

## RETHINKING HISTORY EDUCATION AS FUNDAMENTAL INDEX FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

History as a discipline relates and links the spheres of human life with regard to moments of time: present, past and future. History education in many parts of the world is facing immense challenges especially in developing African nations. Nigeria in particular has gone through various stages of educational reforms that touched many subjects, curriculums and syllabuses yet neglects history as a fundamental core subject very much needed if she must solve her numerous national problems from the root. Nigeria as a country continues to recycle her irrelevant problems and struggles as long as the trending relationship between history study and our educational system that will guarantee national cohesion and development is not met and upheld as such. Using the method of critical analysis, the researchers find out that we need to effectively rethink history as a compulsory course in our educational system and thereby recommend that history as discipline must be offered by all in academics a *cohesive* national development.

**Keywords:** History studies, education, national development

### Introduction:

History is the study of an event, concept, and phenomenon in chronological order: tracing ideas back to their origin and studying the evolution of ideas or events. An awareness of what has gone before is necessary to know what is to be done in the present or future time. Knowledge of the past is essential for great and noble achievement, growth, unity and development. Evans (1997) points rightly that history is very important in the development of a person, group of persons or a race. According to him, "this is because history never repeats itself; nothing in human society, the main concerns of historian, ever happens twice under the same conditions or in exactly the same way." This popular saying "experience is the best teacher" amongst the people in the society supports what Evan asserted. Therefore, it is through taking cognizance of these historical occurrences that we can forestall the bad once from happening again and improve the good ones.

National integration has long been seen as an important focus for postcolonial African governments. As some scholars noted, especially Binder (1964) upon African decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists were concerned about the need for what was then called "national integration" in societies with multiple ethnic, religious and racial cleavages. Bandyopadhyay &

Green (2009) have argued that this concern has been more recently resurrected by Miguel (2004), Collier (2009) and others who have advocated for national integration as a policy to promote state building in a continent now notorious for and rife with political instability and economic throwback.

As Ifeanchio & Nwagwu (2009) observed, Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. In their words, the history of democratization in Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular, has remained the history of national disintegration. Thus, the integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifest in the minority question, religious fundamentalism and conflicts, ethnic politics, indigene-settler dialectic, resource control, youth restiveness and militancy and the clamor for a (sovereign) national conference or conversation about the terms of the nation's continued unification. The status quo has convulsed the productive sector, limited the impact of government's economic programs on the people, threatened food insecurity, *complicated* social insecurity, deepened the deterioration of physical and social infrastructures, distressed the living standards of a vast majority of Nigerians, militated against the educational system and resulted in the *ostracization* of the generality of Nigerians and their exclusion from the political and economic space, among other glitches. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterized by inter- and intra-community, inter and intra-ethnic, and inter- and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of the Nigerian nation.

The trust of this paper is to discover how the Nigerian society can be experientially or objectively explored, properly integrated, reinterpreted, reconstructed, compiled, documented and carefully studied, free from socio-cultural, ethnic and religious sentiments, to move Nigeria to a progressive, politically stable, just, transparent, strongly united and egalitarian society that will totally be out of insecurity of life and prosperity in general.

### **A Concise History of Nigeria**

Nigeria has over the years acclaimed to be the giant of Africa. She is bordered to the north by Niger, to the east by Chad and Cameroon, to the south by Gulf of Guinea of Atlantic Ocean and to the west by Republic of Benin. According to Olufemi (2016), "Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and a major oil producer with a population of 180 million (in 2015) and more than 250 ethnic groups, it is home to millions of Christians, Muslims and adherents of indigenous religions (ATR)."

Nigeria is made of ethnic groups but had three major ethnic groups which are: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Historically, the Yoruba people have been the dominant group on the west bank of the Niger. Their nearest relatives, linguistically, are the Igala who live on the opposite side of the Niger's divergence from the Benue, and from whom they are believed to have split about 2,000 years ago. The Yoruba were organized in mostly *patrilineal* groups that occupied village communities and subsisted on agriculture for the Igbo community, the Nri kingdom is seen by some scholars as the ancestral home of the Igbo people. The

Hausa kingdom were a collection of states started by the Hausa people, situated between the Niger River and Lake Chad.

The entity called and referred as Nigeria dates to the almighty amalgamation of 1914, when the British brought together in one entity the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. Since then, through the independence of 1960 and later her republic in 1963, Nigeria has managed to continue to grow until now that she now has thirty-six (36) states with a capital territory located in Abuja.

### **Conceptual Understanding of History**

The ancient Greeks were the seekers of knowledge and wisdom which made them inquire into past events, history. Etymologically, the English word "history" is derived from their Greek noun "historia" which means an enquiry about the past of mankind was later developed into a discipline (subject) by the ancient Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides. Herodotus known popularly as the "father of History" was the first to give history meaning "inquiry to the past". Marwick (1970) defined history into three levels. Firstly, that history connotes "the entire known past as it actually happened". Secondly, history deals with man's attempt to describe and interpret the past. Lastly, history has been seen as a "systematic study of the past". These definitions were criticized because Marwick emphasized the capture of the past as "it actually happened" and it has been proven that the past cannot be recreated exactly as it was. Carr (1961) has seen history as continuous process of interaction between to historian and his facts and an unending dialogue between the past and the present. From the definition of Carr, we observe history to be a recall of the past as it affects the future.

The past had a paramount role it plays in the present. History sees the past through the microscopic eyes of the present and evaluates the past through which the future is created. History, however, allows us to be confronted as well as gives us the opportunity to think critically about our present situation so as to take decision for our future.

Usman (1979) in his scholarly work argues that history is all about the totality of human existence over time. From the above assertion, it is obvious that history is the totality of all life experiences that transpired from the conception of a person, community or nation over a long period of time. Ziauddeen, an Arab Historian opines that:

To justify the study of History is to undesirable history as the sum of happening, the totality of human experiences as a way in which facts are selected, verified, described and analyzed. It also involves the selection of facts, the words, the styles, the accents, the imposed logic, the footnotes all bear the impress of the individual historian and his milieu and are combined to promote a particular image of the past (as cited in Kabir,2013, p.51)."

The major goal of history is to justify human curiosity and provide the society with the opportunity to know itself better in respect to past events, societies and cultures. History in nation building is the reconstruction of record of the activities of man on earth, his religion, politics and economics long existed inter group-relations.

### **Understanding Education**

Education is defined as acquisition of knowledge in relation to a definition of philosophy as love of knowledge. Education according to Udom (2005) is not just the acquisition of knowledge but the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge. This conceptualization means that education is the process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shape and condition, man attitudes action and achievement it is a process of developing the child's moral, physical emotional and intellectual power for his contribution in social change.

Reconstruction, integration and overall nation unity and development, education may construct or destroy a nation depending on the utilization and application of the acquired knowledge. Many states of the world are faced with the problem of inculcating a sense of national identity in the citizens and for strengthening the legitimacy of institutions including political authority in developed counties such as France and Britain. Many factors operate as effective socialization agents to meet the need of nation building and such are derived primarily from their histories of common government and a united struggle agents foreign foes their long possession of unity symbols and facilities such as language literature, social and political institutions (Smock & Bentsi-Enchil 1986) examples abound where nations of the world have utilized the tremendous power of education as an instrument of national policy e.g. in Athenian democracy, education is used for intellectual development, in Japan, it is used as an instrument for cultivation of benevolence, Justice propriety, Intelligence and fidelity, and in Germany, it is used as instrument for national unity (Ukeje, 1988).

In Nigeria, one of the five main cardinal national objectives as stated in the second national development plan (1970-74) and which has been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the national policy on education is the building of a united, strong and self-reliant nation. Here again education is seen as instrument for nation unity and cohesion. Unfortunately the traditional socializing agents do not function at the nation level but at ethic or communal level (Etuk, 1994).

Education is a powerful phenomenon that influences man from day one to the last day. It stresses knowledge, understanding and general development of an individual and the nation as opposed to propaganda which overriding interest and focus is persuasion. Social studies education as an academic discipline touches so closely on all aspects of public and individual life that there are both implicit and explicit demands for it worldwide. Its main thrust is on socializing and humanizing the individual in the society in order to help him contribute meaningfully to its growth and development. National integration and development is multidimensional in nature as it is characterized with social,

*Okafor and Okoli Rethinking History Education as Fundamental Index for National Integration...* political, economic, religious, scientific and technological perspectives which an interdisciplinary subject like social studies is well fitted for its handling. Social studies education has great potentialities for integrating the diverse nationalities in Nigeria if properly implemented in all the levels of education in the country namely nursery, primary; junior secondary school, senior secondary schools and tertiary with the right caliber of teachers. Thus, in the absence of these socializing agencies to reinforce the sense of national identity, education could be used to affect unity, loyalty and integration in the country.

### **Concept of Development**

Development must be explored in order to look at the past in relation with the future. Rodney (1972) defined development as "a many-side process". For him, at the individual's level, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and mental well being"(p.9). Todaro (1977) reiterates that development is multidimensional as evident in his words:

Development must therefore be conceived as a multidimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individual and social groups within the system moves-away from the conditions of life regarded as materially and spiritually *better*.

This means that development involves the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic, political, cultural and social system. This also involves in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutions, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs. Development is aimed at improving the living conditions of the people through the effective management of both the human and material resources as well as historical records. Hence, Gana (1986) noted that, "development concerns that capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talent and productive".

### **Appreciation of National Integration**

Integration has been severally conceptualized. One of which is that regional integration is a process in which states enter into a supranational regional organization in order to increase regional cooperation and diffuse regional tension (Onwuka, 1982). In economic terms, it focuses on removing barriers to free trade in the region, increasing the free movement of people, labor, goods and capital across national borders, reducing the possibility of regional armed conflict through

confidence and security –building measures, and adopting positions which enhances common stand on policy issues. This is aimed at generating economic advantages to individuals, states and regions (Balassa, 1961; UNECA, 2004). Extrapolating this conception to national integration, it would first mean ‘state-building’, that is the processes in which the different people in a state transfer primordial allegiance to one central authority, which becomes the representative of the people, who take conscious steps towards nation-building. Nation building would then involve the various processes by the central authority (state-building) causes the composite social group to cohere and regard one another as member in the same state with obligation towards one another. Regional integration involves a process of increasing interaction and interdependence in the economic and political arena among a group of countries. The extensive body of literature on economic integration has its roots in the world that coincided with the beginning of the European Community, and even pre-dated it (Balassa, 1961, Tinbergen, 1954). Amitai Etzioni on the other hand upheld that integration may be defined as a condition identified with a set of vague symbols or variables, or as ‘process’ identified with an over-increasing degree of structural linkages between two or more parts of a system or systems (Onwuka, 1982). There are three main approaches to the management of integration. These are Functionalist, Neo-Functionalist and Federalist. However, for the purpose of this paper, neo-functional paradigm would be applied. The Functionalist thesis is that since the critical function of any political community is security and welfare, it follows that if a moderate sufficiency of what the people want and ought to have is given to them, they will keep peace (Mitrany, 1975). In view of this, when an organization is set up to meet these needs of the people, their loyalty would incrementally shift to the organization rather than to the nation-state system. The Neo-functionalist on the other hand upheld that the development of ‘world Government’ that is one supreme body for all states and people, is feasible through the growth of supranational organization (Ray, 1979).

However, in addressing the problem posed, the orientation of this paper would include applying the principles of integration in internal integration of hitherto separate peoples. Thus this paper translates the principles of removing barriers between people, and the recognition of one central authority for all, to the processes of state and nation-building respectively.

Consequently, the approach would involve examining the administration of integration in the Nigerian state against the backdrop of the ‘principles of integration. The appreciation of the keywords ‘state and nation-building’ is germane to understanding the challenges posed by the concept. Elaigwu (1981), believes that nation-building refers to the lateral or horizontal processes by which different people in a political community decide to cohere together because they have found themselves in the same state (). The different nations in the state share functional responsibility and live interdependently with one another in harmony. Integration has been subjected to a myriad of interpretations, but one of the most consistent elements conveyed by the term remains ‘bringing together of different

parts into a whole'. In this context the administration of national integration in Nigeria would refer to the processes of bringing the various Nigerian ethnic groups to cohere, on a continuing basis. It is the opinion of the present researchers that cohering often involves the development of cherished norms and values respected by all the cohering groups, in order to enable all component parts in the integration process to continue to have a sense of belonging to the political community created, not out of 'social-contract' through the colonial process of integration. This view was supported by many authors especially Burke and Mistre (1968) when they both stressed the *idea that a society is like an organism, the parts of which are in a natural balance that should not be disrupted by arbitrary innovations derived from abstract reasoning*. Donald Levine in his piece on cultural integration 'contended that "administrators and reformers have been guided by the concept in their efforts to find innovations and modes of introducing change which fits most comfortably into existing cultures". It is discernible at this point that national integration as a process, involves continuous adjustments of elements that would lead to a more or less coherent pattern of social interactions.

National Integration should be seen by the people as the means of deriving both economic and political advantages. Thus, every group of participants should be ready to give and take. This is what takes place when states enter into supranational regional organizations in order to increase regional cooperation and diffuse regional tensions. The administrative processes consist of the actions involved in effecting the intent or desire of government towards national integration. It is thus the continuous active 'business' part of government, which is concerned with executing the law, as made by the legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by courts, through the processes of organization and management, (Waldo, 1968) for national integration. Implicit in this conception are the issues of intent or desire to set up administrative processes, which conduces to both vertical and lateral integration of the Nigerian state; and continuously ensure that the public sector management achieves this.

According to Duverger in Ojo (2009), national integration is "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious." Jacob & Tenue in Ojo (2009) describe it as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity... a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes". Defining national integration as a process, Morrison et al. argue that it is "A process by which members of a social system (citizens for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community" (Ojo, 2009). Ezeigbe (1994) defines a nation as people living in the same place and sharing the same values, resources, and psychic energy for the common good of its members and for their general development.

The difficulty of attempting a precise definition of the concept of "integration" has led to the adoption of three basic approaches: structural, cultural and Marxian, though none of the approaches is mutually exclusive. Here, integration is viewed in terms of the extent to which parts interact and complement each other in order to constitute a viable whole. It is within this framework that national integration is considered as involving a process of holding tightly together the various nationalist or ethnic groups and institutions in a dovetailed manner through the bonds of contrived structures, norms and values. National integration is also conceived in terms of degrees. Under this framework, generally, there could be vertical integration, for instance, of social classes in the society in question, as well as horizontal integration, e.g. the integration of ethnic groups. The operational definition of national integration is the harmonious coexistence of diverse social groups (Bello 1987).

National Integration is the unity of the various ethnic groups in the country or nation in such a way that they see one another as brothers and sisters devoid of tribal sentiments, nepotism and all other vices that bring polarization of the people (Usara 2001). This means the coming together of Nigerian citizens, to speak with one voice, appreciate the circumstances of their nationality, contribute meaningfully to the development of their country and jointly protect the sovereignty of their country. It is a sort of action that means a collective responsibility to swim and sink together in a genuine spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood.

### **Roles of History in National Integration and Development**

The relevance of history in the growth, unity, proper integration and development of any nation cannot be overstated. We must note that no nation grows beyond the quality of her education. In the first place, history offers a storehouse of information about how people and societies act. We can only understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we use what we know about experience in the past. Hitherto, history must serve, however, imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings. This, basically, is why we cannot stay away from history.

Also, the past causes the present, and so the future. For example if we want to understand what happened in the past, be it in political scene, break out of violence, insecurity, tribal wars, unemployment of youths and child abuse, we have to look for causative factors that took shape earlier. History will always suffice to explain a major development. Only through the study of history can we grasp how things changed. In the case of the recent herdsman attack and *Boko-Haram* insurgency, an attempt to discover the cause of these insurgencies will be traced back to the period of amnesty.

The importance of history in explaining and understanding change in behaviour is no mere fantasy. Let's take alcoholism, for instance, as an important human phenomenon through biological experiments, scientists have identified

specific genes that seem to cause a proclivity toward alcohol addiction in some individuals. Alcoholism, as a social reality, has a history: rates of alcoholism have risen and fallen, and they have varied from one group to another. Attitudes and policies about alcoholism have also changed and varied. History is indispensable to understanding why such changes occur. Another instance is in the school environment. For a student to excellently pass a subject or course, he or she must take vital steps to knowing the course requirements, lecturer's requirements as well as his or her principles. All these can only be achieved by the student enquiry from the predecessor-which is history in practical.

To understand the contemporary state of politics in Nigeria as it's full of rigging of votes, low voters turnout, snatching of ballot papers and boxes even for major elections. A historical analysis of changes in the country's politics can help us begin to understand the problem we face today. A purely contemporary analysis may shed some light on the problem, but an historical assessment is clearly fundamental and paramount for anyone concerned about Nigerian political health today.

History well told is beautiful. Most of the general historians who most appeal to the general reading public know the importance of dramatic and skillful writing as well as of accuracy. Biography and military history appeal in part because of the tales they contain. History as art and entertainment serves a real purpose, aesthetic grounds but also on the level of human understanding. Stories that reveal how people and societies have actually functioned, and they prompt thoughts about the human experience in other times and places are stories well done.

History also provides a ground for the understanding of moral standards of a person. Studying the stories of individuals and situations in the past allows a student of history to test his or her own moral stand, to hone it against some of the real complexities individuals have faced in difficult settings. People who have weathered adversity not just in some work of fiction, but in real, historical circumstances can provide inspiration. "History teaching by example" is one phrase that describes this use of a study of past-a study not only of certifiable heroes, the great men and women of history who successfully worked through moral dilemmas, but also of more common people who provide lessons in courage, diligence or constructive protest.

History also helps provide identity, which is unquestionably one of the reasons all modern nations encourage its teaching in some form. Historical data included evidence about how families, groups, institutions and whole countries were formed and about how they have evolved while retaining cohesion. Most Nigerians study the history of their families for provision of facts about genealogy and a basis for understanding how the family has interacted with larger historical change. Family identity is established and confirmed. Many institutions, sections of a state or country, use history for similar identity purpose. And of course nations use identity history as well and sometimes abuse it. Histories that tell the national story, emphasizing distinctive features of the national experience, are meant to

drive home an understanding of national values and a commitment to national loyalty.

### **Inter-Ethnic Mixing and National Integration**

It is common knowledge that most Nigerians are reluctant to leave their homes to other places like the urban centers, so as to mix-up with the people of other ethnic groups. This is unpalatable in terms of national integration. Pell (1986) reported that the promotion of national unity among army recruits during the civil war was reinforced for Kano soldiers by their first experience of the south and the southerners. To facilitate inter-ethnic mixing and national integration, the federal government in 1973 under Yakubu Gowon introduced the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in which university, colleges of education and polytechnic graduates are to serve the nation for one year in states other than their states of origin. This program can aptly be said to have engendered the spirit of loyalty to the nation, development in the participants' positive attitudes through shared experience towards mobilization in national interest, developed common ties among the Corps Members and members of the community in which they service. Employers of labour have through this program employed qualified Nigerians irrespective of their states of origin.

The NYSC program has from its inception itself a laudable step taken by the government to realize the search for national integration. Many youths are exposed to areas which they never thought existed as part of the country. They were forced to adjust to the condition of the environment they served, learnt the language of the community to ease their interaction with the people. Cases abound where corps members got married in the community they served, thus creating opportunity for inter-ethnic marriage which is a strong force in the harmonization of ethnic differences. At the end, many of the corps members come to realize that ethnic boundaries, language and cultural differences are mere natural accidents, and such realization encourages the development of a sense of common identity. Inter-ethnic school sports competition such as the All Nigeria Universities Games (NUGA). Nigeria School Sports Federation (NSSF) and other cultural competitions have served as avenues for inter-ethnic mixing. Apart from the government deliberate actions to bring about positive inter-ethnic relationship through education, the students have also evolve ways of harmonizing ethnic differences in Nigeria. For instance in 1962 some students of the University of Ife founded the palm-wine drinkers club (palmate club). The aim of which was to use palm wine as a symbol to harmonize cultural difference in Nigeria, promote mutual understanding, unity and oneness among members irrespective of tribe, region or political difference "Gyrations" organized by members schools always attracted the migration of students from others schools, thereby enhancing inter-ethnic mixing.

### **Conclusion**

History is the study of the past in relation with the future. Through a thorough understanding of history, we can bridge ethnic, political and cultural

*Okafor and Okoli Rethinking History Education as Fundamental Index for National Integration...* disparities that are prevalent in a nation like Nigeria. History informs, reforms, and helps to rebuild walls of brotherhood, peace and unity in the society. Hence, the need at every point in time makes reference to happenings of old without being hold in the path to achieve an all-round national growth, unity and development.

### **Recommendations**

1. There should be the introduction of history as subjects from the primary school to enable students get acquainted with past events.
2. The curriculum should be built to forecast the usefulness of history and the curriculum should be developed by experts who can relate the past with the future.
3. Instruments used in the past should be preserved and taught with in relating to a particular event in the country.
4. There should also the introduction of cultural studies to help retain Nigerian's cultural heritage.

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