Academic Research in Borderlands Studies: The Challenge of the Transnational Paradigm

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Abstract
The paper examined the characteristics of boundaries and borders in Africa, Europe and North America indicating that boundaries have divided natural regions, coherent cultural areas, related kith and kin and placed them into two or more states. In North America, Europe, there is a systematic challenge in the research and teaching to the state-centric perspective of borderlands studies by the transnational paradigm which recognizes the sovereignty percolating realities along and astride borders. This “new thinking” is yet to be adopted in the research and teaching of African boundaries. The paper argues that the challenge of the transnational paradigm is dictated by the fact that borders could be studied from a multi-disciplinary perspective which the grassroots perspective promotes. It is indicated that border areas are of security sensitivity deserving transnational co-operation, while recognizing the inherently cross-border spread of the localities and the imperative of trans-border co-operation for their planning and development. The experience of Europe of the regions or “Euregios”, rather than Europe of the national state is instructive. In Africa, trans-border regionalism and integration should be premised on Africa of the regions or “Afregios” which stresses the concern for border areas and border impacted groups. This “new thinking” is the challenge posed by the teaching of African boundaries in relation to the intertwining issues of boundaries and regional integration in Africa.

Keywords: Borderlands research; trans-national paradigm;

Introduction
Globalization and the challenges of the 21st century have brought to the fore the inevitability of regional integration on the continent of Africa if the continent will remain a force in world affairs. The pace and achievements of the European Union (E.U.) on the continent of Europe with the attendant effects on the world economy and politics are clear indications of the power of economic integration. One major area of regional integration that evidently enhanced the economic development in Europe is the almost virtual removal of physical boundaries and borders separating sovereign states. This has made it possible for goods, services and human beings to move relatively free without unnecessary hindrances and bureaucracy.

In other words, for regional integration to be effective in Africa, the place to start is de-emphasizing boundaries and borders between states. Borders and boundaries are important in the lives of people; it evokes emotion and dictates patterns of relationships and patterns of international trade. History is replete with wars and devastations that have resulted as consequences of borders in the context of borders and boundaries. This then means that a proper understanding of the phenomenon of borders in the context of peoples involved is imperative in order to facilitate integration. Understanding borders and border related issues should start from an academic stand point whereby various disciplines are employed in a multi-disciplinary
approach to enhance integration in border impacted regions. Anderson (2007: 4) stated that frontiers (i.e. borders) are complex, multi-faceted phenomenon and as such research into them should be both multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary.

Until recently, most scholars who have studied international boundaries approached the subject matter from the state-centric perspective (i.e. relations between states). This approach also informed policy directions about international boundaries as “barriers” or lines of separation between states. This is also in consonance with the notions of state sovereignty, nationalism, diplomatic history and inviolability of a states jurisdictional and administrative competence in international law. This approach promotes exclusivity, “us and them” in immigration policy and promotes conflict and wars in the pursuit of states national interests. The borders impacted populations are treated as marginal in the overall interest of state-centric scholars and policy makers alike.

The transnational paradigm (or grassroots perspective), is new to both academic disciplines and policy formulation. This perspective focuses on divided local populations, coherent cultural areas, the sea bed, natural features such as mountains, river systems and specific geographical zones, divided by the presence of imposed boundaries. This perspective is not popular in the literature of the subject matter and is yet to be imbibed by African scholars and policy makers.

The research challenges which this perspective poses have given rise to monumental research questions in Europe and North America. This has also called attention to the expanding literature in interdisciplinary approach to the study of boundaries, borders and borderlands including border impacted populations. Given the binary nature of boundaries as territorial or spatial spaces, almost every field of study could contribute to the study as this perspective suggests. Furthermore, the composite nature of boundaries could best be approached from a comparative perspective which usually covers the problematique from both sides of the divide.

The orientation in scholarly research from a statist mind set of boundaries as barriers must be persuaded to yield ground to the “new thinking” of boundaries as “bridges” or “osmotic points” of contact that could be crossed or used for positive problem solving.

The re-orientation in Western Europe and North American scholarship from Europe of the nation state to Europe of the regions or “Euregios” is very instructive. State territories in Europe and North America are similar in geographical characteristics in spite of their differences in the details of their historical origins. It was the European experience that was domesticated in Africa. The search findings in Europe since 1945 favours the study of boundaries and borderlands from the transnational paradigm using research design from a multidisciplinary approach. This has enabled scholars and border planners to perceive borders as bridges for economic co-operation and integration. This has informed scholarship toward Europe of the regions (Euregios) in contradistinction to Europe of the nation state. The exemplary evolution of the European Coal and Steel Community (E.C.S.C.), to the European Economic Community (E.E.C.) and now, the European Union (E.U.), is an eloquent testimony to the above assertion.

In Africa, potential African regions or “Afregios” also exist and can sustain African integration. Sadly, and in spite of persistent appeals and pressures from some segment of the academic community to imbibe this new thinking, the effort so far has not met with much success. In the era of globalization whereby boundaries are becoming more permeable the challenge of African scholarship is to re-orientate itself to the unfolding challenges of globalization and the research and teaching of African boundaries and borderlands from the transnational paradigm.
Borderlands Research: A Conceptual Discourse

International boundaries mark the end of a state’s administrative and jurisdictional competence. Some historians and political scientists regard the characteristics and functions of borders as dependent on the internal organisation of societies, and the way in which political power is exercised in the core regions of states. Debate among realist, pluralist, Marxist and interdependence theorists in international relations arise out of different views about the nature of the state. Borders are regarded as epiphenomena whose role and function are dependent on the core characteristic of the state. For others, particularly the political geographers, the characteristics of borders are fundamental influences on the way a society develop and on the political options opened to it (Anderson M., 1997:27). The vast literature on borders including geographical treaties, border and studies and a very diverse literature on border disputes gives little guidance for the examination of the great changes now occurring as the post-Hobbesian states are easing border controls or finding that they cannot use border controls to police and control their territory.

Borders can be analysed (and in normative political theory criticized) in the same way as other political institutions and processes. Borders are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction ends and another begins. Borders between states could be regarded as important institutions and processes established by political decisions and regulated by legal texts. The border is the basic political institution; no rule-bound economic, social, or political life in advanced societies could be organized without them.

This primordial character of borders is embodied in public international law by the Vienna Convention, 1978 on state succession. When a state collapse; the agreements, concerning its borders remain in force. Borders also define, in a legal sense, the identity of individuals because the conditions for claims to nationality and exercise of rights of citizenship are defined by them.

Within its borders the state is a sovereign jurisdiction, and the Weberian doctrine of the monopoly of the legitimate use of force on its territory is still universally recognized. The doctrine of sovereignty remains a central part of thinking about states and relations among them. The doctrine implies that states have absolute control over their territories and can impose this control at their borders. The claim of the modern state to be “the sole, exclusive found of all powers and prerogatives of rule” could only be realized if its borders were made impermeable to unwanted influences. But this view of the border of the sovereign state is not part of an immutable natural order (Scott, 1978:92).

Furthermore, borders are part of political processes with definite defining dimensions. They are instruments of state policy because some government attempt to change them to their own advantage, the location of, or function of their borders – aimed at protecting and promoting national interests, e.g. to encase natural resources for the sole benefit of the state. The policies and practices of the state are constrained by the degree of defacto control that the government exercises over the state border. The incapacity of governments in the contemporary world to control much of the traffic of persons, goods and information across their borders is changing the nature of both states and borders. Borders are the basic markers of identity, and usually national identity, but political identities may be larger or smaller than the nation state. Borders are part of political beliefs and myths about the unity of the people, and at times about the natural unity of the territory. These “imagined communities” or “ecumens” (B. Anderson and Asiwaju, 1991:29), concerning nations divided by international boundaries, and now, a universal phenomenon and often have profound historical roots, and linked by the ideological bonding of
nationalism. These imagined communities or acumens transcend the confines of the state and myths of origin, regional, continental and hemispheric unity also, marked boundaries between friend and foe. Connor (1969:29) asserts that myths of unity can be created or transformed with remarkable rapidity during wars, revolution, irredentism and political upheavals.

Lastly, the term “frontier” and “borers” have been used by scholars interchangeably. Political geographers define frontier as “a border region, or zone or tract which forms a belt of separation, contact or transition between political units. The second meaning is the one in which the term is taken as a synonym of boundary in which case, frontier is defined not as a border region or zone, but as a “wildthes” line of demarcation between states. “Frontiers” are areas that existed before the introduction of a boundary. On the other hand, borderlands are areas in close proximity to an international boundary and are usually disadvantaged areas in terms of their location as the farthest point and are marginal to the core areas of the states. They have been neglected by their core states development strategies; they lack investments and modernity (Adejunigbe, 1989:24).

Borders between neighbouring nation states require an understanding that greatly exceeds nationalistic histories and ethnocentric considerations. These limits where many things must stop and start, need to be studied not just because they exist, but because they are a paradox that isolates and unites. At the same time they constitute a wall or gate, a barrier to and a means for communication. International boundaries are linear points of contact between countries, cultures, and societies that provide unique opportunities to observe the best and the worst in human nature and the exercise of statecraft. An analysis of both conflict and co-operation on these areas throughout the world could provide insights for the peaceful solutions of problems facing the community of nations.

Strassoldo, stressed the relevance of international boundaries and borders in relation to issues of peace and security as derived from their well known paradoxical roles as factors of conflicts and wars or of co-operation and peace between states. He explained the

Ambiguities in terms of the fact that [Borders] divide and unite, bind the interior and link it with the interor; (they) are barriers and junctions, walls and doors, organs of defence and attack. Frontiers, (i.e. borderlands) can be managed so as to maximize either of such functions. They can be militarized as bulwark against neighbours, or made into areas of peaceful interchange (Strassoldo, 1983:393).

In his famous Roman lecture at Oxford, Lord Curzon observed that, “Frontiers” (i.e. borders), are, indeed, the razors edge which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations (Curzon, 1906:132). This binary view of borders was underscored by Star and Most in their joint study of the border factor in international relations, when they asserted but “shared international boundaries are like coins with one side issuing with “risks” and the other with “opportunities” in international interaction (Star and Most, 1976: 130).

According to Gross, international interaction between adjacent states is a continuum with conflict at one end and co-operation at the other. This continuum would be stimulated in either direction depending on the extent which the border in question is “open or close” (Gross, 1973:53).

There have also been similar experiences in relation to their locally felt artificiality and arbitrariness of their creation either in Europe, North America or Africa. They share basic universalisms in spite of their particularisms in terms of their artificially partitioned natural
regions, valleys, lakes, river systems, mountains, forests, deserts, etc, and are notorious as irritants of disputes, conflicts within and between states.

These ambiguities suggest that the range of policy choices open in research design and policy formulation could be directed towards war, conflict or co-operation and integration. Since 1945 the option in academic research and policy formulation in Europe and North America has been peaceful co-operation characterized by regional integration, transborder planning and sustainable development.

**Academic Research in Borderlands Studies: The Challenge of the Transnational Paradigm**

In his book *On The Border*, Tom Miller makes the following observation:

The border has come to represent many things to many people, yet it remains the most misunderstood region of North America. Our Southern border is not simply American on one side and Mexican on the other. It is a third country with its own identity. This third country is a strip two thousand miles long and no more than twenty miles wide. It obeys its own laws and has its own outlaws, its own police officers and its own policy makers. Its food, its language, its music are its own. Even its economic development is unique. It is a colony unto itself, long and narrow, ruled by two far away powers. The symbiotic relationship shared by the many pairs of border towns, such as El Paso and Ciudad Juarez or Calexico and Mexicali, are born of necessity. The cities couple like reluctant lovers in the night, embracing for fear that letting go could only be worse (Miller, 1985.1).

The above comment by Miller applies to a greater extent to border areas in many parts of the world. It is obvious that the complex nature of international border regions and the influences of a border in the lives of those living near it, cannot be studied adequately from a single disciplinary prospective.

Unlike traditional academic disciplines, border studies as a specialized field of inquiry must draw upon those scholars willing to venture outside the narrow confines of traditional academic boundaries to make their professional contribution. This would enable such scholars to balance their own discipline’s demands for mainstream conformity and at the same time pursue controversial and innovative investigations in the peripheral border studies field.

The fact if identical problems which borderlands situations pose across nations, automatically confers on the research and policy analysis, carried out on, a significance considerable implications for the others. Such a condition imposes on the scholar of a local situation, an obligation to set his antennas, in every direction, even when he is focusing on a limited area in consideration often for the need to keep research within manageable proportions and in the interest of an indepth understanding.

Asiwaju, Martinez, and Bonchuk research is a clear illustration that a border scholar is duty bound to show awareness of the wider context of his operation and the fact that the value of his endeavour depends ultimately on the kind of insights it provides (as a case study) into the general workings of international boundaries (Asiwaju, 2003; Martinez, 1982; Bonchuk, 1999).

Though borders exhibit a paradoxical nature (they separate and connect, etc), border scholars must contend and engage these barrier effects in order to reach out for one another for
the vital purpose of comparing notes and findings and producing “a synthesis on one of the commonest and one of the most universally shared experiences of man” (Asiwaju, 2003:10).

Borderlands studies or the multidisciplinary analysis of localized impacts of borders represent a major and virile innovation in the study of international boundaries, and the nation state creators of the boundaries. As opposed to the traditional diplomatic statist or state-centric perspective, when the nation state are the primary focus of analysis; emphasis is placed on borderlands as distinct regions. In these localized studies, emphasis is laid on the economic, human and humanistic dimensions of the problems created by border functions and operations, usually neglected by state-centric studies, such as in international relations studies, international law, international politics, diplomatic history, etc. The concept of borderlands studies, premised on the transnational paradigm (or grassroots perspective – also, variously referred to as “frontier zones”, “borders landscape”, “frontier communities”, “frontier zones” and “partitioned culture areas”, allows for a specialized focus, not on the nation state, but on ‘the people who live nearest to (its) boundary (and) are affected to an exceptional degree”, “people who have many friends and relatives just across the line”, whose local affairs; including economy and culture, suffer a disruption beyond the imagination of those who do not have a first hand knowledge of the situation (Asiwaju and Martinez, 2003).

Furthermore, the ethnic fragmentation which the location of the borders causes has been found to be a major factor in the enlargement and deepening of minority problems and irredentism. The survival of borderlanders is dependent to some extent on the presence of the international boundary in their midst. They are noted for their cross-border activities that disrespect the presence of the borders thereby reducing their status from barrier functions to bridges of contact.

Arising from the above therefore, it is imperative to identify academic disciplines that have direct impacts on border studies and the development of border areas. The identification of its challenges and impediments to integration would enable border scholars to study them from a comparative perspective given their composite or binary nature. In relation to policy formulation, border studies should be approached from the perspective of the concept of a border as a bridge, as opposed by the barrier idea which has generated conflicts and wars. Though the border has potential for conflict, the opportunities and potentials available in border areas should be galvanized for wider economic integration in Africa (Bonchuk, 2002:97).

As earlier indicated it has been recognized that the list of academic subjects relevant to the study of borders is inexhaustible, however, there are certain core academic disciplines that stand out in this scheme.

The study of languages, communication arts, philosophy, history, musicology and popular culture and law contributes significantly in the study of border impacted areas. Secondly, in the social sciences, international relations, political sciences, sociology, anthropology, environmental studies, geography, economics, psychology gender studies, public administration and the health sciences – medicine, public health, veterinary medicine, also, agricultural and engineering sciences are essential in the study of borderlands.

Law as contained in the constitutions of states is an important and indispensable instrument that ensures the smooth running of the machinery of any state. This is particularly so in border towns where citizens intermingle, trade and live with little or no concern for the erected barriers, e.g. U.S. – Mexico – Canada, Nigeria – Benin – Nigeria – Cameroon – Nigeria – Niger, etc. Variations in the laws of these states can become barriers in business transactions, civil matters and control of criminals, cross-border trade, smuggling of contraband goods, etc. The
law in this context is conceived in two perspectives: the municipal law of the state and international law. The municipal laws are national laws regulating domestic affairs of the nation. They are not enforceable beyond the borders or shore of the political entity or national boundaries, so may not be applicable to international issues (Asiwaja, 2006:76).

The international laws are laws among nations that it regulates the relationships among the countries. International laws therefore complement the municipal laws in the global legal areas. International laws are in form of treaties, conventions, accords and agreements consented to, signed and domiciled by nations thereby binding on them. In borderlands studies both the international and municipal laws are relevant due to the challenges posed by the transnational paradigm.

One of such laws that usually affect borderlands and interest to border scholars is land law. Land law affects border areas because a piece of land may be divided by border demarcation. The land may contain natural resources (surface or underground), struggle over ownership may result to conflict, and this creates legal difficulty in the administration of our conflict resolution. Bonchuk’s analysis on the Bakassi Peninsula and the International Court of Justice judgment (I.C.J.) supports this view.

Conflict of law in border areas – (where internality meets with locality), arises because of differences in the law that operates in each segment of the same piece of land, territory or property. Therefore, there is the need to identify existing land laws that operate in the border towns and find ways of reconciling the various statutes to ensure harmonious relationship among the border communities thereby enhancing integration. There may also be need to advocate for the harmonization or for special laws for such border laws where such conflict could degenerate to serious crisis.

Alternatively, the conflicting laws could be fused together such that the two or more laws in operation in the borders could be harmonized. The dominant law or the most prominent and popular law in the borderland may be adopted as long as the borderlanders agree to accept the law.

Where the fusion of the existing law may create more problems and there is no clear dominant law that suits the peculiarity of the areas. The people’s customary laws could be established for the purpose of administrating the border areas (Bonchuk, 2010:36). For example, in Europe, such laws exist where the border areas are granted permission to enact certain laws that operate only in the borderlands without infringing on the sovereignty of their core state. The European Outline Convention on the Administration of Territories approved by the council of Europe is the best example.

Luspha’s study of the U.S., Mexico borderlands of the border underworld reveal that borders are “creators and facilitators of crimes and criminality”. The border under world is a unique and different criminal phenomenon found not only in the U.S. – Mexico borderlands, its uniqueness lies in the environment and context in which it is found (Luspha, 1985:76). Asiwaju’s study of Nigeria – Benin, and Bonchuk’s illuminating analysis of the Nigeria – Cameroon borderlands are often cited in terms of this phenomenon. The involvement of the legitimate business and commercial sectors in cross-border economy of contraband naturally involves that community with the corrupt and criminal. These factors taken together result in cross-border culture which has a close connection, historically and economically with its underworld. Here local enforcement often operates in a world of permissiveness and toleration of community elites engaged in cross-border smuggling and contraband. In order to deal with this problem, collaboration between Border States in “area study” is important. This could
involve research into community policing, law enforcement and criminal law of states. For instance, Nigeria’s common law tradition and French civil law ought to be harmonized for effective policing of borders (Ajomo, 1989:37).

Psychology is the scientific study of human and animal behavior with the goals of understanding, explaining, predicting and modifying behavior. Psychologists study human behavior to enhance co-existence and possibly quality of life. With regard to border studies, psychology is identified as a potent instrument of interaction considering issues like ethnic identity, inter-ethnic relations, perception, stereotypes, prejudices and the likes. According to Ogunlesi, man is naturally boundrophobic and such artificial boundaries and boundaries will be instinctively resented. Here psychology is considered as a fundamental discipline in border studies (Ogunlesi, 2007:8).

This is in view of the fact that perceptions, mental and physical attitude of people to border determine their actions and reactions to border issues. A proper understanding and use of psychology will foster positive attitude that will enhance border integration. Certain key issues need be addressed if a border line will be a bridge (transnational) to foster positive relationships among border peoples. For example, do people segment themselves to ethnic group, or they relate globally? How do we remove the “border” from the consciousness of border people? Since ethnic identity leads to competition, rivalry and hatred among the people, how do we encourage cooperation among different ethnic groups living in border areas? Since the individual goals of the borderlanders conflict, how do we encourage supreordinate goals that promotes cooperation rather than competition in border areas? Research into social intercourse like inter-ethnic and inter-racial co-operation should be encouraged. Psychological conflict resolution and management mechanism should be researched into while attitudinal change programs that de-emphasize “They/We” dichotomy and split identity among borderlanders be put in place.

The issue of discrimination against the female sex has also been identified as germane in border areas. It is observed that gender discrimination and biases may even be more pronounced in border areas than in core areas because of neglect and in most cases lack of access to information about new development and current best practices. This is more so in Africa where the border areas suffer gross neglect from their respective governments. It is then the submission of this paper that there is need for urgent empirical studies on forms, occurrence and prevalence of gender discrimination in the border areas, roles of the women and girls in borderland activities, rights and privileges of females, cultural and governmental differences in equal opportunities and treatment of females as well as gender equality, and how these can be annexed to enhance regional integration (Bonchuk et al, 2008:9).

Observations have shown that the various international borderlands in Nigeria are a beehive of economic activities; both legal and “illegal”, either way both forms of economic activities are sources of livelihood to residents of border towns and even people in the core. Of particular interest is the volume of unregulated trade in border areas. Governments of countries lose huge economic resources from this parallel trade while individuals make huge profits at the expense of their countries. It is obvious (and this has been supported by research findings) that if economic activities in borderlines are encouraged, harmonious and cooperative in a synergistic manner, they will lead to bridge-building and integration (Nowotry & Peach, 1985:42).

However, it is observed that the border areas in terms of economic implication are:

Permeable and encourage underground transborder economic activities. The permeability is due to the way the borders are defined and determined. Border traditionally is
seen as a barrier intentionally built to block livelihood and impoverished the people. It was done without consideration for the borderland areas dwellers economic well being. This in a way may be responsible for peoples’ attitude of subverting governmental rules and regulations at border posts. The border demarcation mutilates the nucleus of the economic units of borderland dwellers. This kills or weakens the economic base of the borderlands. The cost of carrying out their economic activities across the artificial borders now increased due to physical barriers imposed by government to protect the artificial barriers. Most border communities’ areas are not developed; the inhabitants are poor and neglected. They feel no presence of the government. These conditions of borderlands make the people to sabotage the government national policy. It suggested that:

- Comparative studies on economy of border areas should be embarked upon.
- Identify the constraints to developing the areas and the alternative policies that can integrate border towns into the mainstreams of national economic life.
- To study the ways borderlands in other continents are being managed and developed and suggest ways of adapting such approaches to the African cases.
- Determine the workability of Joint Free Trade Zones in the border areas for example the Benin/Nigeria, Nigeria – Cameroon border areas as a means of reducing the underground economic activities taking place there now.
- To carry out studies on the economic potential of Nigerian borders and identify those economic activities that can thrive as a large scale commercial ventures which both private investors and governments can be encouraged to take up.
- Government should involve the people in the community in the development and implementation of any policies that affect their lives in the borderlands areas.
- Various bodies that have been established to develop borderlands must be made functional and effective.
- In view of the current global phenomenon, government should encourage private – public partnership in the development of the border regions.
- Government should make the border areas attractive through development of tourism and hospitality business in the border areas.

   The role of effective communication and language use cannot be undermined in resolving borderlines problems and promoting integration. It is obvious that language and communication art are power and therefore learning the language of neighbors is a virtue that gives added advantages.

   The main issue identified in the case of language is that though the border areas have unique languages that are used across borders residents still face challenges when they transact business with people from far regions. So it is important that the people at the borderlines learn at least the lingua franca in the two neighboring countries that they bordered. This gives them the opportunities to effectively communicate with foreigners and people from the hinterland that do not understand their local dialects. It will also reduce frictions arising from language conflict and misunderstanding (Valdes, 1985:17).

   It is recognized that different colonial administrations bequeathed different policy structures on the states in Africa, for example, the British adopted indirect rule while the French started with the policy of assimilation and later changed to association. In the light of these, the post colonial era led to policy differences among African states and the differences are informed by colonial experiences and heritage. A classical example is the issue of civil versus common laws in the Francophone and Anglophone African countries respectively. It is thus suggested that:
There should be integration and harmonization of policies and laws of the adjacent countries in border towns.

There should be bilingual linguistic educational system for the people in border towns (Bonchuk, M. O., 2002:198).

Sociology deals with the culture of the people; institutions and society at large. It is suggested that:

- Institutions and systems should be understood and used in integrating border people.
- Border people should be studied and understood in terms of their origins, evolution and dynamics (Aradeon, 1989:259).

With regards to the discipline of geography, it is suggested that:

- In making and implementing policies: regions, topography, mapping, nature of maritime, cartography, traditional boundaries are important factors to be taken into consideration.
- Road networks should be a priority in facilitating development (Baloqu, 1988:213).

International Relations has to do with relationship between sovereign nations, this is a field that cannot be ignored for regional integration to be successful. The following should be taken into consideration in using international relations as a tool for integration:

- Embassies abroad should be developed and adequately funded.
- Carrier diplomats and not politicians should man our diplomatic posts.
- Boundaries should be treated as bridges and not barriers (Ekoko, 1988:279).

The place of history in integration efforts is prominent; no integration can be successful without a full understanding of the antecedents (cultural and otherwise) of the different sovereign units that are to be integrated. In this regard, historical focus should be on the following areas:

- Economic history of border towns
- Land acquisition patterns
- Political history vis-à-vis intra-state interaction, conflict management mechanism, diplomacy, social issues, inter-group relations, culture, religion institutions, etc.
- General and historical relationships of neighboring states
- Subcultures and languages
- Territorial history
- Partitioning of Africa and its consequences
- Different colonial administrative systems
- Forced citizenship (Asiwaju, 1984; Bonchuk, 1999).

One of the phenomena in the world that have demonstrated strong unifying power by breaking language and other forms of barriers is music. Musicians perform across various cultures and are accepted in spite of cultural and language differences. This is an indication that if music is properly annexed as a medium of integration, it will have far reaching effect especially in border towns where nationals of countries interact on a frequent basis. Based on the foregoing:

- Ethno music should be encouraged in cross border interactions
- Research should be conducted on how music unifies and integrates cultures
- Traditional music, folklores, and myths telling the story of a people should be developed and given recognition (Bonchuk, 1999).

Philosophy provides different frameworks for any particular concept, it deepens the understanding of theoretical standpoints and bridges the gap between past pattern and current realities, and it also provides logic for reaching decisions (Momoh, 1988:51).

International health has long been recognized as a major vehicle of development and cooperation. As an aspect of public health international health is as old the nation state. The
development of civilization with urban commercial centers surrounded by agricultural and markets marked in turning point in human history. The relevance of agriculture engineering and public health practices to border studies becomes clear. The most evident failure of borderlands is their location with respect to the rest of their political units. The borderlands are usually the farthest from the core areas and the capitals in any direction except in the rare situation where the capital or core area is located in the boundary. This locational characteristic has important implication for the borderlands. They lack basic infrastructural facilities, poor drainage system due to lack of planning for their development, poor health facilities, including modern agricultural practices (Fokolado, 1989:353).

In order to guard against the import and export of diseases public health experts are required to study the pattern of disease interaction in border areas including experts in veterinary medicine and animal scientist to check animals before they cross borders. Therefore medical experts should research into the incidents of port health, airport, quarantine stations on hospitals and vaccination. Border towns are noted for their vibrant social life with a high incidence of prostitution or “sins business”, the incidence of HIV/AIDS across borders needs to be studied. The future of public health engineering and agricultural practices will continue to be relevant in the border international communities. The challenge is to adopt strategies to control environmental hazards and modify behavior in a constantly changing world (Ibrahim, 2008:93).

Conclusion

The paper examined the prospects of teaching about international boundaries, borders and borderlands in Africa. The characteristics of borderlands were highlighted. It was indicated that either in Europe, North America or Africa boundaries divided not only related ethnic groups placing them in one or two antagonistic political units, but also, natural regions. However in Europe the notion of a boundary as a barrier is being decomposed to reflect the new reality of globalization of boundary as a bridge. This has enhanced European and North American integration.

It is regrettable that in Africa this new thinking is yet to be imbibed by policy makers and academics in the research of their borderlands. Given the binary or composite nature of borders, it is impossible to research into them from one single discipline. The state-centric approach in the study of the border problematique can no longer sustain the quantum of academic research in borders arising from the analysis of borderlands studies and the concepts. Certain academic disciplines were indicated and explanations for their suitability illustrated for the study of borders. For African regional integration to yield positive results, the starting point is the re-orientation of the academic research from a statist mind-set of boundaries as barriers to the emerging concept of boundaries as bridges.

References


