

# THE INDISPENSABILITY OF HISTORY EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING NATIONAL UNITY: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*One of the protracted “epidemics” in Nigeria is the absence of National Unity. Nigeria has fought a thirty month war to keep all her parts together yet every year, the togetherness is still seen as fragile. Several armed groups; Odua People’s Congress (OPC), Niger-Delta militant groups and the current one is the Boko Haram terrorists in the North East of Nigeria have come up to disintegrate the country. Despite some laudable efforts made by successive governments of Nigeria and several recommendations made by scholars on the togetherness of Nigeria, Nigeria still experience disunity because Nigerians lacks historical consciousness. This research initially focuses on what history is then a concise reminder of the evolution of Nigeria before discussing the issues within the unbreakableness nature of Nigeria. The challenges of national unity in Nigeria and how Nigeria can use history education to galvanise national consciousness among Nigerians were properly elaborated. This study suggests that History education remains the most reliable vehicle (field of education) best equipped to stimulate imbue and institutionalise national unity in the minds and hearts of Nigerians.*

## KEYWORDS

*History Education, Indispensability, National Unity, Nigeria*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Not to know what took place before you were born is to remain forever a child” Cicero. History education is indispensable in achieving national unity because “a people with no knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without the guidepost of precedence to shape their course” Fafunwa (1990). Echoing this assertion was the great Prof. J.F.A. Ajayi of blessed memory in 1990. He said

*“History interacts with the nation. For the nation is a product of history in the sense of historical circumstances and events; and therefore, the nation cannot escape from its past. At the same time, the nation is shaped by the effort of historians, among others, who try to establish the history of the nation, influence its group memory and seek to define its nationality-that is, the essence of what binds its people together, what constitutes their identity, what makes them a people distinct from other peoples. Indeed, what historical understanding does essentially for any nation is to place its developmental predicament within rational time perspectives of human evolution. This is the*

*utility value of history. History also helps people not to undervalue what they are and overvalue what they are not. It in turn provides confidence building strategy to any prostrate nation that is striving to grapple with present problems”.*

These statements are reminders of the indispensability of history in fostering unity in a nation. Unfortunately, Nigeria has refused to utilize this value inherent in history. And that explains the reason why the country has remained a crawling giant bedevilled by deep-seated hatred, poverty, violence, ethnic and religious sentiments. The President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari in a national address on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 said “We have all the attributes of a great nation. We are not there yet because the one commodity we have been unable to exploit to the fullest is unity of purpose”. Over one hundred years after Nigeria’s “introduction” (amalgamation) and fifty-eight years after her “engagement” (independence) and fifty-five years after her “wedding” (becoming a republic), Nigeria remains a “co-habitation without marriage” (Adedeji, 1999).

It is considering these that a study of this nature becomes imperative as part of the continuous efforts toward the historical awakening of Nigerians and search for Nigeria’s unity. This essay continues with a discussion on the conceptual framework by introducing the meaning of History Education to us before briefly reminding us of the evolution of Nigeria and elucidating the concept of National Unity. It further discusses the challenges Nigerian national unity is facing and the enormous and invaluable influence that history has on national unity. And lastly, invaluable suggestions are made on how history education can be injected into the minds and hearts of Nigerians to stimulate that desired but elusive national unity.

## **2. HISTORY EDUCATION**

History as a field of study has been described and explained in diverse ways by different authorities. History being a fountain of enlightenment and development is a critical study of past events which has moulded the progress and destiny of mankind. This is because events in history are the result of human actions, reactions and interactions with his physical and social environment. Robert V. Daniels described history as the memory of human group experience. That is, without history, without the events that have happened in the past, there would be no countries, no nations, no religion, no classes and humanity would have no meaning.

E.R.Elton in his view sees history as the search for objective truth about the past. That is, the study of human sayings, thoughts, deeds and sufferings which occurred in the past and have left present deposit. Adeyinka, 1986 described history as the study of life in society in the past, in all its aspects, in relations to present developments and future hopes. It is a study of man in time, an inquiry into the past based on evidence, which is the raw material of history teaching and learning.

Furthermore, Oloruntimehin described history as a major instrument for organizing and interpreting societies’ collective and individual experiences, to provide understanding for the present and a guide for the future. This emphasizes the fact that the past co-exists with the present. In effect, there is no break between the past and the present because the evolution of man and his environment is a continuous process. This meaning of history was further buttressed by E.H. Carr who defined history as a continuous process of interaction between the present and the past and an unending dialogue between the historian and his facts. History, which is the study of society in time perspective is therefore an attempt to reconstruct the past by inquiring about what

actually happened, the factors that brought about the occurrence, when it happened and the process of the occurrence of the events.

### **3. INDISPENSABILITY**

Dictionary.com describes this as a fact or state of being absolutely necessary, extremely important, essential, or required. It means something or someone that is so good or important that you could not manage without it, him or her. It is something that is incapable of being disregarded or neglected. Indispensability is the quality possessed by something that you cannot possibly get along without. This essay is saying that history is the major field of education which Nigeria requires to achieve the much-desired national unity. Nigeria needs to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of her citizens.

Consequently, the description of history that best suits this study was given by Akinjoghin in 1977. He defined history as an organized critical study of the past activities of human beings as had produced significant effects on subsequent course of events or on other human beings in the course of events. He opined that the soul of the nation is its history, which is knowledge, and that it can grow, it can change, and it can die if not nurtured. That is to say that, there is a symbiotic relationship between history and nations. One exists to complement the other. In short, I dare to say: no nations no history, no history no nations.

### **4. NATIONAL UNITY**

National unity can be described as a political construct that reflects the collective spirit and will of a group of people who agree to be part of particular geographical area as a unit, for the purpose of governance and action on behalf of all. But that is not to say the governance will always reflect the spirit and will of the people. And that is why we have democracies and dictatorships, and in each, we have governance on behalf of the nation, acting with national unity insofar as other nations are concerned, but with little or no internal national unity (Caplan, 2014).

This is being witnessed in Nigeria presently, a nation that has an elected government that acts on behalf of the country, with what appears to be a substantial minority having no spirit or will to be part of the nation. Once internal national unity is lost, instability results, sometimes leading to civil wars and sometimes leading to complete gridlock, which to a large extent is being manifested in Nigeria.

### **5. EVOLUTION AND FEATURES OF NIGERIA**

The geographical location of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is on the Gulf of Guinea in Western Africa. It is between Benin in the West and Cameroon in the East. In the North are Chad (North East) and Niger (North West). And in the South, it is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. The making of Nigeria started with the British annexation of Lagos in 1861. The name "Nigeria" was coined by Flora Shaw, who later became the wife of Lord Lugard, the British colonial administrator, on 8 January 1897, which she used as the title of an article in *The Times* (Meek, 1960), to describe the vast land around the River Niger and its basin. It was then called Niger-area, but after a long usage it was shortened to Nigeria.

The peoples of Nigeria are diverse, and the cultures and traditions varied; Igbo, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Ijaw, Owe, Nupe, Igala, Ebira, Tiv, Ibibio etc. Though they were largely independent of

themselves, compelling evidence shows that they however interacted, traded together, fought one another and established links with one another for centuries before the British colonialists brought them together under one political culture and system. The Peoples of Nigeria were not isolated from one another. This is because there were constant interactions among the peoples, movement of material goods, ideas and values. These have led to the conclusion that Nigeria is not an arbitrary creation but “had existed as a nation and its formal establishment by the British was a recognition of the interaction and interrelationships in the vast geographical region served by the Niger Ricer, its tributaries, the mountains and hills” (Omolewa, 1986). The country has a population density of 145 inhabitants per km Nigeria officially has a population of about 140 million people; this made the country the most populous nation in Africa and the most populous Black nation in the world.

After the annexation of Lagos, the British went about capturing other parts of Nigeria from the South to the far North. By 1905, Britain had subdued the whole of what is now present Nigeria. The British rule Nigeria by dividing her into three administrative units; Northern Protectorate, Southern Protectorate and the Colony of Lagos. But in 1914, Lord Lugard, amalgamated the units to become Nigeria. The territory was later divided into three regions; Eastern, Northern and Western regions. After several constitutional developments, Nigeria gained her independence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. And Nigeria became a Republic on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1963.

Today, there are 36 states in the country of which seven states are located in the most populated North-West zone which has the population of 35, 786, 944. The South-West zone is the next most populated zone with six states having the population of 27, 266,257. The six states in the South-South zone have the population of 21,014,655. The seven states in the North-Central zone including the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (1,405,201) have the population of 20,266,257. The six states of North East zone have the population of 18,971,965. The five states in the South - East zone have the total population of 16,381,729 making a total population of 140,003,542. It is therefore the ninth most populated country in the world. This data can be found in Wikipedia.

## **6. THE UNBREAKABLENESS OF NIGERIA**

As we go into the nitty-gritty of this study, I want to confidently, emphatically and unequivocally state that Nigeria can never break-up! The breakups of countries usually happen in places where there are two or more major ethnic groups with distinct geographical features. E.g Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia etc. Nigeria has three major ethnic groups; Igbo, Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba. These groups will never sit together or fight against one another to separate into different countries. The political, economic and cultural importance of Nigeria to the world particularly to Africa will keep Nigeria together. The world will not even allow Nigeria to breakup. Economically, politically and socially, the world needs Nigeria to be stable and united. A breakup of Nigeria will be the beginning of the “West African Mfecane”. Unfortunately, this kind of “Mfecane” may never end because the World does not have the resources (personnel, funds, food, arms, relief materials etc) to absorb or tackle it.

This is what world leaders have to say about the significance of Nigeria to the world during an international conference organized to mark the centenary of the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria. Jose Barroso, European Union President, said the amalgamation had made Nigeria one of the most powerful and vibrant African nations in the world. The British Prime Minister, David Cameron while reiterating the need to keep Nigeria united said Nigeria is more or less a role model for many other African nations. Francois

Hollande, the French President, who delivered a keynote address, emphasized the need for a stable and secured Nigeria as it will enable her to optimize her potentials.

In a more explicit gesture, the Vice President of Kenya, William Ruto who represented the East African countries said “We the people of East Africa admire Nigeria and its typical vibrant resilient and innovative people. We the rest of Africa look up to you. What you have done, everything you have achieved only because of your union. A divided Nigeria would not be a continental leader. A squabbling Nigeria could not command respect in the comity of nations. Nigeria must remain together with bond of unity and fraternity. It is what we wish for when we think of Nigeria”. But the most unequivocal, thought-provoking and objective statement was made by Sierra Leone’s President, Ernest Koroma. He said “the strength of Nigeria is in its diversity and must use it to growth. When Nigeria sneezes, the whole of Africa catches cold” (Nigeria World News, 2015). This was later emphasized by the Chadian President, Idriss Derby while congratulating ex-President Goodluck Jonathan for accepting defeat in the presidential election. He said, “you all know that when Nigeria sneezes the neighbouring countries catch cold” (AbujaGist, 2015).

If Nigeria is to break-up, along which line will she go? Is it along religious domination? What happens in the South-West and Igalaland where Muslims and Christians are almost even? Or is it along ethnic inclinations? If so, then where will the Middle-Belters go? Will the Igalas go with the Hausa-Fulanis to be “servants”? Or will the Ebiras accept to be the unnoticed and neglected minority among the Yorubas? If the Igbos gets separated, how will they cope as a landlocked country? Landlocked countries are the poorest nations in the world. Will Ikwerre or Ijaw peoples happily co-habit with the Igbos? I do not see any of these scenarios playing out.

If Nigeria must disintegrate, it will tear into more than a hundred nations! And other African countries will want to devour every piece available. It will turn Africa into an inhabitable continent for more than a century. Nigerians who are generally egalitarian in nature believe they have the divine leadership right of Africa and will not humbly join any country. Yet other countries will see the disintegration as an opportunity to “make gains”. All these will lead to incessant, devastating and protracted wars which we all know the world does not have the resources to manage. As such, Nigeria has nothing to gain if it breaks up. But Nigerians have everything to lose if Nigeria dismembers. Moving forward, Nigeria must accept the eternal fact she will forever remain a nation. Nothing can ever make Nigeria disintegrate. Nigeria can never even witness another civil war not to talk of breaking up. Nigerians are destined to live together. Nigerians must accept their fate and compulsorily fall in love with their fellow peoples and their nation, Nigeria.

## **7. STATE OF NIGERIAN NATIONAL UNITY**

**Constitutional Crisis:** There are several unresolved issues in Nigeria’s constitution, which are not encouraging the unity of the country. Some of these contending issues include Resource Control, Federal Character, lopsided federalism and uneven distribution of powers (Otiwe 2018). The constitution stipulates that the federal government should control more than fifty per cent of resources of the country, which is anti-federalism. The sharing formula based on derivation, population, needs and so on meant that the states that produce more resources lose their resources to other states with higher population. This has continually created tension between the Niger-Delta areas that produces almost seventy per cent of the country’s revenue and the North which has very few resources. The Southerners feel like the goose which produce the golden eggs while

the gander (Northerners) eat majority of the eggs. Implementation of the federalism according to the constitution is very lopsided because the fiscal policy of the country is centralized with the federal government having excessive powers over the states and local governments. The federal character or quota system enshrined in the constitution negates meritocracy. The system sacrificed objectivity and merit in the distribution positions in the country. These problems have continually created and heightened mistrust and distrust among all the regions of Nigeria. The constitution has also not adequately addressed the issue of indigene and settler dichotomy that is causing inter and intra communal violence ravaging major parts of Nigeria particularly in the Middle-belt (North-Central) region.

**Poor leadership:** Another challenge to the national unity of Nigeria is poor leadership. This begins with the desperate and ugly competition for political office by Nigerians. The average Nigerian is not interested in the appropriate method of getting into power. Most politicians are ready to do anything regardless of its constitutionality in order to attain and retain power. This desperation leads them to trample on the rights and privileges of the masses. The politicians ignore the rules of democracy through election malpractices, intimidation of voters, killing of opponents and so on. The arms of government who are supposed to work harmoniously have become sworn enemies. Usually intimidating and floating the powers of one another. Most of the leaders get into power without clear-cut manifestoes. Most of them lack the skills and will to advance Nigeria. The leaders who are supposed to be exemplary usually place their interests above the constitution and laws of the country. The attitude and performance of the leaders do not encourage the citizens to be committed to the cause of the country. Nigeria is gradually becoming a "leadersvs masses" country on the time bomb of revolution waiting to explode in the fashion of the "Arab Spring".

**Imbalance in the devolution of political powers** is a challenge hindering the national unity of Nigeria. There has been increasing cry of marginalisation, monopoly of power, domination of the political and bureaucratic positions by a section of the country. The Geneva based United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) asserts that some sections of the country dominate the bureaucracy, while others dominate the cabinet. The South is at the receiving end of this lop-sidedness. Also, there is the uneven geographical distribution of the regions. For instance, the location called North is almost twice the size of the entire South. This has swung appointments and revenue allocation in favour of the North despite the fact that majority of the human resources and revenue of Nigeria come from the South. Nigeria is divided into six geographical regions namely South-South, South-West, South-East, North-East, North-West and North-Central, all having a total of thirty-six states. Four regions have six states each but the North-West has seven while the South-East has only five. The South-East where there is the resurgence of secession has clamour for the creation of a new state in the region, but the other regions have refused to grant the request. According to the constitution, states and local government creation can only be made by the approval of majority of the National Assembly and all the existing thirty-six States Houses of Assembly. Persistent calls are been made for the restructuring of the Nigerian federal system (Abdullahi and Maigari 2018). Virtually every group is demanding state or local government creation out of fear of domination and marginalisation. The unity of Nigeria is being threatened by these perceived and real imbalances.

**Corruption:** One of the most terrible challenges facing unity in Nigeria is corruption. Corruption is pervasive in all walks of life in the country. Nigeria is currently rated on the corruption index by Transparency International as one of the most corrupt nation in the world with just twenty-seven points. Between 1996 and 2017, Nigeria has persistently remained below twenty-eight

points with 1996 being its lowest (six points). Bribery and corruption has become a culture in Nigeria. Resources meant for infrastructural development are being siphoned into private purse. The country is blessed with abundant resources yet because of corruption majority live in abject poverty. The government of Goodluck Jonathan has been indicted for embezzling over ten billion dollars and the current government of MuhammaduBuhari has not fared better as a number of its officials have been accused of corrupt practices yet the government has taken little or no action against the officials. Recent revelation claims that Nigerian politicians are the most highly paid in the world, yet the citizens don't get paid their salaries for several months. This creates resentment in the minds of Nigerians generally feeling betrayed by these officials and in effect, they care less about the unity of the country because the government has refused to fulfil its social contract with the citizens by not enhancing security of lives and properties and by not performing its welfarist functions. Nigerians now gravitate towards segregation rather than a united Nigeria.

**Socio-economic inequality:** Inequalities are a threat to a common citizenship. Socio-economic across the country fuels fear and suspicion which keeps our people divided. Recent statistics shows that Socio-economic growth and development across the Nigeria are grossly lopsided. For instance, immunization of children against dangerous childhood diseases, it is observed that South-East has 44.6% immunization coverage; the North-West has 3.7% and North-East 3.6%. While education of the girl-child as indicator, there is similar pattern of inequality with the South-East having an enrolment rate of 85%, South-West 89%, South-South 75%, North-East 20%, and North-West 25%. Only 25% of pregnant women in the North-West use maternity clinics, while 85% of the women in the South-East do. It is not surprising that 939% more women die in child-birth in the North-East, compared to the South-West. Education and poverty levels are also important dimensions of inequalities across Nigeria. If we take admissions into Nigerian universities in the academic year 2000/1, we see that the North-West had only 5% of the admissions, while the South-East had 39%. As for poverty, the Central Bank of Nigeria recently pointed out that while 95% of the population of Jigawa State is classified as poor, only 20% of Bayelsa State is so classified. While 85% of Kwara State is classified as poor, only 32% of Osun is in the same boat. (Gambari 2008)

Poverty and national unity can never cohabit. A deprived citizenry will not be able to perform its duties optimally. Therefore, for Nigeria to demand loyalty and maximum patriotism from the people, the government must provide the citizens with basic education, housing, health and electricity. Without these, unity will continue to elude Nigeria.

**Militancy:** Violence has become pervasive all over Nigeria; from advancement of insurgency in the Far North by the Boko Haram terrorists to the rejuvenation of secession in the South East by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and MASSOB. There is also the incessant attack by the Fulani 'herdsmen' which has led to loss of several lives. Some Igbo people in the South East are demanding for secession of the region to be independent. This is a resuscitation of the demands that led to the Nigerian civil war (1967 - 1970). The Boko Haram group in the Far North wants to break out the Northern region from Nigeria and adopt sharia law. The herdsmen from the North are ravaging all parts of the country especially in North Central killing people because they don't want to tame their cattle in ranches as they prefer open grazing on the lands of North Central and Southern peoples. Yet the government has not been able to bring them under control. This violence with unconvincing efforts from the government makes the indigenes of North-Central and South suspicious of government complicity in the crisis. These crises do not encourage national unity.

**Sentimentalism:** Nigeria is a country that is evenly divided in terms of religion. There are almost equal population of Christians and Muslims with a very minor population in other religion. But this division is aggravated by its geographical distribution. The North is dominated by Islam while Christianity dominates the South. Most national issues are tainted with religious colouration. Also, Nigeria being a multi-ethnic country with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups usually act and talk along ethnic divide on national issues. The leaders emphasize the difference because of their selfish interests. Nigerians are easily swayed along their religious and ethnic inclinations in order to undermine the basic problems of inadequate basic amenities created by the politicians. Religious bigotry, favouritism and appointments along religious and ethnic inclinations are visible in Nigeria. This is creating and fanning the flames of disunity in the country.

**Indigene - settler conflict:** In most countries, indigeneship is by birth but it is not so in Nigeria. The constitution of Nigeria clearly states who an Indigene of any place is. And that is why it gives the Local Governments powers to issue certificates of origin to citizens. Only someone whose origin can be traced through his/her paternal lineage by the community leaders can be regarded as an Indigene of that community. Therefore, a child born in a different community from that of the father must go to the community of the father to obtain certificate of origin. In Nigeria, one may not be an Indigene of the land of his/her birth even though he/she has lived there all his /her life. This confusion and discrimination have led to contestations, community crisis and resentment, which has adverse effects on the unity of Nigeria.

There is persistent beating of the drums of disunity with agitation for more state and local government creation, open disregard for people's culture, tribalism, corruption, subjugation of the minorities, and religious fanaticism particularly during electioneering in Nigeria as against stronger and united values in the country. Values such as hardwork, honesty, justice, transparency, discipline and so on are callously, openly and shamelessly being slaughtered in the senseless abattoir of greed, egoism and trivialities. This is because Nigerians lack historical consciousness.

## **8. HISTORY AND NATIONAL UNITY**

As it has been established earlier, all nations are products of their past and there is no way they can move forward without taking into consideration their history and their peculiar circumstances. This is the debt all nations that seek unity, peace, stability, and development owe to the past. This is because history provides the foundation on which the unity and development of each nation is built. This explains why most developed countries in the world ensure that the discipline of history does not suffer decline and continues to retain its pride of place in their universities. More importantly, history has always been used to provide political education for leadership elites in such societies. Each nation then develops its own historiography, which is essentially nationalistic. Western societies have placed great emphasis on teaching their national history with the aim of consolidating the bond between the individual citizen and the homeland (Podeh 2000). That is why no American child goes through school without learning American history. Similarly, in Great Britain, it is official policy that everyone up to the age of eighteen years must be taught not only British history, but also that of British relations with Europe and the larger world.

History education helps in nation-building, promotes national consciousness, flowering of moral leadership and ensures overall national development of a country. Due to Nigeria's neglect of

history education, Omolewa, 1986 predicted the advent of Boko haram and Niger-Delta militants when he said “if you train a person science without training his mind and faculty to be humane and rationale, you would probably end up having nuclear bomb and in throwing that bomb arbitrarily without thinking of humanity. Meanwhile, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) justified its inclusion of history in its 2014 syllabus thus:

- Acquisition of knowledge of their National History from the earliest times to 1985 with emphasis on the relationship between the peoples and states
- Acquisition of intellectual capacity and skills of historical interpretation and analysis.
- Ability to use acquired skills in relating the past to the present.
- Ability to appreciation of factors that make for NATIONAL UNITY and global understanding.
- Ability to exposure and appreciation of the similarities and differences in the National, social, economic and political institutions.
- Acquisition of knowledge of the main historical developments in Africa since 1800.
- Ability to relate events in their country and Africa to those of the outside world.
- Ability to present clear, relevant and logical arguments
- Having the ability to ‘cook’ the children and youths of Nigeria with the above aims, neglecting history education will further perpetuate disunity in Nigeria.

An objective construction of a country’s collective memory (history) is an integral part of national integration. This is because collective memory of the past binds a group of people together. According to Eller (1999),” the prime raw material for constructing ethnicity is usually the past (history)”. Scholars have discussed how states and elites have used history as a reliable resource and instrument to defend national unity and internal coherence. History can be used to promote nationalism, national integration and national consciousness. According to Smith, 1999, “what gives nationalism its power are myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage and the way in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias (Wang 2008). History can create and maintain a distinctive identity. This made Smith, 1996 say “no memory, no identity, no identity, no nation”. Zerubavel 1995 observed that nationalist movements, in an attempt to legitimize their struggle, create a master commemorative narrative that legitimizes their aspirations for shared destiny by emphasizing a common past for its members.

Generally speaking, education helps articulate relations between state and society and sets the boundaries and terms of citizenship. And in particular, most states use history and civics textbooks to present an “official” story highlighting narratives that shape contemporary patriotism. It promotes respect for the institutions and practices of societies. Through history, a nation is able to explain how it conceives of the world in which the nation is an integral part. Through its history, a country is able to give explanations on the origin of land, sea, man and other nations. History helps a nation explain the basis of the different laws and customs that it has and how or why they differ from other nations in terms of customs, traditions, religion and political system. For instance, the knowledge of causes and effects of military rule which are taught in history can help deepen democracy. Democracy enables stability and unity in a society. History education enhances critical thinking and empathy skills, the willingness to question

simplistic models and the ability to disagree about interpretations of the past, and their implications for present social issues without resorting to violence.

History helps to promote social reconstruction in post-conflicts societies. With the empathetic skills, critical thinking and patriotic values it teaches, people will be able to ask themselves why they should attack others based on religion, ethnicity or colour. History helps to disabuse the mind of negative sentiments. It boosts moral development of man. It is the best medium for transmission of culture including the cosmology of the peoples. In fact, society is history. It is constantly engaged in an historical movement, in a transformation of itself, its members, of its environment as of other societies with which it maintains relations. These changes are more or less in harmony with the past of the society and follow a more or less explicit pattern (Guy Rocher quoted in Fadeiye, 2010). These underscore the symbiotic or complementary relationship and synergy between history education and the formation of national identity or unity.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

More accessible funding should be made available to historians to carry out impactful studies on historical issues. Government has ostracised historians from having equal opportunity to access funds in favour of the sciences. But in an attempt to galvanise national unity among Nigerians, there is the need to know where the country is and how the country has arrived at this stage. To unravel this, historical studies must be adequately funded to enable the historians provide the country with the appropriate information needed to build her national unity. In doing this, the historian must be more objective in their researches to enable the country benefit more from every research.

Adequate funding should be made available for the National Museums, Archives, libraries and historical sites by the government and private entities. Adequate publicity should be enhanced for Benin national museum, Esie, Kaduna, Owo, kanta, Jos, the Nigerian National museum, Umuahia war museums and so on in order to attract visitors. Citizens should be encouraged to regularly visit these museums, the National archives in Abuja, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna, and other historical sites such as NOK culture, Ugbo-Ukwu, Daima, Jabba, and the grave sites of the heroes of our democracy like that of MoshoodAbiola, Ken SaroWiwa and so on. These visitations should be included in the core curriculum of both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. This is because these regular visitations will contribute to imbuing patriotism in the citizens thereby forging national unity in the country.

Based on the values inherent in history education, just as it is done in advanced countries like USA, Britain, China, Ukraine and so on, Nigeria should make history part of a core curriculum in her educational system; from primary schools to tertiary institutions, Nigerian history should be a compulsory course of study for all students whether in humanities, commercial, social sciences or pure sciences.

Nigeria needs to deemphasise the desperate politicians' exploitation of our differences (religious, ethnic, culture etc) and accentuate the paramount similarities among the component ethnic groups which is one Nigeria. The various peoples of Nigeria from the far South to the far North had similar experiences under the British rule. Every community experienced harsh taxation, indirect rule, discrimination and so on. All these sentiments have been exploited wrongly by our visionless leaders to develop a victimisation narrative which perpetually blames the West particularly Britain for our disunity and slow development. But moving forward, Nigeria needs to replace this victimisation history with a patriotic history which should arouse our national unity.

In developing a new narrative for the unity of Nigeria, the Nigerian Civil War generally known as the Biafran War should now be known as "The Unity War" or "The War of Reintegration". This is because it was after the war that Nigeria began to make concerted effort to reintegrate the Igbos into the national polity. And Nigerians began to give more regards to the culture and aspirations of their fellow Nigerians. The war gave birth to the quota system where Nigerians began to feel part of the federal character of Nigeria. The war should be seen as a war against foreign aggressors (countries that supported the breakup of Nigeria). It was a war which challenged the resolve of Nigeria to protect and keep her territory and citizens, which Nigeria surmounted. Nigeria came out the war stronger and passed a diplomatic message to the world of her determination and ability to protect and hold on to her territory and people. In addition, the leader of the Biafra group, Col. OdumegwuOjukwu should no more be seen as a rebel but he should be regarded as a national hero because it was based on his effort that Nigeria realised the need to cater and fight for every part of her territory and peoples. Moreover, he should be commended for rejecting the overtures of the USSR then. If he had accepted the offer from USSR, a world super military power, the war will definitely not have ended when and the way it ended.

To foster unity in Nigeria, indigeneship of any community should be by birth and parental (paternal and maternal) origin. Every citizen should have equal rights and privileges and access to national resources irrespective of origin, ethnicity, sex or religion. Nigerian youths should be given access to political leadership. The current age discrimination against the youths should be corrected to reflect the global trend of 'not too young to rule'. Youths need leadership experience to build a viable and united Nigeria. This in turn will lead to good and responsive leadership which Nigeria currently lacks.

National unity should also include the wellbeing of the citizens. A citizenry that is depraved, hungry, unhealthy and uneducated can never cultivate national unity. Therefore, the government must make provision for basic amenities such as availability and easy access to education and health facilities, good and safe roads, safe water, internet and electricity. The provision of these infrastructures will engage the youths, make democracy attractive to the citizens, and reduce emphasis on sentiments in the national polity of Nigeria.

Also, Nigeria should be promoted as a project that must survive and become the giant that is expected of it and as the Black man's pride. It should be built as a country for every black person world over. Negroes world over should be encouraged to come to settle in Nigeria and become permanent citizens to develop Nigeria.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

There is no denying the fact that it is difficult to quantify the effects of historical knowledge on individuals and societies, yet Nigeria needs to have historical awakening because an objective analysis will show that there is a positive correlation between history education and a country's unity, integration and development. Haven observed that the country is faced with a crisis of national disunity, and history haven been proven to be a reliable vehicle of national unity, Nigeria needs to urgently take the advantages of history education in all facets of her society. Therefore, in order to face the future confidently and enhance national unity, Nigeria must be able to embrace her past truthfully through History education.

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