

**SOCIAL STUDIES AND HERITAGE RESOURCE
PROMOTION AS EMERGENT CULTURAL STUDIES
AND NATIONAL UNITY**

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Abstract

Nigeria as a plural society is constantly bedeviled by disintegrative tendencies which might not be unconnected with its shaky foundation of the amalgamation period. There is therefore the need for continuous revisiting and repositioning the nation's unity. To do this effectively, both natural and man-made resources must be garnered for the task, since the life of the society and human beings is consist in the said phenomenon, the place of heritage resources and its variant, cultural heritage in fostering national unity cannot be over-emphasized. One of the ways by which heritage resources are being promoted for national unity is through field trip in social studies. This study therefore examined the place of field trip in social studies in the promotion of heritage resources for national unity in Nigeria. It was recommended among others that more attention be given to the method while heritage resource sites should be made more accessible for educative purpose.

Keywords: Social Studies, Heritage Resources and National Unity

Introduction

The place of unity in the affairs of men can never be over-emphasized. It therefore follows that unity is the bedrock of national growth and development. Consequently, no effort could be too much or too little when it comes to the issue of unity. This perhaps, forms the basis of the continuous emphasis on the issue of unity, the world over. Social studies and Social Studies Educators as a unique discipline and indispensable association cannot but be a rallying point for the unity of Nigeria entity. The choice of this year's conference theme: Cultural Studies and National Unity: Emerging Trends may not be unconnected with the search for the seemingly elusive nature of unity in the land. It therefore follows that a re-examination and redefinition of national unity in Nigeria is imperative. This cannot be done in vacuum of culture and the attendant cultural studies since human beings constitute the central focus of Social Studies. Culture which is an epitome of human beings total way of life is of preeminence to Social Studies educators. Hence, fostering unity among the said beings is achievable through in-depth knowledge of their culture. As such, if there is any better time to go back to the drawing board on the issue of unity in Nigeria, it is now, hence, this 'olive branch' being waived by the Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) through this conference.

To say that Nigeria unity is constantly under threat is to repeat the obvious. The nation, arising from its multi-ethnic and pluralistic nature has been constantly battling with bringing the diverse entity together for national unity. As such, right from the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914 by Lord Lugard, the nation has been struggling to maintain the 'marriage of inconvenience' bequeathed on her by the erstwhile colonial masters. Berating the aftermath of the 1914 amalgamation on the Nigeria entity, Olukoju (2014) write that Lugard created a country with two unequal parts, a legacy that was sustained in a lopsided federation to the perpetual discomfiture of Nigeria with no attempt to unify the two units, leading to amalgamation without unification, a reality that continue to haunt the country (p.4). The foregoing is but the genesis of what the nation is experiencing till the present time. It thus seems like the biblical allusion that "since the time of John the Baptist, the kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent taketh it by force" the case of Nigeria has therefore, among the various ethnic groupings become

the survival of the fittest. This continued to fuel the seed of discord among the citizens.

Contributing to the spate of disunity characterizing the nation is the ineptitudeness of even Nigerians themselves apart from the colonial legacies. For instance, in a description of the attitudes of some Africans with regard to the oneness of their nations, Abdullahi (2006) indicated that some learned Africans that wrote history books favoured one ethnic group and suppressed the other. Survival of the fittest that characterized the pre-colonial era came into play during the colonial period and is still manifesting in various shades and colours in form of tribalism marginalization, deprivation of individuals rights and privileges because of ethnic, religious or regional affiliation (p. viii). Thus, from time immemorial, the issue of parochial loyalty tends to preclude the national loyalty. This, to a large extent keeps on threatening the unity of the nation generally.

The resultant effects of the foregoing situation therefore are the state of the nation presently. The same has equally resulted in institutional breakdown in the entire nation with continuous existence at the pedestal of comatose. Capturing the scenario of Nigeria unity vividly, Olukoju (2014) averred that 'impunity, lack of accountability and massive corruption complete the picture of a systematic destruction of institutions and the structure of checks and balances. The legislature and judiciary have become accomplices in executive lawlessness at state and federal levels. But nothing has damaged Nigeria more than the concentration of power, resources and impunity...' (p.8). It is the product of the aforementioned issues that serves as the soil in which seeds of discords are germinating in Nigeria. The continuous struggle for power, armed-conflict, ethnic crises, religious impasse, suspicious and other national questions continue to fan the ember of disunity in Nigeria.

It is instructive to state at this juncture that the failure of efforts at curtailing the disintegrative tendencies characterizing Nigeria is imbued in the foundations laid for the country. Succinctly, the country's canoe of unity has been paddled by its faulty foundations. Confirming this stance, Mangut (2012) attributed lack of national identity and integration to ethnic and cultural differences. The two during the indigenous state formation periods thus dictated areas to

be raided for slaves, areas to be traded with, evangelized, attacked and occupied (p.55). This is the more reason why Yadaki (2012) arrogated the foundation to force, violence or threat of the use of force for the purpose of appropriating the land and its produce. The best that was done therefore was the acculturation of the people's culture, values and world outlook (p. 56).

The disintegrative tendency of the nation is vividly portrayed in the submission of Akwara, Udaw and Ominawo (2013) when they observed that the call for resource control, fiscal federalism, a discussion of the national question, formation of ethnic militias by ethnic nationalities; introduction of sharia law in the northern states of the country signify absence of national integration in Nigeria. The Niger-Delta crises that pitched the ethnic militias in the Niger-Delta against the national government and the current Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria... (p.51).The foregoing depicts the state of the nation presently which calls for concerted efforts to remedy the situation.

Since culture plays vital roles in the existence of human race, it is imperative to tow along the line of culture and its ideals in assuaging the disintegrative tendencies staring the nation's face. Expatriating the cultural and national unity affinity, it has been argued that the indigenous state formation ignited the integration of the ethnic nationalities in the new states through inter-ethnic marriages, unifying religious and cultural practices as well as the co-option into the leadership, the natural leaders in the area (Abubakar, 2007). Thus, cultural practices and its attendant effects cannot be over-emphasized in the affairs of attaining sustainable unity and integration.

As a subject with focus on human beings and rich in cultural studies, Social Studies cannot but dwell extensively on the possibilities of culture in the quest for national unity. Attesting to this, Akwara, Udano and Omimawo (2013) posited that ethnic and cultural differences provide the basis for group identity, solidarity and interaction within and among the group (p.50). One of the ways by which Social Studies in line with the best practices in education presently assist in promoting cultural studies and unity is the exposure of learners to community resources. This entails the adoption of inquiry method and its variant, field trip to avail learners a knap into the rich

heritage resources of the nation.

Since unity is the sine qua non of peace, progress, growth and development, continuous search for sustainable unity in Nigeria is imperative. This paper therefore sought for the relevance of cultural studies in the promotion of national unity in Nigeria. Thus, the paper examines the place of heritage resource promotion through Social Studies on national unity in Nigeria. Attempt is therefore made to conceptualize heritage resources in terms of its concepts, typologies and import, Social Studies, heritage resources and national unity nexus.

Understanding Heritage Resources

To say that Nigeria is a country richly endowed with resources is but like begging the issue. The nation is blessed with demographic dividends, flora and fauna, relief, water resources as well as other bio-diversity. Little wonder the assertion of Oladiti (2011) that Nigeria as a nation is endowed in both human and material resources spanning 74million hectares of arable land, 2.5million hectares of irrigable land, teeming population coupled with comparative advantage of climatic condition. Prominent in the list of the said avalanche of nature's gift in Nigeria is her rich heritage resources.

In a way, heritage resources constitute both natural and cultural phenomenon prevalent in different parts of the country, hence, tagged Nigeria's heritage resources. These resources according to the International Cultural Tourism Charter, Managing Tourism at place of Heritage significance, ICOMOS (1999), entails landscapes, historic places, sites and built environment, bio-diversity collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. Such resources therefore encompass both the natural phenomenon as well as human effects manifesting in material and non-material aspects of culture generally.

Furthermore, heritage resources have been described as the diverse resources found in virtually every locality in Nigeria which constitute tourism and recreational resources. Such heritage resources are said to come in form of protected eco system, landscapes, unused lands (designated Nature Reserves), cultural sites and resources (Ekechukwu, 1990, Aliyu, 2013) Presenting a

comprehensive description of heritage resources, Ekechukwu (2005) that heritage resources range from historic places, landscapes, sites and built environment, biodiversity collections through past and present traditions, cultural practices, indigenous technology to the contemporary life of the host communities as well as the indigenous custodians or owners themselves in whose landscapes and cultures in which heritage resources are located (p. 2)

The foregoing description is an indication that heritage resources generally are all encompassing. This perhaps underpin Modus (2015) description of the concept when he wrote that heritage is comprehensive that can consist of many diverse values like cultural, natural, historical, architectural, archeological and geological values. Hence, heritage is seen as a mirror of different way of lives and habits, that is, different cultural era's of mankind and the society they live in. This assertion may not be unconnected with the views of Ekechukwu (2005) that heritage resources include cultural heterogeneity.

Thus, an important aspect of heritage generally is the cultural aspect which describes the human effects in the environment. Alluding to the general description of culture as way of life, Modus (2015) described cultural heritage as a collective endowment of human existence or unique activities over a span of time and within a cultural area which bear exceptional testimony to the cultures, tradition, religions and belief of the people. Such properties form the basis of peoples living and existence which are transfer directly from generation to generation.

From all indications, heritage resources as diverse as they are, come in different forms which may go beyond the scope of this work. However, attempt here is made to have a glance at typologies of heritage resources prevalent in Nigeria as contained in the different descriptions given to the concept. Prominent here are the protected ecosystems that entails nature reserves in terms of forest reserves also known as government reserves as well as game reserves. Examples here include the Yankari Game Resources and Borgu Game Reserves among others.

Again, heritage resources include a number of protected landscape and unused lands across the nation. The protected

landscapes are characteristic or exceptional scenic beauty and areas of scientific importance which are usually protected for recreational purposes such as rugged landscape, waterfalls, and landfalls (Ekechukwa, 2005). Here, mention can be made of Wikki Warm spring in Bauchi, Ikogosi Warm Spring in Ondo, Oluminu Waterfall in Osun Manbila Plateau in Taraba, Jos Plateau, to mention few. Coastlines and associated Beach resorts in different parts of the country constitute some of the unused lands as part of heritage resources.

Other heritage resources are the rich cultural sites and resources as well as traditional arts and crafts. These entails archaeological sites and discoveries, historical towns and sites, cultural festivals, museum and monument, sacred shrines and grooves, abound in the country such as the Esie Museum, Ife, Benin, Owo Museum, Tafa Balewa monument, Osun Osogbo shrine to mention but few. Some of these heritage resources are currently listed among the World heritage sites. For instance, Aliyu (2013) identified Sukur cultural landscape in Mandara Mountains, Adamawa and Osun Osogbo sacred groove in Osogbo, Osun State as two world heritage sites in Nigeria.

It will amount to disservice to Nigeria's heritage resources if mention is not made of the import of the resources generally and its cultural affinity. More so, the place of culture and cultural heritage in fostering peace and unity has been canvassed. For instance, Lawal (2012) affirmed that the peace that has eluded Nigeria is because of disunity, to ensure peaceful co-existence among Nigerian's therefore is by understanding their different cultures. Similarly, Aregbesola (2012) has berated lack of a national cultural identity among Nigerians as one of the major challenges working against the nation's unity. By implication, the place of heritage and cultural issues cannot be over-emphasized.

Confirming the foregoing, it was the contention of Modus (2015) that heritage which could be cultural and natural are priceless, irreplaceable possession of mankind which is an expression of the past manifested in the present closely related to difference in cultural and national diversity. Thus, a well preserved heritage is said to enable communities to learn about their cultural history truly and chronologically. Quoting Banjo, Modus further indicated that peoples cultural heritage is their way of life and their traditional behavior

which include the ideas, acts and artifact that are passed on from one generation to another.

Advancing the course of promoting cultural heritage, Azebry in Okeke (2014) narrated that 'most of our cultural heritage is lost and people don't want to go back to it again, instead, they are copying foreign cultures and is slowing down our own culture...' (p. 3). The views relayed here is a clarion call for a re-visit of the nation's cultural heritage. Reiterating this fact, Okeke (2014) asserted that the need for Nigerians to protect and preserve their heritage resources is pertinent since culture plays prominent in the development of any nation. The realization of this idea might not be unconnected with the establishment of world convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and national heritage adopted by UNESCO in November 1972 which enables signatory nations of the world to recognize the unique and irreplaceable nature of the said resources. The foregoing imports of heritage resource no doubt, are a useful instrument of promoting oneness and sense of belonging imbued in cultural and national identity.

Social Studies, Heritage Resources and National Unity Nexus

Having gone thus far on heritage resources and its cultural relativism vis-à-vis national unity, it is imperative to present how Social Studies promote heritage resources and its implications for unity in Nigeria. To start with, Social Studies as a subject have been variously described by authors and educators in the field. The central issues around which such definitions tend to revolve are human beings, environment and interaction. Hence, the tripod of human – environment – interaction with human being as the central focus. Since the subject is out to equip learners with what it takes to interact within the environment near and far and enables them to cope with fluids of realities emanating from such interaction, its place in facilitating effective understanding and usage of natural and cultural aspects of heritage resources for national unity cannot be over-emphasized. This, the subject is able to do owing to a number of its peculiarities such as nature, objectives, cultural, methodology, among others.

Reiterating the foregoing, Akinyemi, Ngwako and Nleya (2005) affirmed that no other subject in the school curriculum lends itself to

resource for creativity and ingenuity in the art of teaching than Social Studies. This is partly attributable to its multifaceted characteristics as well as its environmental and cultural relevance (p. 121). This is the more reason why Ajiboye (2009) asserted that Social Studies stands as one of the school subjects that could help human beings to achieve the nation's educational aspirations.

Summarizing the hallmark of Social Studies from various conceptions of the subject, Ogundare (2010) concluded that the subject in Nigeria has assumed the dimension of teaching learners especially, the young ones social responsibilities and problems through the utilization of facts and figures obtained from behavioural sciences. Social Studies in the words of Akinola (2014) describes the process by which an individual acquire values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that helps such individual to be useful to him or herself and the society in the process of interacting with others in the society. Further description of the subject that point out its problem-solving tendency has been canvassed. For instance, Ajiboye (2009) viewed Social Studies as a school subjects that is out to direct and gives learners a free-hand and opportunity to make enquires, investigates, discover, discuss, experiment and requires experiences for the purpose of making informed decisions on social issues and problems and find solutions to them.

Attaining the present status of a core subject in the current Universal Basic Education in Nigeria by Social Studies does not come spontaneously. The feat among others is closely tied to its peculiarities as earlier indicated. Prominent in such peculiarities is the issue of its methodological approach. Confirming this stance, Ogundare (2010) adduced that what will make for learners effectiveness is a product of a teacher's skillfulness and resourcefulness in the identification and practice that identified new approaches of individualized instruction, problem-solving, learning by doing, inquiry teaching and discovery learning. The inquiry method is the focus of this work with emphasis on field study or field trip. As a variant of inquiry method, field trip entail inquiring activities that prepare student for more complicated forms of inquiry method in the future which lay necessary foundations for understand scientific approach to information (Ogundare, 2010).

Field trip entails a means by which true-to-life activities are

engaged by learners under the auspices of the teachers. Such activities by its nature are conducted outside the four walls of the classroom. It involves such activities that explore the environment in driving home the theoretical aspects of teaching learning process through practical exposure. Attesting to this, Akinlaye, Mansary and Ajiboye (1996) described field trip as that activity that takes learners away from the classroom for them to see things with their own eyes. To them, there is no substitute for direct experience to learning Social Studies. Quoting Okorie, the trio indicated that there is no better way in a real life situation than to actually be there on the scene (p. 106).

Buttressing the foregoing, Osokoya (1996) described field trip as any learning activity carried out by students in group outside the classroom under the guidance of the teacher for the purpose of seeing things with their own eyes. To this effect, three categories of community-based resources especially for the teaching of Social Studies have been identified. These according to Akinyemi, Nleya and Ngwako (2005) are human resource, material resources and places, events, festivals and visits or field trips. Fieldtrip as part of community-based resources therefore entails visit to places of historic significance through which learners can see, feel and ask questions. It constitutes organized visits to place, of educative interest generally which may be undertaken in a day or more depending on the scope of such visit.

Reiterating environment and heritage resources as bedrock of practical learning in Social Studies, Ogundare (2010) asserted that almost any area of school, town, village, city or countryside has something to tell if it is insightfully observed. This further confirms the notion of superiority of Social Studies over other school subject's interms of environmental and cultural relevance (Akinyemi, Ngwako and Nleya, 2005). Reasons for this might not be unconnected with the fact that human being coninstitutes central figure in Social Studies and the cultural environment as context of concern. In like manner, social problems and issues are made concrete when investigated in the communities. Hence, the community is said to be the source of information on traditional, cultural and national phenomenon. Akinyemi (2014) buttressed this by stating that resource places are places of visit with educational interest at heart to which field trip could be organized for such. Places of significance especially to Social

Studies include mining sites, markets, police station, communication network, shrine, museum, beach resort, water falls to mention few.

From all indications, a number of benefits are inherent in field trip for learners. Such benefits range from provision of first-hand information, making learning more practical, encouraged social interaction, reduction of monotony, development of inquiry technique in learners to appreciation of diverse heritage resources generally. Exploration of the environment and its resources no doubt, is capable of widening the learner's horizon.

Implicit in such study trips especially to the heritage resources are a number of ideals that can promote cultural and national identity among learners which can be garner for national unity. Prominent here is the interdependent notion of human society since no man is an island. Through field trip, learners would be able to appreciate cultural, social, economic as well as commercial interdependence and the need to promote unity of purpose.

With such trips, the integrative prowess of heritage resource avails learners to see congruence of cultural affinity such as inter-ethnic marriages, unifying religious and cultural practices, socio-cultural activities as well as economic activities in areas visited. Understanding of different cultures through such organized trips no doubt, go a long way in promoting peaceful co-existence and national unity altogether. More so, study trips to heritage resources will also provide basis for cultural identity among the diverse ethnic groups in the country.

Fostering of social interaction among the learners and the host communities is made possible through field trip. With this, rather than underline capitalizing on factors of disunity in the country, such interaction tend to remove ambiguities surrounding different ethnic groups in different locations. The trip as well promotes social skills in learners. Such skills are that of public relations, cooperation and respect for authority and others opinion. These are necessary ingredients of understanding one another, an essential aspect of national unity.

Concluding

As rightly observed by Oladiti and Wahab (2013), as long as Nigeria remains plural society, the issues of its existence cannot but keep on generating rancor. This thus calls for renew efforts at salvaging the

situation through continuous search in their culture and adopting benefits inherent in cultural aspect of the nation's heritage resources becomes pertinent. To do justice to this, Social Studies, through its methodological prowess bring to limelight ideals of cultural heritage as integral part of heritage resources. This is being done through field trip as an appendage of inquiry method. It is therefore imperative that more attention be paid to this method by the parties concern. This is necessary to make such trip an educative and rewarding one rather than an exploratory one. In like manner, such heritage resource places need be made accessible especially for educative interest.

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