



THE RELEVANCE, CONSTRAINTS, AND WAY FORWARD OF FIELD TRIP METHOD: A PANACEA FOR HISTORY TEACHERS IN NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

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Abstract

Field trip has long been recognized as a valuable tool in teaching and learning history, providing students with hands-on experiences that can enhance their understanding and engagement with historical concepts. This paper explores the relevance, constraints, and way forward of field trip method in history education in Nigeria. The relevance of field trip lies in its ability to provide experiential learning, promotes critical thinking, and fosters a deeper understanding of historical concepts and events just as it stimulates students' enthusiasm in history through firsthand information, and provides students with the opportunity to ask questions on issues they see practically in the course of field trip as well as promotes interdisciplinary connections between history and other subjects like Social Studies, Geography, Government and Civic education. However, several constraints including logistical challenges, financial constraints, time constraints, break in communication, curriculum constraint, weather and safety concerns of the students cripple the effectiveness of field trip. The paper highlighted potential strategies for addressing the constraints and promoting effective use of field trip in history education. The paper relied on secondary sources of historical reconstruction such as text books, journals as well as information from the internet. The paper concludes that despite these constraints, field trip can be a panacea for history teachers in Nigeria in the 21st century if properly planned and executed.

Keywords: Teaching, history, field trip, History teachers, Nigeria 21st century

Introduction

The teaching and learning of history have passed through a significant transformation over the years with educators relentlessly seeking for innovative methods to ease students' understanding of the subject. In Nigeria, the

traditional lecture-based approach to teaching history suffered a critical attack for its limitations in fostering in depth thinking, creativity, and emotional connections with the past. Amidst these challenges, field trip method has emerged as promising pedagogical approach, offering a



unique opportunity for students to experience firsthand information and develop a deeper understanding of the subject (Kolb,1984).

Field trip also known as educational excursion, involves guided visits to historical sites, museums, and other culturally significant historical locations. By providing students with a tangible connection to the past, field trip can enhance their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning experience (Kolb,1984). This experiential learning approach enables students to contextualize historical events, appreciate cultural diversity, and develop essential skills such as critical thinking problem-solving, and collaboration.

In the 21st century, Nigerian educators face numerous challenges in the course of teaching history, including inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, and limited opportunities for experiential learning. It is against this backdrop that the field trip approach provides a refreshing ground and a genuine alternative, allowing educators to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching methods and provide students with a more immersive and engaging learning experience.

Although, a curious mind might still be pondering why emphasis is still on field trip despite overwhelming advancement in teaching strategies evidenced by the use of hardware and software. This underscores the fact that field trip remains unequalled for history teaching which is what this paper addresses. The entire paper is structured into the following sections; introduction, conceptual clarification, the significance of field trip in teaching and learning history, challenges of field trip method in teaching and learning history, strategies of mitigating the challenges of field trip method and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning are closely related. However, the two concepts project different meaning. As opined by (Muazu, 2017), teaching is an activity aimed at bringing about meaningful

learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable. It involves a teacher, a learner, and content in form of knowledge, facts, information, and a skill to be impacted; a deliberate intention on the part of the teacher to teach for learning and on the part of the learner to learn, as well as a method that respects the learner's cognitive integrity and freedom of choice. In teaching, the content must not be imposed for the criterion of willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner would be violated. Also in teaching, the learners should be given the freedom to ask questions so as to clarify ambiguous areas.

Teaching is a process in which one individual teaches or instructs another individual. It is an activity with four phases; curriculum, planning, instructing and evaluating (Hough & James, 2019). To teach is to engage students in learning; thus teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge. A teacher requires not only knowledge of subject matter, but knowledge of how students learn and how to transform them into active learners. Therefore, the more prepared and qualified a history teacher is, the easier it will be for him or her to convey historical information to the students. This will help increase students' enthusiasm for the subject. On the other side of it, an unqualified or less educated history teacher will have harder time answering students' questions which may result in students' diminished respect for the teacher, as well as lessen the students' interest in the topic at hand and the subject in general. On the whole, the nature and characteristics of teaching can be described as summarized in this order; teaching is all about giving information, teaching is a face to face encounter, teaching is an interactive process, teaching is skilled occupation as every teacher is expected to know the general methods of teaching-learning situation.

Having conceptualized teaching, it is equally important to fully understand what learning is all about. Therefore, **what is learning?** Learning is a process that leads to change which occurs as a result of experience and increase in potentials for improved performance and future learning. The change in learner may happen at the level of



knowledge, attitude or behaviour. As a result of learning, learners are opportune to see concepts, ideas and the world differently. Learning is the direct result of how students interpret and respond to their experiences.

In the view of (Mu'azu,2017),learning is the process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, attitudes and preferences. The ability to learn is possessed by humans and in this case the students. The changes induced by learning often last a lifetime as human learning starts at birth or even before birth (conception) and continues until death as a consequence of ongoing interactions between the students and their environment.

History

History is an account of what actually happened in the past which has a link to what is happening at present and can help in planning or projecting for the future. History is also seen as the continuous interaction between the historian and his facts and an unending dialogue between the present and the past. It encapsulates the interpretation of traces or relics of the past in the light of the imaginary idea of the historian which is self-depending, self-determining and self-justifying form of thought (Adesote & Fatoki, 2013). This connotes that the historian has access to the traces of the past in terms of relics, monuments and documents.

What is most discernible from the above definitions of history is that even though history deals with human past, it requires analysis and interpretation based on evidences (historical records). An historian is the one that analyzes historical records. An historian is not usually in a hurry as he takes time to evaluate the necessary records or information received so as to come up with a balanced and acceptable account. An historian relies on different sources of historical information such as the written source, oral tradition, linguistic, ethnographic, archaeological sources just to mention a few examples.

History Teachers

History teachers are educators who specialize in

teaching history to students at various educational levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. The history teachers perform various roles and responsibilities including: the development and implementation of curriculum plans that align with educational standards and requirements, planning and delivering engaging lessons that promote critical thinking, analysis, and interpretation of historical events and processes, adoption of different teaching methods including field trip, lecture, discussion, and debate to convey historical information and concepts, management of classroom environment to ensure a safe, respectful and inclusive learning space, provision of mentorship to students aimed at helping them develop research skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. In carrying out these crucial roles, the history teachers face different challenges including those of limited resources, curriculum constraints, student motivation and engagement, assessment and evaluation.

The concept of field trip

Field trip is a type of educational outing or excursion that takes students out of the classroom and into a real-world setting to learn about a particular subject or topic. Field trip according to (Folaranmi, 1982), is an excursion taken outside the classroom for the purpose of making relevant observations and also for obtaining some specific information. Folaranmi further sees field trip as a planned journey that takes students not only to places of interest, but also to places where relevant materials, information, or knowledge are available for better teaching and learning of a particular subject matter.

Kisiel (2006) sees field trips as educational excursions that involve guided visits to various locations outside the traditional classroom setting. These locations according to Kisiel include: historical sites, Museums, National parks, and other places of historical and educational significance. Citing Oladokun (2011), Folaranmi (2016) argued that field trip is a journey made to acquaint learners with learning opportunities different from what they have in their immediate learning environment. The



distance of trip might be short or long depending on some salient factors of time, fund, personnel, caliber of students involved and organization. He further asserted that, field trip is an exercise embarked upon by school, department or parastatal to experience practical of what had been taught in the classroom. Whichever way one is looking at it, field trip is one of the inquiry based History teaching and learning method which allows students to interact with their environment.

Field trip is not only peculiar to history but used in other subjects in the humanities and natural sciences such as Geography, Geology, Archeology, Social Studies etc. Like the other aforementioned subjects, its relevance is appreciated and understood better when it is used in History, given its objectives. Folranmi (2016), further stressed that the adoption of field trip and historical excursion would be a projection into history of what has already been done in other subjects.

The significance of field trip in teaching and learning History

The role of field trips in teaching and learning history remains understudied despite its crucial place in promoting the understanding of historical concepts. It is against this backdrop that Folranmi (2016) stated that field trip has the capacity to make learning more immediate by bridging the gap between the outside world and the classroom environment by means of the experience that educational resources can provide. Folranmi, also stressed that field trip if well planned can afford students the opportunity to actively observe historical objects and sites directly, providing a tangible connection to the past just as it provides students with the opportunity to observe details, textures, and features of historical objects that might be difficult to appreciate through images or description alone. In addition to observation, the field trip provides opportunities for students to collect primary sources, such as photographs, documents, or artifacts, which can be used for further study and analysis.

Field trips can spark students' interest and

enthusiasm in history, making them more engaged and motivated (Kisiel, 2006)). By providing hands-on experiences and real-world connections, field trips can help students see the relevance and significance of historical events and concepts. Since the students are opportune to see and think in the course of field trips, they are encouraged through simple searching questions that evoke reasoning about "the how's and the why's". This is made possible since they can see, touch, and experience concepts they've only read about in textbooks, making learning more tangible and memorable. Also, since travelling is often regarded as part of education, students would be able to know, apart from places of interest, many towns and villages; since during field trip/excursion the students pass across many states.

One other vital benefit accruable from using field trips as a teaching method for enhanced learning of history is that it stimulates curiosity among learners. Field trips can ignite curiosity and inspire a love for learning by exposing students to new environments, cultures, and ideas. Thus, exploring unfamiliar places or engaging with professionals in different fields can broaden learners' perspectives and interests.

Another significance of field trip in teaching and learning history is that since the students travel out of their immediate learning environment, they are provided with more opportunities to ask questions since they are prone to see practically things and concepts that they have never seen before. This time, topics and stories they read from text books are now brought at their disposal. Thus, what ordinarily would not be explained in text books some great detail would now be exposed to the students which could stir their curiosity to want to know what that thing is (Lazarus, 2007). For example, if history students are taken out on an excursion to Ririwan Dalma in Ningi chieftdom to the iron smelting factories that existed before colonialism to see how tin ore was smelted into iron and subsequently fashioned into various shapes, are more likely to ask questions based on the implements they see compared to what is explained in a text book. Or still, if students and their teachers embark on an



excursion to the headquarters of the west African force at Zungeru under Lord Lugard, they are prone to ask questions concerning the nature of the building with its scattered gulags where alleged recalcitrant African chiefs were locked up (Lazarus, 2007). The act of stimulating questions among students itself due to the environment as earlier observed is now a colossal achievement in imparting knowledge to students hence it unconsciously introduces another teaching strategy, questioning method. Questioning method has proved so useful that at every stage in education, questions are the core around which all communication between teachers and pupils takes place (Lazarus, 2007). Social and emotional development is another derivable benefit of field trips for enhanced understanding of historical concepts by learners. Field trips can help students develop historical empathy and perspective-taking skills by providing opportunities to experience different historical contexts and perspectives (Barton & Levstik, 2004). By walking in the footsteps of historical figures and experiencing historical events firsthand, students are opportune to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of historical events just as the students are also opportune to interact with peers and adults in different settings. This brings about fostering social skills, teamwork, and independence.

Using field trip method in teaching and learning history can promote interdisciplinary connections between history and other subjects such as social studies, Geography, technology (Wurdinger, 2005). By examining historical artifacts, sites, and events through multiple lenses, students can develop a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of historical events and processes. This makes it possible for students on a field trip get to discover the originality of instruction thereby getting amused and motivated in the process. By getting amused on the platform of originality the students are encouraged to develop more interest in the discipline.

The application of knowledge is also one of the benefits of using field trips for enhanced

understanding of historical concepts by learners. Through field trips, students are opportune and allowed by the history teacher to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations, reinforcing concepts learned in school. For example, a history teacher who takes his students to a museum for excursion can engage his students on what he taught in class through interactive exhibits and demonstrations.

In addition, field trips enable the students to acquire knowledge. Students are made to learn about aspects of the course in the area visited whether in the locality or outside it. Field trip provides some new knowledge or experience for the students or helps at confirming or disproving some new issues or old ideas raised earlier. As a corollary to this, students are made to identify problems associated with either remote or immediate cause of either the rise, fall or development factor of a particular kingdom, provinces or empire and phenomena.

Challenges of field trip method in teaching and learning history

Despite the crucial role of field trip method in teaching and learning history, the history teachers are constraint by using this method of teaching. A number of factors are responsible for this. The first factor is that of time constraints. There is limited available for history teachers to use this method within the yearly academic calendar and also balancing field trips with other curricular demands. To strike out this constraint, the history teachers need to spend more time planning and preparing for field trips, which most time conflicts with their regular and other private schedules. Compared to other methods of teaching history like the lecture method, preparing students for field trip takes the most time of the history teacher. For example, scheduling the journey and making plans for students who can't attend add more work to an already tedious teaching load of the history teachers. More so, it can be extremely tasking to supervise students during field trips (Wurdinger, 2005 & Kisiel, 2006).

Financial constraint also impedes the use of field trip method in teaching and learning history. For



example the history teachers through the school may want to take students on a field trip to a museum, but the cost of admission fees and transportation may be too high for some families. This would force schools to find ways to subsidize the costs or offer alternative activities. Against this backdrop, schools with limited resources might not be able to take students out for excursion. Especially when there are too many administrative issues and financial bottlenecks to tackle, the history teachers can become demotivated. On the side of the students too, majority of the students may occasionally find it difficult to pay for field trips considering the expenses involved.

Break in communication also affects the use of field trip method in teaching and learning history. Break in communication in this context refers to the disruption of communication between the history teachers, students, and other stakeholders during field trips (Kisiel, 2006). Several factors contribute to break in communication during field trips. These include; noise and distraction which make it difficult for teachers to communicate effectively with students during field trip. Other related factors to break in communication during field trip are large group sizes and the use of faulty public address system which further make it challenging for history teachers to communicate with individual students or small groups. Apart from the already cited issues that affect communication during field trip is poor internet connectivity. Break in communication during field trips have severe consequences. For example, it can lead to reduced learning outcomes as students are most likely to miss vital information or instruction, just as it can lead to decreased engagement among students as they may become disconnected from the learning experience (Kisiel, 2006)).

Using field trip as a method of teaching history is further compounded by the challenge of limited physical accessibility by students. Physical accessibility in this context refers to the ability of students to access field trip location. This is a challenge especially for students with disabilities, as some historical sites may not have

wheelchair ramps, elevators, or accessible restrooms (Kisiel, 2006). In addition, in terms of geographical accessibility, it is possible that students from rural or remote areas may find it difficult to access historical sites due to distance, transportation costs, or at times limited public transportation option. This in no small measure affects the effective use of field trip method in teaching and learning history.

The use of field trip method is also affected by curriculum constraint. Curriculum constraint refers to the limitations posed by the curriculum on the use of field trips in teaching and learning history. It also means ensuring that field trips align with curriculum objectives and learning outcomes as well as integrating field trip experiences with classroom instruction. The constraints in question arise from various sources. One of such sources is that of time constraint. The curriculum may not provide sufficient time for field trips, making it difficult for teachers to plan and execute field trips. In terms of content coverage, the curriculum may require teachers to cover specific content, leaving just little room for field trips that may not agree with the required content. This reduces the frequency of field trips, limiting the opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning.

Weather and safety concerns also affect the effective use of field trip method in teaching and learning history. Inclement weather such as heavy rain, snow, or extreme heat, may force teachers to postpone field trips. The safety concerns of students for field trips also matters. Some historical sites or locations may pose security concerns such as terrorism or crime. This without doubt affects the safety of students that could result to postponement of field trips.

Mitigating the challenges of field trip in teaching and learning history

Organizing and executing field trip can be challenging. However, for field trip to be effective and yield expected outcomes for both teachers and students, the following strategies can be used. First, logistical challenges such as transportation and scheduling can be addressed



when educators plan ahead by booking transportation and venues of places to visit well in advance so as to ensure availability and reduce costs. In addition, as part of measure to address logistical challenge, schools can embark on sharing of resources such as the means of transportation like buses in order to reduce costs (Greene & Kisiel, 2006).

Second, since financial constraints limit the feasibility of field trips, Anderson (2007), posited for seeking funds. To him, educators can seek grants, sponsorships, or funding from external sources to support field trips. Choosing free or low-cost venues, such as local museums or historical sites can also help reduce costs.

Third, in relation to time constraint, field trips should be integrated into the curriculum. For example, field trips should be designed to support specific learning objectives, making them a valuable use of instructional time. The use of pre-and post-trip activities can help extend the learning experience and reinforce concepts, making field trips a more effective use of time (Greene & Kisiel, 2006).

Fourth, to ensure that field trips are accessible and inclusive for all students, educators should make it a priority to choose venues that are wheelchair accessible and offer accommodations for students with disabilities. This should be in addition to providing support, such as sign language interpreters or extra assistance, can help ensure that all students participate fully and actively in field trips.

Fifth, since risk management is a critical point for consideration during field trip, educators should conduct thorough risk assessments to identify potential hazards and develop strategies for mitigating them. One of such strategies is to develop emergency plans and communicate them to students and staff to ensure a safe and effective response in case of an emergency.

Conclusion

The field trip method is a valuable tool in teaching and learning history, offering numerous benefits that can enhance students' understanding and engagement with historical concepts. Despite the constraints that can limit its effectiveness, such as logistical challenges and financial bottlenecks, the field trip method has the potential to be a panacea for history teachers in Nigeria in the 21st century. By understanding the relevance of field trips, addressing the constraints, and exploring potential solutions, history educators can harness the power of this method to create engaging and effective learning experiences. Without iota of doubt, the field trip method can play a significant role in promoting historical literacy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness among Nigerian students, preparing them for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Also, by embracing field trip method of teaching, history teachers can revitalize the teaching and learning of history, foster a deeper appreciation of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, and equip students with the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to navigate the complexities of the 21st century.



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