

INTRODUCTION OF HISTORY AS A STANDALONE SUBJECT IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL: MANAGEMENT DEMANDS

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Abstract

History is capable of creating in learners the love for their nation which could engender in them the spirit of patriotism, but the Nigeria nation relegated the teaching of history in her primary and secondary schools to the background for some years. Recently, the Federal Government of Nigeria approved the re-introduction of History to be taught as a standalone subject in primary and secondary schools in the country. In order to make the new policy a success, there is need for some management demands to be satisfied. Some of the demands that administrators of the UBE schools must attend to include the following: There should be training and re-training of History teachers. The re-introduced History curriculum is expected to be planned to provide for inclusion of local themes needed in shaping the worldview of young learners as they learn from their surroundings to the unknown. It is

also expected that the re-introduced History should support the building of bridges across the various tribes and not themes that separate the citizenry. New teaching approaches such as active participation of learners must be the focus to make the teaching of History less abstract. Emerging technology could be explored to make real historical events. The preparation and provision of simple textbooks in hard and soft copies is necessary to make the teaching of History better positioned for inculcating the intended behavioral changes. The article concludes with the hope that the teaching of History is capable of igniting in youth the zeal for patriotism and civil relationship.

Keywords: History, Nigerian history, history curriculum, new technology and universal basic education.

Introduction

History has immeasurable values of the past embedded in it which are capable of creating a sense of identity, citizenship and patriotism in a plural society if well explored. Nigeria pre-colonial history is endowed with themes that can enable learners to imbibe unifying qualities. It can also create in learners lessons capable of instilling in them the love of the nation while forging a path from which mistakes of the past could be avoided. It also assists in defining or redefining efforts toward state building and national development. Lessons learnt from history are veritable instructions for building a better future. That is why people, nations, tribes, professions and institutions associate themselves with historical experience for knowledge dissemination and advancement in prosperity. Economically cum scientifically, advanced nations also cherish every opportunity to relish and imbibe their history.

According to Maigida (2013), history is taught not because learners should learn facts, but because they should think and understand. In times of security, economic or political challenges, knowledge gained from

history such as national identification characteristics could be invoked for national cohesion and unity even in the midst of diversity. Plumb (1971) explained the purpose of history succinctly: to deepen understanding about men and society, not for its own sake, but in the hope that a profounder's awareness will help to mold human attitudes and human actions. If human actions and attitudes are not regulated by laws, the egocentric nature of man may push him to ruin himself and others. On the other hand, the teaching of the history of a particular profession is a recurring decimal in the curriculum such as the history of science, history of engineering, history of medicine, history of education, history of economics, history of physics, history of nursing, history of banking, history of management, military history just to mention a few.

Even institutions and organizations are not left out in the invocation of history to their defense. If everyone cherishes history, one wonders why a nation such as Nigeria relegated the teaching of her rich history to the background at her primary and secondary levels of education. Nigerian historians warned against relegating the teaching of her history to the background. For example, Ikime (2006) argues that if history is ignored, 'we cease in that measure to be human because we would have no knowledge of who we are and how we came to be, like victims of collective amnesia groping in the dark for our identity'. Nigeria is not alone in this though but it took her too long to wake up from her slumber. Singapore

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too did not teach her history to her citizens shortly after independence. According to Chia (2012:191), 'Singapore is atypical of the decolonized states in that there was no impetus for the writing and teaching of its national history in the first two decades following its independence'. The likely consequence is that youths who are often referred to as the leaders of tomorrow were deprived of valuable lessons contained in history as a subject. How could citizens be proud of a nation they knew little or nothing about? Hence, common mistakes such as elections irregularities, population census issues, corruption in high places, tribal cleavages, political sentimentalities, social unrest and so on keep re-occurring in our national discourses.

If youths are not taught, they cannot be blamed for being ignorant about the great efforts made by the founding fathers of the nation to forge uniting bonds among the various groups in the past. The place of history in the fight for the attainment of Nigeria independence is well captured in the literature. Inter-group relations among pre-colonial peoples of Nigeria illustrates their cohesiveness. Historians identified 'a compactness about the Nigerian geographical environment which encouraged greater movement and interaction of peoples within it than with peoples outside it' (Ade-Ajayi & Alagoa, 1980: 225). Historians have therefore concluded that 'Nigeria was not merely an arbitrary creation'. Such historical reality encouraged the nationalists to be united in demanding for political independence from Britain. Shortly after independence though, political leaders dumped the teaching of history in the dust bin. For a tree to grow tall, huge and healthy, it must be supported by well-developed roots. History is the root or anchor for national development. If history is removed from a people, their roots would have been removed and the bonds of unity would have been broken. The separatist activism that presently envelops Nigeria may not be unconnected with the lack of patriotism, nationalism and civic relations which are imbibed through the teaching of history. Citizens' allegiance to the state appears to be weak, while tribal and sentimental cleavages gain prominence in contemporary Nigerian society. This is possibly because history was not taught to create the spirit of cohesion among the various groups.

History as a teaching subject is not about dates and ability to chronologically memorize facts. It is associated with the inculcation of citizenship values, national pride and identity in support of national cohesion. Awgichew and Ademes (2022) note that History education can enhance national cohesion, convey collective historical memory, create peaceful socialization in the society, and play a critical role in shaping the nation-building process

and producing imagined communities. Maigida (2013) faults the removal of History from the school curriculum, wondering if there was no need for people to understand or know their history and that of the society in which they live. Without teaching of history, individuals may not imbibe the patriotic and civic culture inherent in it. Children learn about the heroic deeds of their tribes in stories, songs, dramas, folktales and other forms of oral literature. Not teaching history deprives the school from teaching the children valuable lessons inherent in history.

Even though much unexpected events have taken Nigeria back since the teaching of Nigeria history was relegated to the background, the new directive that History should become a standalone subject in our primary and Junior secondary schools is a welcome development. The directive supports the efforts of our fore-fathers since pre-colonial era to establish the bond of unity among the various peoples of Nigeria. The teaching of Nigerian history in primary and secondary schools could create the spirit of patriotism and national consciousness in learners. Having neglected the teaching of history for a long time, its re-introduction is bound to be confronted with some management challenges. This paper examines the management demands which are imperative for the successful implementation of the re-introduced Nigerian history as a standalone subject at the Universal Basic Education level. Attention is given to the place of curriculum planning, workforce capacity development, financing logistics, and history textbooks production and distribution in UBE.

Management Demands for the Re-introduced History

The National Policy on Education recognizes the place of educational management when it stated that the success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate financing (FGN 2014). Without proper provision and management of human and material resources for the re-introduced History, efforts being made may not fully accomplish set goals. Thus, Ogunode, Wama and Dilmurod (2020) argue that educational reformers in Nigeria do not often give sufficient thoughts to the resource provision (human, logistics, financial and managerial) components required to implement such reforms before pronouncements are made. In the absence of adequate managerial preparation, policy statements become mere political propaganda without achieving the real intent. The management of human and material resources is cardinal to the success of the re-introduced History in the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria as would be discussed henceforth.

Planning of the History Curriculum

The themes for the re-introduced History have to be carefully chosen to infuse national consciousness in learners. Osuji and Nwafor (2022) observe that *national consciousness is brought about by the school curriculum if well planned. Recently, the nation witnessed the emergence of local warlords, tribal loyalists, militias, insurgency, and separatist agitations. The schools need the history curriculum which will contain interesting themes that inculcate uniting bounds among the peoples of Nigeria. It should also emphasise themes that glued the various groups together even before the advent of political amalgamation in 1914. Imakpokpomwan (2019) notes that:*

Taught and intended curriculum focus on national cohesion and unity while playing down what divides us so that progress can be attained. In a plural society like Nigeria, tribalism, religious bigotry, linguistics affiliation, political leanings and cultural identities could be manipulated to satisfy individual egocentric ends. Properly planned and well-implemented, balanced, functional education on the other hand could instill in learners values and attitudes that promote 'oneness' and cohesiveness as citizens adjust to changes occasioned by the quest for national development. (66)

The re-introduced History is expected to have the various ingredients that will be needed in a curriculum designed to bring about changes in the society. Planning education in Nigeria has been characteristically unitary, even though the nation professes to practice federalism where the component states are expected to develop at their pace. This implies that the curricular themes for our educational system have largely remained national in outlook instead of being made of local and national contents. According to Imakpokpomwan (2013), even though Nigeria government is 'de-jure' a federal arrangement, it largely operates a unitary educational planning approach at the UBE level. This is because the primary education curricula are basically made of the same content across the various states throughout the country. In some countries, certain percentages are reserved for local input into the primary education curriculum (FAO 2002). Sagita, Deliarnoor and Afifah (2019) explain the reasons for local content inputs in Singapore thus: 'the purpose of implementing local content curriculum is for students to be more familiar and engage to their environment so they are not alienated from the socio-cultural context in which they live'.

On the other hand, the approach in planning the school curriculum for the country has been top-bottom. In this case, local realities may not be covered as it emphasises national coverage. That should not be in a federal arrangement. Younger learners in lower basic education classes should focus on the history of their immediate environments. Local themes are needed in shaping the worldview of young learners. The contemporary local realities too must be accommodated so that young learners can learn from the known to the unknown. It is necessary to trace the roots of the various tribes and peoples so as to establish the 'nerves and bones' that connect every ethnic group in the country together. Historical antecedents that promoted inter-ethnic marriages, arts, culture, language, commerce, industries and intra and inter communal relationships could be captured at lower levels of education. From the local themes, historical derivatives could be introduced to accommodate regional facts and interconnectivities in local, regional and national topics.

The new curriculum for the teaching of Nigerian history must be based on building bridges and not themes that separate the citizenry. As learners progress to middle basic, wider spectrum in terms of geographical coverage and personalities of historical values within and outside a particular region will be introduced. At the upper basic level (junior secondary school), the history curriculum could include themes like pre-colonial inter-ethnic relationships, commerce, transportation, agriculture, local industries, traditional institutions, cultural imperatives, local jurisprudence in resolving issues, the rule of law as they existed in local communities, communal living, sanctity for human life and societal cohesion.

At the curriculum planning stage, stake-holders from urban to rural schools should be involved since they relate with the learners on daily basis. It is not enough to assemble university professors and Ministry of Education bureaucrats to discuss the teaching of history at the primary school level without involving the local stake-holders; the primary school teachers and the parents of the pupils. They are the locus of dispersal of instruction. One would expect teachers with experiences from across the Local Government Areas to be part of the curriculum planning for the re-introduced History.

Financing the Teaching of History

Regular visitations in form of field trips and excursions are certain to bring life to the teaching of Nigerian history. In the 1970s, the teaching of geography and history at the primary school level enlightened learners about the sources of the solid minerals in Nigeria. Solid

mineral is increasingly being explored illegally by foreign elements, while young Nigerians know next to nothing about the natural endowment in their neighbourhood. The teaching of Nigeria history should bring to the learners' awareness the mineral deposits in their localities. At least, once a term or at approved intervals, students must visit historical sites where they would discover more about the history of their people and neighbours. The aim is not to encourage certain children to lord it over others from other tribes but to progressively bring them to the reality that diversity of the Nigerian nation is a blessing to its peoples. Universal Basic Education does not allow fee collection from pupils. This is to enable all children irrespective of the socio-economic status of their parents to benefit from basic education. However, if excursion must be embarked upon, it means that parents must regularly support their children with the transportation logistics to places of interest. Some parents may feel that UBE expects no financial supports from them. That erroneous impression must be corrected. The motto of UBE speaks volume about the support everyone can give. It says education 'for all is the responsibility of all'. There must be a policy guideline to define what areas government expects the parents to financially support their children and wards. Otherwise, government would have to provide the needed logistics for planned learning to be effective. For example, in discussing the history of crude oil exploration in Nigeria, a visit to Oloibiri, the location of the first commercial crude oil exploration site, could impress on the young learners a sense of patriotism, quest for scientific discovery and zeal for national development. In Edo State, Oben oil wells are popular among contractors and government officials. Students too can learn much about oil exploration and downstream business in the oil industry through field trips.

Manpower Training and Retraining

Capacity building of the teaching workforce is the deliberate process of infusing new methods, skill, knowledge, ability and technology in existing teachers with a view to attaining improved and higher productivity in their teaching responsibility. Ayeni (2020) studied the relationship between capacity building and teachers' productivity in Ondo State, Nigeria. He found that there was a significant relationship between capacity building and teachers' productivity. Thus, the more capacity building a teacher receives, the better his performance in instructional delivery.

There was a time when history was taught at the primary and secondary school levels. Teachers then were

at least taught history at a point in time during their primary and secondary education. Many teachers in the system presently may never have received lesson in history at any level. Even then, the teaching skills are subject to the changing demands for an information age teacher. It will be counter-productive to entrust the teaching of the re-introduced History to teachers that know little or nothing about the subject matter. Those who read History as a teaching subject in the past may have been forced by circumstances to relocate to the teaching of similar subjects such as Government, Social Studies, or Civic Education as the imperative of the past dictated if they are not yet retired. They too may have lost bearing with the current trend in pedagogy of teaching History at the Universal Basic Education level. The need for teachers' capacity building cannot be over-emphasized because learning approaches is dynamic and so instructions should constantly improve along the needs of the society. Kumari (2022) highlights the need for capacity building of teachers thus:

In the globalization era, marked by its borderless world through information communication technology, this change becomes more prominent. These changes have changed the trend and profile of students, created new needs in the knowledge and technology areas and the modified role and function of schools making them more challenging than before. The globalization Era has changed the teaching profession landscape. (284)

It is obvious that the pattern of teaching as handled over to the nation by the colonial masters can no longer fit the instructional needs of the 21st century learners in Nigeria. Omoifo (2016) establishes that the 21st century teachers should be endowed with both hard and soft skills in order for them to capitalize on the knowledge, experience, values and attitudes that students bring to the programme. The 21st century teachers have to be resourceful by sourcing materials beyond conventional textbooks, including mobilizing students to source materials from the internet and elsewhere. Teachers must therefore be equipped with the ability and capability to adjust to the emerging reality by self development, mentorship, participation in seminars, conferences and other in-service training provided for them. History teachers, therefore, can no longer rely on the skills learnt in the 20th century to train the global citizen of the 21st century. There is need to train and retrain the available teachers of History so that their energies can be re-directed to the renewed hopes in the teaching of the re-

introduced History. It is also very instructive that training institutions in Nigeria should dig deeper to equip their students (would-be-teachers) who are the future workforce of the education industries with varied and emerging teaching approaches.

Production and Provision of History Text books

The preparation and provision of simple textbooks for the teaching of any subjects is indispensable to the learning of the subject concerned. History cannot be properly taught and learnt without adequate coverage of history curriculum written on modern textbooks in line with the new curriculum. Experts should be encouraged to write books for use in the teaching of History as dictated in the re-introduced history curriculum. Publishers of textbooks also need training to be able to produce easily comprehensible textbooks for the re-introduced history. Multi-media concepts expect learners to be involved in learning with all senses. Electronic copies of history textbooks can also be developed to fit into the cell phones of contemporary learners. In line with the expectation of the Universal Basic Education, Government can procure or subsidize the Nigeria history textbooks for the use of children in the UBE programmes.

History and Emerging Technologies

In the past, the teaching of history has been principally centered on teachers. Modern dispensation pedagogy encourages child-centered learning. The teacher-centered learning approach was the most popular method for teaching history in the past. Resourceful teachers could get the students actively engaged in narrating the events of the past. For instance, the teacher could explore active learning method to get the students engaged in teaching topics in history. Felder and Brent (2009) explain that 'active learning is anything course-related that all students in a class session are called upon to do other than simply watching, listening and taking notes'. To Candido, Murman & Mcmanus (2014), 'active learning places students in a participatory role, rather than sitting for a lecture'. Active learning may not be a new idea, but it is expressing an old idea in a new way. People have learnt since time immemorial simply by listening to people, watching what they do and getting involved in a way by imitating them before they master the concept. Voet and Wever (2016) encouraged the teaching of history through inquiry-based learning (IBL). They explain inquiry-based learning within the context of history to mean that students are offered the opportunity to conduct their own investigations into the past, through an analysis of historical sources (Voet and

Wever, 2016). Getting the students involved makes the teaching of history more interactive. Active learning environment encourages students to work with the content in a new way as they make connections between new content and old theories, or as they reflect upon the material alone or with other learners (Candido, Murman & Mcmanus 2014).

The history teacher can engage active learning by getting involved in the use of emerging technologies to dispense instructions. Young learners learn more through play and songs. If teachers can transform the theme to a play, song, rhyme, poem or something more participatory, the children can learn it. For example, the teaching of the landmark features or the names of the kings that have reigned in the kingdom could be transformed into rhyme, songs or drama; it will make the teaching of history less distant or abstract. The information age is characterized with the use of computers, handset, short dramas, internet and other social media. The teachers should explore them to deliver instruction. In addition, Creative Commons Attributions (CCA) as well as the Open Education Resources (OER) movements are making learning resources available in many subject matters. The history teacher of the 21st century should be more resourceful in getting the children engaged in learning. With the advent of the social media such as snapchat, YouTube and other agency of the world wide web, historical themes can be made real by bringing images of distant and near places to the classrooms.

Economic History of Nigeria

In the 1960s and 1970s, the teaching of history at the primary school level focused on the exploration of West Africa by Britain. Pupils were taught how Mungo Park 'discovered' the River Niger. Themes centered on European explorers such as Richard Landers brothers, the slave trade and the like were prominent in the colonial curriculum. These stories were told while drawing out the economic benefits of such expeditions to the imperialists. Their mode of transportation, trading, article of trade, and the business sagacity of the colonial officials etc. were their focus, hence they got the support of the political, religious and economic leaders back home. But this is not the time to talk of Mungo Park, instead the focus should be on local economic realities of Nigeria history.

It is time to teach the economic history of Nigeria. Crude oil, solid mineral, agriculture, revival of industries, transportation initiatives, employment creation, exportation, creativity, local manufacturing and local disputes resolution mechanism should be

explored among the themes of the re-introduced history. For instance, the colonial masters discouraged the use of organic local gin popularly called kai-kai in the Niger Delta in support of the synthetic imported gin. They arrested and prosecuted local producers of guns. Post colonial governments in Nigeria have not fared better in their aversions for local industries. For example, local manufacturing of gun has been viewed with skepticism. Yet everywhere in the country today, imported guns are ubiquitously in the hands of unauthorized elements in the society.

In the area of medicine, herbal products are imported into the country as food supplements, while the locally-inherited local herbal medicines are viewed with disdain. The history of local industries must be the focus of the new history. 'Charity', they say; 'begins at home'. Local production in the learners' environment should be the focus. It is time for the nation to teach the younger generation the history of local production, including the famous arts and crafts of the people. For instance, the Benin bronze arts of over 500 years old are still the cynosure of tourists. Such artistic works have a lot to teach about the history, industries, organization and politics of that time. It is also time to teach the young folks how to turn such ancient achievements with a touch of modernity into economic hub for national development.

Conclusion

The article has discussed what can be infused into the teaching of the re-introduced history to make it more effective. As discussed in the article, focus must on getting the young learners to be attracted to the teaching of history in modern ways. The re-introduced history curriculum is expected to be packaged with functional themes as well as easily comprehensible texts, produced in both hard and soft format to retain the attention of the young learners whose romance with modern information and communication technology is unprecedented. It is hoped that the teaching of the re-introduced history is capable of igniting in youth the zeal for patriotism and civil relationship.

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