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THE EFFECTS OF NEGLECT OF TEACHING HISTORY IN NIGERIA PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010-2016

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Abstract

History is a discipline which plays a significant role in the development of an individual and his society, by providing one with national consciousness and patriotism. In spite of these imperatives, history has suffered neglect in Nigeria's National Curriculum especially in the Primary school sector, following the 1969 National Curriculum Conference when it was expunged. This neglect has manifested negatively on our youths and the process of national development. This alarming situation prompted this research which is an attempt to examine the effect of the neglect of the teaching of History, its significance and role in human and societal development. The research examines how the study of History can change the society by repositioning its educational sector for national development. The research looked at the concept of History, why the study of History is a must and why it is neglected. The methodology adopted in the study is that of historical survey and analytical. The major findings of the study reveal that the neglect of the teaching of History as a subject has resulted in the loss of historical consciousness and lack of patriotism.

Keywords: **History, teaching, primary schools, Nigeria.**

Introduction

This paper attempts to examine the consequences or better still, the implication of the neglect of the teaching of History education to pupils of Primary Schools of Nigeria today. The argument that, in the Primary Schools, History as a subject should be known and taught as Social Studies has attracted a legion of debates by a plethora of scholars of historic origin who argues favorably on why History and not Social Studies should be taught to pupils of Nigerian Primary Schools. These arguments were hinged on the premise that the new syllabus (2017) based on the reintroduction of History focuses on four (4) major content aspect: History (change and continuity), Cultures, Social Studies and Structures and the Environment which differs from that of Social Studies which is multi-discipline and focuses on current issues. The assumption that Social Studies can explain and stand in place of History has culminated in making History as an academic discipline less and less popular among Nigerians and even undergraduates. As such, very few apply to study History as a first-choice subject. For the vast majority of students studying History in all Nigerian schools, either secondary or tertiary, the subject is imposed on them by their respective admission authorities through placement as a result of unsatisfactory requirement of chosen subject or course of study. The main crux of this is the lack of foundation in Primary education. However, in due course, the students

who were coaxed to study History grow to love it and are manifestly proud to have offered it. Yet, the unpopularity of the subject in Nigeria persists (Mangvwat, 2007:1).

In spite of the peculiar nature and structure of History, its special broad-based curriculum and cognitive processes and as well as its objectives, there seems to be a general neglect and dissatisfaction of its instructional outcomes in the Nigerian society as a whole. History education which exerts a powerful influence on education in the sense that, educational development is a function of societies and historical development vividly shows that education will continue to bear traces of previous knowledge, has been relegated to the background in not only the 6-3-3-4 but also in the 9-3-4 system of education (Bozima, 1996:73). The direct culprits for this irrational and epileptic decision were the policy makers and their sponsors/financers, who do not see beyond their nose the significance of a discipline like History. Yet, every man including the government, the governed and the policy makers live in History and with History on daily basis. A fact they cannot change. This assertion is supported by E.H. Carr who said that:

The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present, and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery of the present, the dual function of history (Carr, 1961:18).

Statement of the Research Problem

There has never been any controversy or doubt about the value of history for nation building or the development of an individual, his society or larger community, as the knowledge of history teaches one about who they are, where they are from, and how they came about their present abode and situation. As such, historical knowledge has been given due attention by nations of the earth due to its imperatives in creating a unique economic environment due to historic knowledge, social and cultural coexistence for national development.

However, in spite of these relevance, it has been observed that in Nigeria, History as a process and also as an academic endeavour has not been given due recognition in spite of efforts by colonial administration to teach History which was sustained in the early years of Independence. However, with the dawn of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference which was followed by the adoption of a National Policy of Education, and the subsequent arrival of the 6-3-3-4 education system, History was expunged from the education curriculum and replaced with Social Studies. The assumption that Social Studies which deals with current issues could replace History whose main crux is events that took place, lessons learned and the avoidance of negative occurrence in the future was ill-conceived by the education administrators and policy makers as at the time of the conference. As a result of this development, there exist a huge gap on what History really is to the Primary School pupils and the nation at large.

There is also a growing perception that the integration of History and Social Studies has done much damage to history and historical consciousness as many people perceives History as a mere narration of the past and as such, do not see its significance in the development of an individual and the society at large. As such, a call for its reintroduction as an independent subject of study in Primary Schools did not gained popularity until recently. The most fundamental issue is how a subject with such national and global outlook is taught inside

Social Studies largely as mere topics. The research therefore arises from the problems mentioned above.

Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this research is to examine the aforementioned problems. The main questions that the research seeks to investigate include the following:

- What is the meaning of History?
- Why was History as a subject of study neglected in our primary schools?
- Why should History be taught in Primary Schools?

In line with the aforementioned aims, the specific objectives of the research are to:

i. Examine the implication for the neglect of the teaching of History education in the Nigerian Primary Schools.
ii. Identify the significance of the teaching of History to pupils of Nigerian Primary Schools.
iii. Identify and examine the method of teaching History to Primary School pupils in Nigeria.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The research centres on the effect of the neglect of the teaching of History in Nigerian Primary Schools. The choice of Primary Schools as our area of interest apart from being the first step of the 6-3-3-4 education system in Nigeria is historically influenced by the impact of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference which led to the expunge of History from the Primary School education curriculum.

The extent of the study shall be from 2010 - 2016. The periodization is chosen based on the unique historical reality involved in the removal of History from the curriculum of Primary Education, its merger with Social Studies and its reintroduction into the Primary School education curriculum. The choice of 2010 as the starting point of the research is basically to corroborate or commemorate with the merging of History and Social Studies as a single subject to be taught in the Nigerian Primary Schools. This period also marked a watershed in the rapid decline of History as a subject in the Nigerian Primary Schools and also its consciousness in public lives of Nigerians.

The terminal period for the research is 2016 which is historically significant as it marked the reintroduction of History as an independent subject of study in both Primary and Secondary Schools in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

It is pertinent to state here that the concept of history as it relates to the study is an important theme in academic discourse. It is particularly important in the study of man, change, culture and progress. Like most academic concepts, history is a victim of definitional pluralism. The need for clarification is therefore germane for a proper understanding and appreciation of the research.

History either as a process or as a study has been defined by different historians and scholars. In fact, there may be as many definitions of History as there are many historians. History is

an objective reality. It is what exists and has existed; something that has or had a life as opposed to fiction. It is the human (not animal past), the totality of past experiences of man. A past that is both variegated and dynamic in nature between man and nature resulting to movement and change (Mahdi, 2008:2).

History as a concept plays a fundamental role in human thought. It invokes notions of human agency, change, the role of material circumstances in human affairs, and the putative meaning of historical of historical events. It raises the possibility of "learning from history".

It is a continuum linking the past, present and the future. It flows like a river, continuous motion, everything is in the process. It also suggests the possibility of better understanding ourselves in the present by understanding the forces, choices and circumstances that brought us to our current situation. Edward HalletCarr sees it as:

A continuous process of interaction between the historian and his fact: an unending dialogue between the present and the past (Carr, 1961:19).

People have always lived with history and in history. As the above definition have clearly shown, people live history and they also use history on daily basis. Eskor Toyo defines History as: a sub-branch of epistemological philosophy that deals with all aspects that bothered humanity and the society at large. It also involves all about human experience and heritage. It concerns in general perspectives, on the present in order to visualize the future direction human activities are unfolding (Toyo, 1975).

According to Karl Marx, history is a relationship between man and man and between man and his environment. In essence, history refers to the events and episodes, that is, the totality of the changes and experiences which humanity has undergone ever since the emergence of mankind. In other words, it is the reality outside one's events and actions that together make up the human past.

History can also refer to the academic discipline which uses a narrative to examine and analyze a sequence of past events, and objectively determine the patterns of cause and effect that determines them (Evans, 2001:2).

It is relevant to note that, the main issue in the occurrence of events as well as their study is change. Hence, to address the problem of national development, it is relevant to go back to history which is the basis of understanding the magnitude and nature of events and changes. As such, History which studies past events and change provide the basis and foresights for national development.

Thus, for policy planners to neglect the inclusion of History Education for Primary Schools in the National Curriculum of Education is disastrous to the Nigeria nation project. It shows that they lack historical consciousness as we will find ourselves groping in the dark for a direction, as to where we are going to as a nation. To support this assertion, Atanda posits that "history is as old as the human mind and the nation needs History as an anchor for its present and a compass for its future" (Atanda, 1990:85).

Importance of the Study of History

Any nation without the knowledge of its history is a nation without a soul, and its place in the committee of nations is in doubt. Every nation has its history of how it came to being, that is, what makes that country unique or different from other countries. Any person or community that cannot remember its past is condemned to repeat. Hence, History should be studied in the Nigerian Primary Schools because it is one discipline that is essential not only to individuals but the society, and because it harbours beauty. It offers a storehouse of information about how people and societies came about and how they behave.

History also helps provide identity, and this is unquestionably one of the reasons all modern nations encourages its teaching in some form. Historical data include evidence about how families, groups, institutions and whole countries were formed and about how they have evolved while retaining cohesion. In a related view, History which documents the activities of man, also educate the younger generation about the role of great men such as Tafawa Balewa, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo in the making of Nigeria. Also, in Nigeria's fight against corruption, historical knowledge can be imperative in educating the pupils by exposing those involved in fraud.

The past causes the present and the present and so the future. And to understand changes in the society, for example, a shift in political party dominance in the Nigeria's 2015 election or a major change in insurgency as the Northeastern part of the Nigeria was engulfed into it, we have to look for factors that took shape earlier (i.e. causative force). Only through studying history can we grasp how things changes, or understand the forces or factors that causes change and how to solve them. History, then provides the only extensive materials available to study the human condition. It also focuses attention on the complex processes of social change, including the factors that are causing change around us today. The study of history provides a terrain for moral contemplation. Studying the stories of individuals and situations in the past allows a learner of history to test his/her own moral sense as against some of the real complexity individuals have faced in difficult settings.

The study of history is essential for good citizenship. This alone is the most common justification for the place of history in school curricula. History provides data about the emergence of national institutions, problems and values - it is only the significant storehouse of such data available. It offers evidence also about how nations interacted with other nations, providing international and comparative prospective essentials for responsible citizenship. Further studying history help us understand how recent, current and perspective changes that affects the lives of citizens are emerging or may emerge and what causes are involved. More important, studying history encourages habits of minds that are vital for responsible public behaviour, whether as a nation or community leader, an informed, petitioner or a simple observer. The neglect of History Education in the Nigerian Primary Schools has plunged the nation into its present sociopolitical and economic quagmire in its process of development. How can you account for the fact that, it is only in Nigeria that foreigners come in to settle without due knowledge of the government or registration authorities? It is only in Nigeria that citizens changes places of residence without the knowledge of those in authority. It is also in Nigeria that we formulae and change education policy within ten (10) years span without reaping the fruits of the former.

It goes on to say that, the Nigerian government policy planners do not know where they are leading the people to. If the knowledge and study of History in schools are to be taken seriously despite of insurgency, recycling of developmental and educational policies, will stop for progressive policies as obtained in developed countries. History as a wheel of progress is very central in the development of any nation. Thus, neglecting History Education is invariably neglecting development. Nigerian youths today do not know their history, nor where they are from simply because they were not taught history in the primary and secondary schools. Unlike their counterparts in Europe, Asia, Middle East and America, who are proud to identify with their country and historical heritage no matter the situation. Can same be said of Nigerian youths?

The study of History Education in Nigerian Primary Schools today is a must, if the country has to move forward. History is a wonderful detective, a record keeper, an adviser, a recall of events/development however unpalatable, a judge and a merciless administration of punishment of wrongdoers (Mahdi, 2008:13).

Reasons for the Neglect of the Teaching of History in our Primary Schools

It must be understood that History is the one discipline other than religion which constantly reminds society of how it came about and where it is developing to as a result of universal search for peace and social justice which has characterised man's activities since time immemorial. Therefore, the responsibility of the historian is to critically investigate the past with a view to educating the present about the details, complexities, strands, nuisance, setbacks, advances and pitfalls which have mediated this search for peace and social justice on earth overtime. This singular responsibility of History has not gone down well with particularly, the wealthy (looters) class in our society (Mangvwat, 2007:7).

History as a discipline has its own peculiar concepts, processes and wide ranged in its content matter and scope. Its special features, structure and instructional resources or aids as well as its assessment techniques, demands a slow but progressive pattern of instructional events, which in other words is sequential and spiral from the simple (known) to the complex (unknown). These calls, for instruction right from the primary through the junior and senior secondary school to the tertiary institution, but the reverse is the case looking at the school curriculum of all the three strata of learning in Nigeria school. These goes to explain the type of social behaviours of our youths today in Nigeria societies where ethics, such as respectful elders and those in position of authority, cultural values and obedience to rule of law have been thrown to the clogs. The question to ask is, Are Nigerians scared of History that even in federal colleges in Nigeria only a few teach the subjects of history?

Maybe because history or historians do not perform heart transplant, improve highways design or arrest criminals. Hence, its place in the society and school curricula seems to be questioned as many communities desire quick or instant remedy to their problem or challenges. This may seem as one major reason why curricula planers tend to neglect its inclusion in school curricula most especially in the primary school.

Conclusion

By its very nature and scope, History is a discipline which develops the intellectual, the emotional, the moral, the spiritual and social relations of the person, group, classes,

communities, nationalities, and sub-nationalities. It has direct and more values to the specific environment in which it is studied and to the lager society in general.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the basic foundation on which national development thrives is being denied of the very instrument i.e. the study of History, that would help to provide pivot for effective nation building. The de-phasing out of History education most especially in primary school curriculum and some tertiary institution is a thing of concern. The government emphasize on social studies which is fast replacing History as a teaching subject, if anything, has only succeeded in staring society and humanity of the needed knowledge showing the connections and causal-effect relationship analysis, of the unfolding activities of humanity and society. This, to some extent, explains the inhuman, reckless, animalistic and destructive ways, clashes, conflicts, insurgencies, strikes, etc. experience in Nigerian society in recent times.

Suggestions

As an expository, analytical and interrogative discipline, History enables the learner to achieve various instructional objectives in a hierarchical order such as knowledge, understanding, critical thinking, practical skills, interest and attitudes relating to historical issues and problems solving. This attributes if properly utilized and pursued can lead to all round development of the learners and the nation.

History and man cannot be separated, because of its values and usefulness in societal development. Hence there is the need to re-introduce and re-emphasize the teaching of history education in our primary and secondary schools. this will directly arouse the feeling to develop national consciousness, love of the fatherland and loyalty to defend the course of the nation.

The study of History is need to be restored at primary and secondary school levels and be made compulsory so as to ensure proper educational development of the learners and the nation at large. This is because History study help to unravel, represent the image model, and activities of the remote and recent past of man and his environment, his activities in social production and relations. How he originates, evolve over time and come to constitute a social group. Such knowledge brings out the reality of the people's cosmology, cultures, philosophy, government, economy, and socio-cultural ways of life.

If History is really and indeed the home and dwelling place of all subjects, it should not be ignored or waved aside. It has the characteristics of finding day to day solution to the problems faced by man and society. It is these fundamental realities of History as a field of study and as a veritable instrument for national development that there is the need, for Government and Policy planners, to review current school curriculum and make generation of our youths as potential leaders of tomorrow would come true, as it was obtained in the 1950s up to the 80s.

Even the federal colleges of education and tertiary institutions of learning should re-introduce department of History to encourage the study of basic liberal subjects as it is obtained in developed countries.

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