

Towards History and Education for National Integration: Imperative for Peace and National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at teaching history as a vehicle to encourage national integration in Nigeria, peace and national development. The paper is of the opinion that Nigeria as a nation and a conglomerate of many and varied ethnic nationals existing as an indivisible entity today: had a past that needs to be reinvented through the teaching of history for a proper perception of each other and a peaceful coexistence for national development. The author is of the opinion that the function of history in recreating the various past of many ethnic nationals that make up the Nigerian state is imperative now that Nigeria is faced with a lot of forces that tend to tear it apart. The paper brings to the fore the historical specificities that led to the fusion of the previously existing independent ethnic nationals to a nation-state. Given the poly-ethnic nature of Nigerian-state, manifest in cultural diversity, religious differences, and political/economic divides that challenges the unity of Nigeria. The author is of the opinion that national integration can be encouraged through the teaching of history of the various ethnic nationals, chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires that existed before the amalgamation by the British colonial government in 1914, thus encouraging peaceful coexistence for national development. Though using education as a vehicle for national integration is fraught with a lot of challenges and set-backs. However, given the imperative of peace for national development, the author proffers some solutions that can encourage national integration through the educational institution and that is the work of History.

THE CONCEPT OF HISTORY

The concept History does not have a once and for all definition, given the fact that there are as many definitions as there are scholars. However, a simple and concise definition sees history as a study or the reconstruction of the past. This reconstruction may be in relation to a peoples' political, economic, cultural or military past, and this past can be the immediate past of yesterday, it could be the remote past of yester years, that is a long time ago or the past of the classical era/period (Ogeh 2018). On a similar note, Becker in Kosemani (2002) opined that the national function of history is an investigation of things said and accomplished; things said and done, whether in recent past or in the remotest past of mankind. Perry, Davis, Harris, Von Laue, and Warren Jr. (1985), maintain that the study of history enables us to explore and appreciate the achievement of people throughout the world in different periods of time. Studying the achievement of people throughout the world in different time further provides us with information about man: his economic life and inventions, the development of society and governments, the creation and development of culture and the origin of religion, music, arts and other experiments and creations/inventions of man that has made life easy and simple today. (Zebel and Schwartz (1963))

Perry etal (1985), further maintain that the more knowledge we gain in the past, the more insight we will have into the present. In this regard history is the key that unlocks the secretes, mystery and hidden treasure of the past and simplifies the complex existence and interaction of man today. History links mans past with the present and helps him to understand himself in the world which he leaves today. Nigeria as a people can

only understand themselves through the study of the past and the secret of peaceful coexistence as a nation state. History deals with facts, and history is a fact; a fact about a peoples' past, origin, inventions and development. That is why some scholars argue that history is an unending dialogue between the past and the present a mirror to the future; because history accounts for the past, links it with the present and predicts and projects the future. In other words, history is about yesterday, today and tomorrow (Abdulrahman-Yusuf (2014, Amaele, Wosu and Ejire, 2011)

History tells you who you are,-your origin, history tell you what you were- your creations, inventions , past glories, history tells us what we are – transitions, development present creativity, challenges and what we might become- possibilities. History galvanizes the past, the present and the anticipated future. History librates us from the failures and limitations of the past, enlightens us on the realities of the present and projects us into the possibilities of tomorrow- the future. History is the artist's kaleidoscope that provides us the opportunity to admire the wonders and beauty of his multiple color creation of arts. History is the drivers rear –view mirror that points to the previous location of the driver and still drives on with the driver. History is everything man has created and is creating and will still create (Ogeh unpublished lecture notes). Without history a people will be lost and lose their identity, their inventions, and their possibilities. History recreates the past for the present to accommodate the present and hope for a better future

THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

The concept of education is not easy to be narrowed to a single definition. The concept has as many definition as there are educationists, scholars, thinkers and philosophers. Different scholars define education differently based on their background, position at a particular time as to the aim and objectives of education and as the occasion demands. Strictly speaking, the concept of education is said to have originated from two Latin words: *Educere and Educare*. The first concept *Educere* means to “lead out “or “to Draw out”. Osokoya (2014), maintains that from the derivative of “drawing out”, education cannot be limited to what happens within the four walls of the school. In this regard education is more broad than just schooling, It presupposes that one can be educated without going through the formal school system. On the other hand, the word *Educare*, from the Latin derivative means “to raise”, “to nourish “or “to bring up “. Looking at the two Latin words, *Educere and Educare*, we can conclude that the concept, education has to do with the deliberate effort to lead and instruct an individual acquire the relevant skills that will enable him live a responsible life as a citizen in the environment he finds himself. In this regard, the relevant skills passed on to the individual is determined by the environment.

Osokoya (2014), furthers this idea of education by looking at the sociologists concept of education, as the process of cultural transmission and renewal. Given the fact that a peoples' culture is basically determined by the environment, invariably, the curriculum for the educational process for a non-literate, agrarian society will be quite different from that of an industrial society. In this regard, culture is seen in terms of the way people do their things or a people way of life. Ukeje (1986), affirms the above claim when he looked at education as a process, as a product and as a discipline, but in broad sense defined education as a process of developing the individual physically, mentally spiritually, morally and socially for his own welfare and for the welfare of the society. Ukeje *ibid*, further maintains that education is a process of inculcating a way of life (culture); of transmitting the cultural heritage; of acquiring knowledge and ideas. Through education the individual acquires the civilization of the past , and are enabled both to take part in the civilization of the present and make the civilization of the future.

From the foregoing, this means that an educated individual is expected to make contribution for the sustaining and development of the society in which he was raised. The individual is developed to enable him leave effectively and efficiently in the present society so as to advance it. This is the function of education as history has enabled us to understand.

THE CONCEPT OF NATIONHOOD AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The concept nation/nationhood has been defined and explained by many scholars and given many explanation based on the specific culture it is being referred to. Halidey and Bayles (1973), posit that the word nation has existed for many centuries and equivalent to what today may be called tribes, peoples, groups, of subjects of a monarch or communities .It also relates to the idea of a community with its own history and identity, and often its own language or religion, and which has existed in all cultures. Halidey and Bayles precisely maintain that the contemporary usage of the word ‘nationalism’, dates from the 18th century, and was created in three separate but interlinked phases. The first phase of the usage is associated with the thinking of the enlightenment, influenced by the writing of J.J .Rousseau and J.S Mill in the 18th century, referring in particular to the principle of self determination of communities; and the principle of individual self determination of nation. The second phase was associated with the French Revolution of 1789, when the opponents of the monarch called themselves *La nation*. “the nation” meaning the community of all French people irrespective of previous title or status; emphasizing liberty, equality and fraternity. The third idea is associated with the German romantic idea of *the volk or ‘people’*, a community based not so much on political identity but on history, tradition, and culture. In this regard, the concept nation conveys the idea of self determined people, a community of people based on a common history, tradition and culture; and a group of people with a common interest with a collective interest of self determination. Gold and Teller (1969), posits further that a nation is a people connected by real or at least accepted racial unity, such unity being shown by language, religion, customs and apparent destiny. Deutsch (1980), defines a people as “a group with complementary communication habits whose members usually share the same language, and always share a similar culture so that all the members of the group attach the same meaning of words. A common language, a similar culture, same meaning of words and with complementary communication habits presupposes a common ancestry or a common descent or a common origin gives us a good understanding of a nation. Asiabaka, Asiabaka and Anunobi (2013), affirms that a nation is made up of a distinct group of people who share a common background, including any or all of the following: history, racial or ethnic characteristics, geographic location, religion, language, culture, and belief in common political ideology. And when people have the above common characteristics, they develop common affinities, values, attitudes, and pattern of behavior. These shared values, attitudes habits and interest accommodates the evolution of a government which is political and provides the nation with the tool for governance, and gives us the idea of a nation-state. In this regard, the idea of a nation connotes an anthropological meaning and origin. This description aligns with the characteristics of many nations in Europe. Boyd and king (1983), maintains that in the early 18th century, during the period of the rise of nations, many nationals that spoke the same language gathered and formed independent nations; which are referred to as national states. Though there may be few variations due to migration, war and some unavoidable historical antecedents. This is the case with many, if not all African nations which are mainly the creations of their colonial governments, in this regard, are referred to as artificial nation-states. For example, in the present day Nigeria before the contact with European merchants and the eventual colonization, there existed many and different ethnic nationals with varied cultures, values and belief system. The amalgamation of these squabbling African ethnic nationals into nation-states by the European colonial powers is the major and root causes of crises in the post colonial African nations. Nigeria is a good example of a post colonial African nation-state, a creation of the British colonial master; believed to be peopled and inhabited by over two hundred and fifty ethnic nationals; (James Coleman 1985) separately and independently existing in the northern, Western Eastern and in the Southern Nigeria. For example, there was the Karnem Bornu Empire and the Zazau kingdom in the North beside others, there was the Oyo Empire in the west, there was the Nri, the Aros and other autonomous communities/ statedoms in the East and in the South the Benin, the Igbany -Bony, Opobo, Ijaws, Ikwerre Ekpeyes, Ogonies etc, Empires, kingdoms, statedoms and chiefdoms and other loosely led, but self existing communities throughout the geographical

expression of the present day Nigeria. These self existing ethnic national were arbitrarily and forcefully amalgamated in 1914, by Lord Lugard, the then representative of the British imperialist. While in Europe we have “organic nations” or what may be called “anthropological nations” because of the commonality of their origin, formation and existence . In Africa on the other hand, we have artificial nations; ethnic nationals that were forcefully jammed to a nation-states for administrative convenience and economic benefit of the European colonizers, a sort of forced marriage. Though almost all these created nations in Africa have gained political Independence decades now, however, these so created nations in Africa are faced with the daunting challenges of nation-building, state-making, national unity and integration to accommodate and coexist with one another. This account for the high incidence of political instability, legitimacy crises, ethnic chauvinism, political nepotism, religious bigotry, civil wars and ethnic cleansing in almost all the post colonial African states. Majority of the citizens of African countries do not even know and understand the root cause/s of their problem due to ignorance of their origin and past history as to understand how these problems could be approached to provide a lasting solution. This paper is of the opinion that the past of a people affect their present existence and determine their future, hence the paper advocates for the compulsory teaching of African and Nigerian history in the schools from the Primary to the tertiary levels to enable citizens understand themselves; who they were, why they are the way they are and agree on how to coexist while recognizing and respecting their ethnic differences through dialogue with mutual respect and sincerity of purpose. The best avenue to achieve this feat is education for national unity and integration. Education for national unity and integration will provide the antidote for ignorance that has blindfolded African nations from understanding their past as to understand how best to control and influence the present to coexist with one another in peace and achieve national development.

THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND EDUCATION

National integration as a concept has to do with the coming together of culturally different people to a single indivisible entity. It could be seen as the extent to which a people are able to create unity and solidarity amongst its members to bring about a sense of national identity over and above that created by the family, tribe, village, or region. Ogeh and Eyong (2020), maintain that national integration is the incorporation of two or more culturally different people or ethnic groups within a geographical area into a single system of sovereign authority which gradually consolidates into a state or nation-state with defined international boundaries. Ahluwalia and Bais (2010), furthers this discussion by saying that national integration is believed to be a psychological and educational process involving the development of a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people. National integration as a psychological process also involves a sense of common citizenship and a feeling of loyalty to the nation; and freedom from mutual suspicion, fear, hatred, and intolerance. It is the basic oneness of the country by which an individual realizes that he is basically a Nigerian with a corresponding change of attitudes. In this regard, national integration would mean that all people who are Nigerian citizens, regardless of their differences in respect of religion, language, culture, creed, race, values etc., have feeling of oneness and a common belongingness to Nigeria as a nation or country. Ahluwala and Bais (2014), further see national integration as a multi-dimensional concept having psychological, sociological, intellectual and economic dimensions to be tackled properly and profitably for national development In other words, national integration as involving freedom from mutual suspicion, fear, hatred and intolerance will make room for a peaceful coexistence and encourage national development. Education is the best vehicle through which this type of feeling can be achieved in Nigeria. This involves the teaching of History to the citizens; history about their origin, their past and the antecedents that brought everybody together as a nation. In understanding their past, the people should be able to understand why and how they exist as a nation-state. This is imperative because it will enable the citizens see every other ethnic group as unique and coequal member of the society, eliminate the feeling of superiority and wiliness to dominate weaker and minor ethnic groups by a stronger ethnic group thereby, causing rancor and crises. In the case of Nigeria the fear of domination of one ethnic group over the other, intolerance and hatred have generated crises and eventually snowballed to a civil war between 1967-1970.

After the war, the then Nigerian government decided to use education as a vehicle to encourage national integration. This accounted for the post civil war educational policies by Gen Yakubu Gowon. The National youth service corps scheme, the unity schools, common entrance examination, the quota system for admission among others are some of the post civil war education programmes and schemes initiated by Nigerian Federal government to encourage national integration in Nigeria.

EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL INTGRATION, PEACE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Education for national integration was initiated after the Nigerian civil war(1967-1970), by the then military government of General Yakubu Gowon. After the thirty months civil war, General Gowon announced that there was no victor no vanquished and “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done”, according to him . Given the fact that education was one of the remote cause of the Nigerian civil war, education was also seen as a factor through which peace, unity, progress and national development can be accomplish (Abernethy 1969). Given the fact that no progress or development can take place in an atmosphere of rancor and war as was manifest in the Nigerian civil war. To assuage the aggrieved and the devastated; especially in the South Eastern Nigeria which was the theatre of the civil war, with much casualties; General Gowon introduced the Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and the Reconstruction programme. The Quota system was also introduced to encourage equal chances representation in terms of admission and job placement in national agencies and institutions. The General studies was introduced in the university programmes to enable students learn and understand the poly-ethnic nature of the Nigerian socio-cultural formation, appreciate the rich cultural heritage of the divers ethnic groups and learn to accommodate one another, their varied values and belief system, their idiosyncrasies and cuisines. To further achieve the above ideals, other measures adopted by the Nigerian government was the establishment of two federal colleges and at least one university in each of the states of the federation. According to Udoh (2010), these schools are popularly known as “Unity schools”. Students were admitted into these schools on equal quota basis from all the states. It was hoped that if students from different parts of the country are allowed to learn together for five years; they should be able to develop friendship ties that may continue even after their school years thereby encouraging national integration. The National Youth Service Corps was another post- war effort in Nigeria, aimed at using education as an avenue for national unity and integration. All graduates of institution of higher learning spend a year serving the nation in rural communities and states other than those of their origin. The government also believes that if graduates from different parts of the country coexist for a year outside their states of origin, this could lead to inter-ethnic marriages, friendship and understanding of one another; thereby encouraging national unity, integration, peace, progress and development.

CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL INTEGATION IN NIGERIA.

National integration faces a lot of challenge/s in Nigeria, given the postcolonial nature of Nigeria and state formation which was a colonial creation. From the onset, after the amalgamation of 1914, there had not being any sign of unity or wiliness to stay together. Even the founding fathers so to say, never embraced the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Nigeria as one nation. This assertion is made manifest in the utterances of Nigerian leaders “Since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one only on the paper.

Nigerian unity “is only the British intention for the country” (Tafawa Balewa in Amadi 2014) . This view of Balewa was confirmed by Awolowo in Amadi (2014) when he posited that

Nigeria is not a nation, it is a mere geographical expression, *there is no one Nigeria... the word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.*

From the onset till date, National integration in Nigeria has suffered serious setbacks as it was an integration that never originated from the people rather, an imposition that never sought for the consent and the willingness of the people to be one. Up till now, the problem persists. There is no sincerity of purpose, no acceptance of one ethnic group by the other group, despite all the claim of unity in diversity. Political nepotism, ethnocentrism, religious intolerance and segregation persist even from the leadership rank. Corruption and discrimination persist in governance. Ethnic and religious rivalry multiplies every day. Where a condition of dog-eat-dog persist, where intolerance persists, where partiality to appointment to the federal institution persists, instead of appointment on merit and where government agents and representative connive with criminals and bandits to undo Nigerians from other ethnic groups, national integration in Nigeria remains elusive.

THE WAY FORWARD

Given the fact that the ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian state were never consulted as to seek for the opinion and willingness of the people to be together as one before they were forcefully jumbled into one nation. The starting point of unity in Nigeria is a national dialogue to give the ethnic nationals/ citizens the opportunity to bare their minds. This debate should be centered on the following: the willingness to be together as one nation, the nature of the togetherness, revisit the Nigerian constitution as to accommodate the nature and outcome of the national discuss, ethnic federalism should be encouraged and any ethnic group/s not willing to remain in the Nigerian union should be allowed to secede and remain independent and develop at their pace. Secularism should also be encouraged in the system, a situation where one religious group is subtly trying to dominate and control other ethnic groups through appointments to public offices will breed more hatred and disaffection from the neglected groups. If otherwise, Nigeria should replicate the formation of nation-states as in Europe in the early 18th century where the Dutch, the Germans, the Finnish, the Danes, the Scot, the Irish etc is allowed to exist on their own based on the language and cultural affinity. The Ibos should be allowed to stay as a nation, if they feel not accommodated in the one Nigeria, the Yoruba nation should be allowed to stay as a people if they do not trust the Hausa-Fulani, the Hausa-Fulanis should be allowed to stay as a group if they think “they are the only one fit and born to rule Nigeria” .How can a people who claim to be one work together and succeed if there is no mutual respect and trust and agreement. I think is better for the Nigeria artificial nation to memorize the Soviet Union as in the nineties, than to be continually engaged in a war of attrition where nobody is happy and comfortable.

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