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CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Copyright page	ii
Notes to Contributors	iii
Editorial Board	iv
Contents	v
 (Mrs.) Y. Ijaiya (Ph.D.) – Effects of Over-Crowded Classrooms on Teacher-Students Interactions.	 1
 O.R. Fabayo (Ph.D.) – Evaluating the Impact of Teaching Practice in the Nigerian School System.	 12
 A. Oseni – The Continuous Assessment Policy: English Language Teachers' Preparedness.	 19
 L.T. Ajibade and U.A. Raheem – A Reappraisal of Fieldwork as a Teaching Method in Geography.	 27
 O.A. Idowu – Regional Variations in English in Nigeria and the Implications for its Teaching as a Second Language.	 36
 B.O. Ibrahim – A Study of Factors Influencing Choice of History in Kwara State Secondary Schools.	 42
 K.O. Omolawon – The Role Physical Education in the Promotion of Health and Well-Being.	 51
 S.O. Medahunsi (Ph.D.) – Judgements of Reading Levels: Are Teachers Always Right?	 55
 Timothy O. Oyetunde and Chinwe A. Muodumogu – Parents' Involvement in their Children's Literacy Development: Findings and Implications for Building Effective Home-School Partnerships.	 64

A STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CHOICE OF HISTORY IN KWARA STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

by

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Abstract

In recent past, history as a subject in secondary schools across the nation and the world at large was regarded as the core subject in the Humanity or Arts classes. Equally, it was difficult to pursue professions like Law and Internal Relation without credit in history. But today it is observed that history as a subject is being relegated or at best neglected by students because emphasis is being shifted to government and social studies. Thus, the purpose of this article is to help make students, educators, school administrators and government aware of the danger at hand if a subject like history is allowed to die. Various factors responsible for low patronage of history are discussed and ways out provided to assist and elicit students' interest in the subject.

Introduction.

In modern times, the school curriculum has been broadened to include a variety of subjects in the liberal arts, the humanities and the sciences. Some of these subjects are purely academic and other vocational. The scope of the courses goes beyond the three basic components of learning as taught by the early missionaries, i.e. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

Among the old subjects is **HISTORY**. To the layman, History is simply story of the past. However, the significance and scope of the course (History) is wider than the import of this statement. In many countries of the world, including Nigeria, History is one of the core subjects taught in our secondary schools and higher institutions because of its relevance to the social, political and economic life of the people. But it is regrettable that in spite of its importance and popularity, students in Nigerian schools are now neglecting history. This is a problem that calls for attention. The main causes need to be examined and corrected so that the subject can be given a benefiting status in the secondary school curriculum.

Furthermore, the writings of many educationists in the past and recent years show that despite the importance of some subjects among which included History, and their relevance to social political, economic and educational system of country, History as a subject in secondary schools faces a lot of problems. According to educators and researchers, the student himself, the parents, the teachers, the policy makers, the government and the society at large are all factors, which affect the students' choice of subjects in their schools.

In many of our schools, teachers are very incompetent as indicated by striven in 1980. There is no doubt that we lack trained teachers in History since

attention is mainly on science subjects. Many of the trained teachers are not ready to offer the great sacrifice of time and energy that history demands. Apart from equipping himself with adequate knowledge of the subject, the teacher must keep improving his method of teaching and learning as opines by Nasiru (1980). To succeed and stimulate interests of students in history therefore, the teacher must be a model of excellence in the dissemination of ideas. His spoken of English must be such that the students can copy and remember to their advantages.

Fafunwa (1975) indicates also that the school is a major factor that affects the choice of students. "It is the job of the school to create an ideal situation for the child to discover things for himself". The reverse is the case in many of our schools in Kwara State. Knowing the bulk of work in history, the periods are not enough and in most cases, the periods are restricted in the afternoon when assimilation becomes difficult considering the way science subjects are handled with laboratory and adequate equipments and teaching aids. For history no teaching aids of any kind, no maps to read nor microfilm of important documents. Every thing is left for the History teachers to do and perform miracle.

The condition of teachers is equally deplorable, pathetic and repulsive. There is no incentive given to history teachers like their counter parts in the science area. Hence many history teachers opt out of teaching. Greyshon (1989) said:

Out of frustration, good and dedicated teachers opt out of teaching to join Private Sectors in Nigeria...

Malcom Donglas (1966) said of the teaching profession in Norway:

In Norway, the teaching profession is held in high regard and it is more difficult to obtain admission to a teachers' college than to enter a University.

Another areas where the government has not encouraged the teaching of History is in the area of the new school curriculum. As reveals later, students can now offer both History and Government simultaneously. This has afforded students that opportunity to neglect History, which they term to be too difficult when compared to Government.

Most students are their own enemies as far as their performances in History in concerned. This was the reason advanced from students contacted during fieldwork for this research as factor responsible not to choose history in the 1998 senior school certificate examination. Osisanwo (1986) said:

For every hundred candidates registered for West African School Certificate Examinations every year, less than 30% usually pass with credits.

For history, the story is more pertetic. Instead of reading novels, magazine, newspapers written in good English and improve their spoken and written forms of English, which is the main ingredient of history. Students prefer to read Yoruba and junk magazines like "Ikebe Super" "Lulu" and others written in sub Standard English as equally noticed by Akilo (1982).

Osazee (1980) on the functions and importance of Library said:

the school Library also provides an information atmosphere free of classroom tension, where pupils can pursue knowledge and other personal interests in a guided but inhibited manner.

Most schools in the state don't have library facilities those that have are highly sub-standard and without books on current happenings around the world.

The Problem.

History is on the curriculum of all the secondary schools in Nigeria and in Kwara State Schools in particular. It has been observed that there is a downward trend in the number of students offering History at the senior secondary school level where the subject is taught. There is also a similar trend in the quality of grades or passes made by the students that sit for the subject at both internal and external public examinations. By implication then, the problem addressed in this paper is the practical experience in the classroom as a teacher for many years. To solve the problem of students' neglect of History at Senior School Level, the following is to be investigated.

- (A) Is the content of History syllabus a limiting factor?
- (B) Is there any relationship between students' neglect of History and the previous performances of students in the subject in the senior secondary certificate examination?
- (C) Is the availability/ cost of History textbooks a limiting factor?
- (D) Is the non-availability of library services in schools a limiting factor?
- (E) Is the understanding/mastery of English language a limiting factor?
- (F) Is there any relationship between students' neglect of History and other related subjects?
- (G) Is the teacher's qualification a limiting factor?

Scope of the Study.

The study was geographically limited to Kwara State and also to students in senior secondary schools where the subject is being taught. The schools for the investigation were chosen through stratified random sampling. Two schools have been chosen from each of the sixteen (16) Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Research Methodology.

The method used was descriptive through the use of a researcher questionnaire designed on both students and teachers of history and other arts-related students. After the general introduction, the response of both students and teachers were collected and categorized. Three hundred and twenty (320) copies of the students' questionnaire were administered in all the thirty-two (32) schools. Ninety-six (96) of these were meant for students offering History as a subject, while the remaining two hundred and twenty four (224) were administered on students of other art subjects who had either dropped or avoided History as a subject. As for the teachers, a teacher of History in each of the schools was served the instrument. The data were analysed using the simple percentage system for each item in the questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire to which the teachers and students responded to can be seen in tables 5,6, and 7. The responses were divided into three categories:

- i. The History teachers' responses
- ii. The History students' responses
- iii. Other Arts and Social Science students' responses.

Teachers' Responses:- There were thirty two (32) respondents. Their responses were analysed on the basis of the teachers' qualification, teaching experience, number of students taught and age.

Table One: Teachers' Qualification.

S/NO	NCE	BA.	BA/PGDE	M.A.	TOTAL	%
1	3	-	-	-	3	9.4
2	-	9	-	-	9	28.11
3	-	-	10	-	10	31.3
4	-	-	-	10	10	31.3
TOTAL	3	9	10	10	32	100

Table Two: Teachers' Experience

NO OF TEACHERS	EXPERIENCE	%
0	0-1	0
12	2-5	37.5
10	6-10	31.25
10	11-15 And Above	31.25
32	Total	100

Table Three: Teachers' Teaching Workload

NO. OF TEACHERS	NO. OF STUDENT'S TAUGHT	%
32	1-20	100
-	21-60	-
-	61-90	0
32	Total	100

Table 4: Age Ranges of Teacher

AGE RANGE	NO	PERCENTAGE
25-40	25	78.13
40-60	7	21.9
TOTAL	32	100

Table 5: Teachers Responses on Problems Facing the Teaching and Learning of History.

	AGREED		DISAGREED	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
1. The S.S.C.E. Syllabus on History is too wide	22	68.8	10	31.3
2. There are incentives to encourage the teachers of History	5	15.6	27	84.4
3. I have too many periods of History to teacher per week	2	6.3	30	93.7
4. My school library is adequately equipped for teachers and students use.	10	31.3	22	68.7
5. Instructional materials like tape, charts and maps are available in my school	4	12.5	28	87.5
6. I as teacher of History have all the necessary textbooks on History	28	87.5	4	12.5
7. Students neglect History for other related subjects such as Government and Social Studies	30	93.8	2	6.3

Table 6: Students Responses on What they think of History

	AGREED		DISAGREED	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
1. History is easy to learn	65	67.7	31	44.9
2. I like to read history books, newspaper or magazines written in good English.	40	41.7	56	58.3
3. My parents told me the history of my family.	30	31.3	65	69.8
4. The school authority arrange excursion to places of interest that involve the learning of history.	20	20.8	76	79.2
5. Our school library has enough books on history.	40	41.7	56	58.3
6. I listen to radio or watch television when there are historical programmes.	35	41.7	61	63.5
7. History club exists in my school	0	0	96	100

Table 7: Students Question on Why they Neglect History as One of their Subject for S.S.C. Examination

		AGREED		DISAGREED	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
1.	I have problem in learning history because it involves too much writing and highly narrative.	200	89.3	24	10.7
2.	History is too complex for me to understand than other subjects.	180	80.4	44	19.6
3.	History syllabus is too wide	192	85.7	32	14.3
4.	Subjects like Government and Social Studies are good substitute for history.	215	96	9	4
5.	I take part in other literary activities in my school.	120	54	104	46
6.	I am very good in mathematics	42	19	182	81

Discussion.

Table 1 indicates that about ninety percent (90%) of teachers put in charge of history at the secondary schools selected for this study have basic qualification to teach the subject affectively. As a matter of fact, the remaining ten percent i.e. those with N.C.E. are at various stages of completing their degree programmes through the sandwich programmes of various Universities. While table two shows...that all the teachers have acquired the necessary teaching experience since none of them fall below one year on the job. Also in table 3, one can see that all the teachers teach less than 20 students, which is less than minimum number of 40 students to a teacher. This situation makes it convenient for the teacher to give constant assignment, essay writing, tests for marking and proper teaching in the class. Table four further reveals that majority of the teachers fall between 25-40 which is an indication that they should be able to teach effectively bearing in mind that they are in active productive ages.

Table 5 reveals among others that:

- Most of the teachers agreed that the History Syllabus is too wide for students of Secondary school age and this contribute to why they opt for other subjects.
- There are no special incentives for History teachers as applied to other science related teachers.
- Majority of the teachers are not too occupied, hence the zeal for teaching. However, most of them are given other subjects to teacher.
- Sixty-eight (68%) percent of the teachers teach at schools where library facilities are inadequate and without instructional materials.

- e. The teachers are provided with History textbooks with which to teach. However, students preferred subjects like Government, Social Studies and Economics to History as revealed in table six.

As indicated in table 6, majority of the students, i.e. 67.7 among those offering history at senior secondary school level felt that the subject is difficult when compared to other subjects being offered in their schools. Most of the students were not in the habit of reading historical novels or magazines written in good English. It is common to find junk magazines and videotapes in students' school bags these days, instead of more profitable reading materials. Worse still is the fact that most students do not listen to radio or television to watch educative programmes.

The educational values derivable from clubs in secondary schools, most especially Historical Club, would seem not to have been fully appreciated in the schools investigated.

Further effort was made to sample opinions of those students of art subjects who refused to offer history or literature as one of their subjects in the 1999 senior school certificate examination as indicated in table seven.

As said above table 7 shows clearly why students neglect history for other subjects. Students no longer want to involve themselves in writing too much during examinations. History needs much elucidation and free expression. Little wonder therefore that more than eighty percent (80%) of the students' respondents subscribed to the notion that history as a subject is too wide and complex for them, and the next option available to them is either Government or Social Studies. Hence most of them offered Government at the senior secondary school level.

Conclusion.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be put up to stimulate students' interest in History especially at the senior secondary schools level.

1. The primary school is the level at which academic foundation is laid and English language is the pivot around which other subjects resolve. Therefore primary schools nation wide need competent teachers to handle English. The government of Kwara State and indeed Nigeria should also find solutions to the scarcity of qualified English language teachers in secondary schools. Ability to express our self freely in English would seem to be one of the factors that influences candidate's choice of History.
2. Funds should be made available to schools for the purchase of teaching aids like radio, tape recorders and even television sets to aid the learning process.
3. Teachers and school authorities should insist as it used to be in the past that all students belong to, and take part in literary societies

such as debating society, creative writers club, dramatic and historical societies where the skills of free expression can be cultivated.

4. Government should re-structure the current History syllabus which seems as a subjects to be too wide to enable teachers teach it easily and students to learn it effectively.

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