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**THE PLACE OF HISTORY IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT: THE KENYAN PERSPECTIVE.**

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**THE PLACE OF HISTORY IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:  
THE KENYAN PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract**

History as both a discipline and a concept is intertwined with the direction that any society takes. There is a positive link between progress of a society and its integration. These are best achieved through the inculcation of historical values and heritage; indeed, the best way of moving forward is by looking back at history. Therefore, this paper examines the place of history in national integration and development specifically with regards to Kenya. It posits that history, as one of the subjects taught in Kenya’s education system, is critical in promoting political, social and economic development. This is because it provides an in depth understanding and appreciation in individuals about where the society has come from, the challenges it has faced and out of that, the best way of solving those challenges. All these values form a momentum which is capable of promoting progress. The study used desk review by collecting, organizing and synthesizing available information which included journal articles, reports and newspaper focusing on the subject of history. For a better understanding of the nature of forces and processes of national development, there is need to appreciate the diversity that makes up Kenya. Thus, through the teaching and study of history, individuals can inculcate national consciousness, patriotism and sense of social responsibility in their lives. Certain historical values that the discipline transmits like cohesion, inter-ethnic relations and cultural diffusion should form the basis of national orientation, instead of a debate on deprivation, resource control and other mischievous issues that stunt development. This article concludes that since development is a product of change, and the subject matter of history focuses on continuity and change, it follows that development can only be understood and appreciated within the context of history. It is this strategic place of history in facilitating integration that makes history incubator of development.

**Key Words:** *History, National Integration*

**1.0 Introduction**

According to Kabir (2013), there is a tendency of disregarding history by some scholars who even ends up tagging it as a bygone discipline that only has significance when it is desirable or ‘past’ that should totally be forgotten. Those who subscribe to this school of thought often regard history as archaic if not completely useless; some others embrace it with low esteem. Yakubu & Chris (2006) aver that, development can be regarded as the structural transformation of a society in such

a way that it acquires a higher capacity and capability required by its population. This cannot be achieved without embracing the knowledge of social sciences. There has been a call for the disarticulation of social sciences, especially history and instead promotion of technical and science-based course/ subjects so as to help in the national development of Kenya by 2030.

Kenya's Deputy President, William Ruto, blatantly dismissed courses such as history, geography, sociology and anthropology instead calling for more attention to be given to technical courses offered by technical and vocational education training (TVET) (Daily Nation, November 25th October 2018). There is no doubt that, the pursuit of science and technology, in the quest to realize Kenya's development objectives is desirable and something to welcome by all irrespective of professional orientation. However, we must realize that, integration and development is about human beings who must occupy the central place in all efforts. Therefore, for meaningful development to occur in a nation like Kenya, history as a discipline and concept is the road to national integration and development. According to Ikime (2006) the knowledge of history makes change comprehensive and meaningful, history is therefore a facilitator of change and development. The aims of education in Kenya are to promote love and loyalty to the nation, develop overall skills such as mental, social and moral values (Republic of Kenya, 2015). History fulfills one or more of these aims of education in Kenya. History as a discipline plays critical role in the nation's socioeconomic and political development, thus it basically evaluates the dynamics of human societies in all spheres.

## **1.2 Objectives**

This study aims to illustrate the place of history in national integration and development. History as one of the subjects taught in Kenya's education system is critical in promoting political, social and economic development. As one of the key subjects taught at all levels of education in Kenya, history is expected to provide an all-round development of its recipients to enable them overcome prevailing challenges and therefore play effective roles in their immediate society.

## **1.3 Study Methodology**

This study used desk review by collecting, organizing and synthesizing available information on the place of history in national integration and development in Kenya. The study made use of



secondary data by creating a reference so that all documents reviewed were captured in the reference list. The documents reviewed included journal articles, reports, newspapers and gray literature available on the subject of history.

## **2.0 Discussion**

An important objective of teaching history is to foster national integration of the Kenyan people. The entity described today as Kenya, is the result of the 1895 British colonial administration. According to Mwaruvie (2010) Britain declared (what later became Kenya) East Africa Protectorate with its headquarters in Mombasa. Hitherto, the present day Kenya had been occupied by various linguistic groups with different cultures and political experiences; the Cushites, Nilotes, Bantus. The people of East Africa and Kenya in general can be divided into four major linguistic groups: The Khoisan; the Afro-Asiatics (Cushitics); the Bantu (Niger Congo family; and the Nilotic (the Nilo-Sudanic People). Some were organized into centralized kingdoms and the others were non-centralized communities. According to Ochieng' (1989) the 19<sup>th</sup> century European conquest witnessed the integration of many parts of the East Africa region, especially the interior, into international capitalism thus diffusing traditional states and in its place the modern state of Kenya. As noted, though prior to European intrusion Kenya's people belonged to different communities, races and religions, they must be able to live and interact as Kenyans. This therefore requires that national integration to become a conscious effort through the teaching of history which reinforces oneness as a state.

It is a paramount duty of history education to help the youth acquire this sense of nationhood by removing conflicts and in its place promote positive attitudes of mutual respect, which enable them to live together in harmony, and foster patriotism in order to make a positive contribution to the life of the nation through teaching of history. Thus, it is absolutely very important that our past as Kenya remains memorable and relevant so that we can overcome the obstacles that militate against our standing in brotherhood without focusing on the difference that divide us, thus in so doing we can achieve an integrated nation. Integration is a feeling of oneness among the people of different cultures, religions and languages. National integration is a positive notion that promotes the growth and advancement of a particular nation (Ugochukwu, C.N. 2013).

History is an essential subject for integration and national developments since it promotes self-understanding. Every person has a heritage which is distinctively his. Kabir (2013) argues that, in the academic history of the United States of America no matter the type of discipline one pursues, he/she must include history as a subsidiary course for the understanding of the national history of America (American Civic History). This ranges from ethnic, family, social-cultural, individual traditions, national cultures etc. Which are intertwined into ones very life. According to Davidson (1979), we need to understand the world of yesterday for it helps to make the world of today. History foretells and demonstrates to us lessons about our lives, based on past antecedents, it helps us to derive judgment. For instance, one of the major obstacles of integration and sustainable development in Kenya is ethnic intolerance. Kyegh (2002) argues that, ethnic chauvinism was identified as one of the major factors that led to the fall of the first republic and the concomitant civil war in Nigeria. Similarly Kenya fell into inter-ethnic violence due to ethnic chauvinism championed by politicians in the 2007 general election. It has been argued that history predicted that if ethnic chauvinism was not checked, it would cause the fall of Kenya's nation state.

This absence of historical inquiry into all the above historical factors renders a man a stranger to himself. Equally the failure of a historical study to inform groups and persons about their identity renders their existence a mystery. History teaches tolerance as a value of good citizenship. Tolerance entails accepting the things one rejects, disagrees with, disapproves, dislikes or objects to in order to avoid conflict (Gibson, 2006). Tolerance with different ethnic groups, political parties, religions, cultures and different ideas. History as an academic discipline demonstrates to us that we are one entity, regardless of our linguistic origin. For instance, history teaches us about how various ethnic groups in Kenya, united to fight colonial government and ultimately defeated it, subsequently earning the independence of Kenya in 1963. According to Pio, G.P (1963) those in the frontline to fight for Kenya's independence cut across all ethnic groups and they include; Jomo Kenyatta, Harry Thuku, Makhan Singh, Tom Mboya, James Gichuru, Daniel Moi and Martin Shikuku. The value of this reminder to the present generation is for both the leadership and the citizenship to give a wide berth to ethnicity and bitterness, as did our past leaders, and put all hands on the surface for the progress of the republic.

As an academic discipline, history helps in handling controversial issues in the sense that it searches for truth, insists on free discussion and permits compromise. Learning history means

gaining some skill in sorting through diverse, often conflicting interpretations in today's increasingly confusing and complex world of information (Michael, 2013). Students of history, are able to handle issues such as conflicts since they are well vast in knowledge of modern and traditional methods of handling controversial issues ranging from; legal process, arbitration, negotiation and armed forces. Such knowledge promotes national integration and development since it limits the adverse effects of conflict; massive displacement of people, refugees problems, fear and insecurity due to anarchy, losses of lives as people are killed, destruction of property, starvation due to crop destruction and disruption of agricultural activities and economic decline. Hornby (2012) avers that, since the advent of political independence of Kenya in 1963, the state has undergone turbulent conflict as it is confronted with the realities of national integration and development. As noted above, history offers a practical means of countering this problem thus lessening the kind of disturbance and destruction brought by conflicts. History helps in resolving our contemporary social and individual problems by developing mature judgments on immediate social issues, trends and prospects in the field of commerce, industry, international affairs, regional politics and other aspects of the contemporary society.

History provides a platform to assess the ideals and accomplishments of human development since in the contemporary world, the issue of development of human society remains of concern. According to Ahokegh A. F. (2018), man from the beginning of society, battled with his environment, to make it suit his way of life. For instance, historical periods such as Stone Age, Iron Age among others, are indicative of the development that have occurred in the life of man over millions of years ago. Thus, development has been central in the development of humanity and building better societies. Throughout the world, modern state desire to better the lives of its citizens through gradual development in all aspects of life. Kenya showed at independence that she desired to develop like any nation in the world. Republic of Kenya (1965) asserts that with independence, Kenya intended to mobilize its resources to attain a rapid rate of economic growth for the benefit of its people. This explains why the key issue that dominated the minds of the emergent indigenous leadership was the development of the nation, rapid change in the social system, education and health, the promotion of new methods of production and exchange that would translate into total development. This feeling of development was enshrined in the 1964-70 development program known as 1965 sessional paper number 10. It is worth to note that as Kenya,

draws far away from the independence euphoria of 1960's, the people have forgotten their history and so the issue of development has been eroded by sectarian politics. According to Muzaffar (2008) the very notion of history is centered on recording and explaining those past events that might or have a certain level of significance to the community of people or an institution. History as a discipline provides to the general public, the standards of reference against which they can measure the values and achievements of their own age. This enables them to have an enlightened awareness of the problems of modern communities ranging from political, social and economic. For instance, the inter-ethnic conflicts and election related violence that has rocked the post-colonial Kenyan state, thus hampering development can all be understood through history.

History is one subject that can promote international understanding in the best possible way. It can destroy prejudices existing among nations; it can also overplay the fundamental unity and interdependence among nations and underplay the sources of disunity. The world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is experiencing swift growth of means of communication across the world, thus hastening the exchange of ideas and interdependence of world nations in all aspects of life due to globalization. Globalization typically refers to the process by which different economies and societies become more closely integrated (Nilson, 2010). From history we can learn how the world has been integrated through early voyages of Christopher Columbus, Islamic period at the East African coast: 10<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> AD, Portuguese Period at the Coast, European conquest etc. International Organization such as the East African Community (EAC) formed to strengthen common market between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania which was a culmination of efforts made since 1902 to promote economic co-operation for East African states. Today EAC is holding together the East African states thus promoting international understanding and integration. United Nations (2018) avers that EAC has facilitated free movement of goods, persons, labour/workers and services. This has helped in integrating Kenya and her neighbours in the region of East Africa.

History as a discipline inculcate moral values in the minds of her learners. For instance, the life stories of great heroes and heroines who excelled in championing for a course aimed at bettering human life ranging from democracy, environmental conservation, wildlife protection, industrial development among other areas. Such personalities include; Jean Marie Seronei, Alexander Kipsang Muge, Bildad Kaggia, Ochieng Aneko, Paul Ngei, Koitalel Arap Samoei, Kungu Karumba, Esau Khamati Oriedo, Pio Gama Pinto, Field Marshal Musa Mwariama and Masinde

Muliro, Kenneth Matiba, Wangare Maatai, Teacher Tabichi among others encourage citizens to be truthful, courageous, just and selfless in pursuit of their personal and national duties. History of heroes and heroines who have made put Kenya on the global stage helps in the development of right attitudes based on an appreciation of things which are worthwhile in life. National Cohesion and Integration Commission (2011) observed that polarization and division of the country along ethnic lines have been contributed by the dishonesty and selfishness among leaders and lack of principles and ideologies to define political direction are vices that curtail national integration. History teaches good values as espoused by Kenya's heroes and heroines who make the entire citizens of Kenya to appreciate the need to stand in brotherhood, as was enunciated in our national anthem at independence, instead of standing against our brothers. The result of this, as mentioned above is nothing less than the development of the Kenyan state.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

This study examined the major contributions of history to national integration and development of Kenya as a nation. It suggests that, historical scholarship is the most essential ingredient that moves a country and its citizens forward through the understanding of the past for comparison with the present and the future at large. This study recommends that the history of Kenya should be made compulsory for each Kenyan university student at the first year of study irrespective of the field of study. This will help them in understanding of Kenya's ethnic groups, cultures, beliefs, norms, values, and histories in general. This is of the view that, if this is successfully included in Kenya's university educational curriculum, there is no doubt there would be better Kenya as far as peaceful co-existence, mutual trust and sense of belonging are concerned. It is worth to note that, through combined efforts, the need for the inculcation of right attitudes, morality and patriotism into the hearts of contemporary Kenyan youths could be attained for integration and national development. Secondly, the knowledge derived from historical research regarding the past and the present of Kenyan history should be properly documented and utilized for nation building. Lastly, the study of history as an academic discipline should be morally and financially supported by the government, stakeholders and non-governmental organizations and calls by the political elites that, history does not have a place in the Kenya of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be disregarded since the study has demonstrated its place in national integration and development. The paper concludes with a



central argument that, the absence of historical knowledge affects the social, economic and political transformation of the country.

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