transport has led to the exposure to all the cultures of different people in the country which enhance the sense and feeling of togetherness and been one united country. Road transport facilitates internal migration within the country mainly through trading. In Nigeria different ethnic groups travel mainly by road to different parts of the country where they forge trading relations and as time go
have settled there. The Igbos for example who are enterprising traders have migrated from the east and have settled in virtually all settlements in Nigeria both urban, semi-urban and rural. Hausa itinerant traders are also found all over the towns of southern Nigeria. The Yorubas have also migrated and settled in the cities and towns of the north.

Road transport is relied upon to carry out government schemes and programmes aimed at fostering national integration. Since independence in 1960, national integration has been a top priority of governments in Nigeria. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the Unity Schools, the Federal Character Principle are examples of state policies intended to achieve this goal (Eaglesisland, 2012). These programmes rely heavily on road transport. Every service year corps members move by road to the states they are posted for their national service. Also in different states of the federation, the ministries of education transport exchange students by road to their schools located in different states. Road transport has continued to foster the integration of people from different cultures and backgrounds in different settlements of Nigeria. This is particularly the situation in nodal towns that are located at the junction of roads that is where roads from different direction meet. Example are Kaduna, Kano, Ibadan, Besides these big settlements that are also others that are small settlements that are located at junction of roads that are also settlements where different people of diverse origins meet. Examples include Mararrabar Jos in Kaduna state, Azare in Bauchi state, Potiskum in Yobe state Numan in Adamawa, Yandev in Benue state (Dada et al., 2006).

**Rail transport**

The railway network has made strong contributions to national integration among the people of Nigeria by facilitating internal migration right from the time of its construction before independence (Zariya, 2012). Railway construction started in 1898 with the Lagos-Ibadan line which was completed in 1901. The last line to be constructed (to complete 3505km of single track) was in 1966 when a branch line from Alesa Eleme Oil Refinery to Elelenwa in Port Harcourt to Enugu line was added (Onakomaiya, 1978). During this period (1898 – 1966) there were the intermingling of tribes either as railway workers or traders and led to countless inter-tribal marriages (Zariya, 2012). The result is that many railway workers decided to migrate and settle in different railway towns such as Ibadan, Minna, Kaduna, Jos, Kafanchan, Zaria, Kano etc. Nigeria’s single narrow gauge railway line constructed in the colonial period was for many years the only mode of people and freight movement between the northern and southern parts of the country. This movement fosters political integration by promoting interaction between areas and by joining them socially (Getis et al., 2000).

Today railway towns are much more cosmopolitan than towns that do not have railway. This is because they are towns that people from other parts of Nigeria have come to settle for over 100 years and have now become part of the local indigenous populations. For example Funtua town in Katsina state is more cosmopolitan than Katsina, the state capital. According to Zariya (2013), many of the 200 railway cities, towns and villages in Nigeria became cosmopolitan in outlook mainly because the railway passes through them.

There are many ongoing railway rehabilitation and construction projects will improve the past contributions of the railways towards national integration as it will ensure more people use the railways as a means of passenger transport and carriage of goods. Adejumo (2006), states that as with other developing countries, a large percentage of the citizens cannot afford to use planes as a means of transport from one place to another. Thus a rail system extended to different parts will encourage the movement of people from one side of the country to the other thereby promoting cohesiveness, understanding of each other’s cultures, etc.

**Obstacles to the contributions of land transport in fostering national integration**
There are several challenges to the contributions of land transport in fostering national integration in Nigeria. These are outlined below:

(i) The roads are overused and misused – Road transport in Nigeria carries over 75 per cent of total movements in the country. This exerts lots of pressure on the roads and makes them to deteriorate easily. The roads are also misused as they carry heavy freight traffic which were beyond the carrying capacity of the roads and thus, further made the condition of the roads to deteriorate and the result is that much of the road system is barely usable (Ladan, 2007).

(ii) Many roads are in poor condition which makes movement on these roads difficult. Even some of the roads constructed by the Federal Government are in poor condition. An example here is the Lagos-Ore-Benin expressway where traffic gridlock usually occurs at the Ore axis. Despite huge budgetary allocation for road construction and rehabilitation by the government more than 70 per cent of 34,123 km of federal roads across the country are in deplorable condition (AIT, 2013). Also many roads constructed by the local governments are in poor condition especially during the rainy season. The poor condition of roads increases travelling time and decreases the life span of motor vehicles.

(iii) There are high rates of accidents on Nigerian roads - Nigeria is reputed to have the highest rate of road accidents among 193 countries and death from reckless driving on the third leading cause of death in Nigeria. In 2012 at least 473 persons died from a total of 1,115 vehicular accidents nationwide (Vanguard, 2013b). Accidents on Nigerian road occur every day and many people are dead, injured, incapacitated or end up on hospital beds and thus could not reach their destination safely. This made many people to develop fear or dislike travelling by road from one part of the country to another which is an obstacle to national integration.

(iv) Highway armed robbery and insecurity - Highway armed robbery is a usual occurrence on Nigerian roads. The robbers rob, injure, rape or even kill their victims which make people to develop real fear about travelling by road. Examples of roads where armed robbery commonly occur include Lagos-Ibadan express way, Shagamu-Benin express way, Benin-Ore express way, Okene-Lokoja-Abuja highway, Enugu-Makurdi highway and many others. The recent insecurity situation caused by the Boko Haram insurgency has became an obstacle to the contribution to road transport as people do not travel to the North eastern part where the insurgents operate even before the imposition of State of Emergency in the North – Eastern region.

Railway transport
Railway transport is a major contributor to national integration especially in the years before independence and the next two decades. However, it faces many obstacles that reduces its contributions which are:

(i) Neglect of railway transport - Railway transport was neglected by successive administrations from the 1970s up to the 1990s. Railway development was abandoned in favour of roads with some highways running parallel to rails as if they were in competition rather than being complementary to each other. During the 1970s and 1980s the federal government consciously pursued the course of developing road and air transport systems at the expense of the railways (Ladan, 2010). Hence the railways could not continue with their contributions towards national integration.

(ii) Progressive decay of railway transport – As a result of the neglect by successive administrations, there was
progressive decay of the railway system in general. The locomotives of the Nigerian railways became obsolete and hence breakdown at the time. By 1990, all the rail tracks were due for renewal and the wagons were unsuitable for modern and efficient rail system traffic as it was then obtain in other developing nations such as India (Ladan, 2010). The railway workers became disillusioned and were rendered redundant as the railways declined and few people were willing to patronize the railways.

(iii) Inadequate Railway Network – The railway network consist of 3505km single track narrow gauge line connecting two principal seaports of Lagos and Port Harcourt. It was adequate during the colonial period for the haulage of agricultural products and minerals from the north to the seaports. There was no significant addition and extension of the rail lines to cover different regions of the country. For a nation with an aerial landmass of 923,768 square kilometers the rail lines were inadequate to continue to make contributions to integration of the nation in view of population growth and economic development in the mid – 1970s up to the 1990s. Cities and towns not covered by rail include Benin, Onitsha, Calabar, Yola, Jalingo, Birnin Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina and many others.

**Conclusion**

Nigeria is highly diversified, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic nation. One of the ways of effectively linking the nation is through roads and railways. These forms of land transport have over the years made contributions in fostering national integration. The railways were however neglected by the governments for many years which reduces its contributions. There is therefore the urgent need to pursue vigorously and complete the railway modernization and renewal projects of the present administration and to effectively tackle obstacles related to road transport. So that both road and railway transport plays complementary roles to each other and thus contribute in fostering national integration.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made in order to improve land transport so that it can improve its contributions in fostering national integration.

The federal government should continue to improve the condition of the roads. In line with this Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) should be well funded and equipped to adequately ensure all year round maintenance. Moreover modern efficient railways should be able to take off the roads tankers and haulage trucks that damage the roads.

Federal and state governments should work towards reducing the high rate of road accidents. There should be driver education to avert reckless driving and ensure abeyance of traffic rules and regulations. Implementation of speed limit on all roads and road repairs and vehicle maintenance will assist towards reducing the high rates of accidents.

The Nigerian Police Force should be provided with adequate equipment and logistics to be able to combat highway armed robbery. Highway police patrol teams should be formed and moved into action to regularly patrol the roads especially robbery hot spots.

The federal government should give top priority to the development of railway transportation in view of the critical role it plays toward the overall development of the country. The railways should be modernized to take their rightful role in the transportation of passengers and goods in the country.

The federal government should continue with the projects aimed at rehabilitating and
renewing railway as a means of transportation in Nigeria. And once the projects are completed, a railway maintenance agency should be established for the sustainability of the initiatives and continued survival of the railways.

The federal government initiative of constructing ten new railway lines in areas that have no rail lines should be implemented as it is a clear attempt aimed at improving the inadequate rail network in the country. Besides these other lines that need to be constructed should be explored so that there is an adequate railway network to make a meaningful impact on national integration.

References


