

EFFECTS OF FIELD TRIPS/HISTORICAL EXCURSIONS ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN EMMANUEL ALAYANDE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OYO

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Abstract

History is the study of man in his past. It is indeed the record of what took place in the past both in space and within a frame time. Thus, history is broadly expected to be a truthful account of a historical situation. Field trip is compulsory for all Part II History students in Colleges of Education. This course is a veritable tool to explore historical events and antiquities nationwide. The study investigated the effects of Field Trip/Historical Excursion on the teaching and learning of History in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo with special attention on the definition; concepts, planning and organizational problems. The total number of students used for the research is 95 and they were divided into two groups A and B. Group A went to Sokoto State Museum, whilst Group B went to National Museum Benin. Findings showed that students answered questions in the areas visited and performed well in these questions more than the remaining two questions. Based on this finding, it was recommended among others that teachers of History at NCE levels should continue to intensify efforts to expose their students to field trip as this will further promote learning by experience, discovery and active engagement.

Introduction

Man is inevitably concerned with the nature of the past, indicator of the present and the future. History offers an understanding of the nature of the society, its values and problems through a critical analysis and assessment of the major events in its social, political and technological development. In an attempt to train students of History at NCE level, a course of Field Trip and Research Methodology (HIS 212) is introduced. The course introduces students to the basic concepts and skills of research, through field trip to important historical sites/centres.

History teaching has been justified on the basis of helping to understand the present in term of the past. Presumably, man studies the past, learn the successes and

failure of the past and plan for the future accordingly. Commanger (1965) asserts that the richest pleasure of history is that it adds new dimension to life itself by enormously extending our perspective and enlarging our horizon of experience.

When translated to broad objectives, Ogundare (1990), quoting Presley, says the goal of studying the past are to:

- i. understand variety of factors that lead to historical events;
- ii. increase understanding of human behaviour and of human situation.
- iii. realise the past with empathy to experience it in a fashion which makes it come alive;
- iv. experience the past in its own term, rather than in terms of the present;

- v. increase understanding, through the use of the methods and the outlooks both of discipline in the field of humanities and also in the field of the social or behavioural sciences; and,
- vi. develop broad understanding and mental discipline, avoiding an exclusive and narrow focus upon attempts to find solution to specific problems of the moment.

One of the distinguishing features of history is the method by which it carries out its investigation. In the past, history was considered as mere record of the past without a meaning for contemporary society. So remote was history that one could equate it to tales or stories retold. But following the revolution in approach to the study of history and visit to places of historical interest is no longer tales but a reality; “the see it yourself” exercise would also stimulate the students into learning more history.

Fieldtrip, according to Abdullahi (1982,) is an excursion taken outside the classroom for the purpose of making relevant observations and also for obtaining some specific information. Yusuf (2006), quoting Jekayinfa, sees fieldtrip 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. Oladokun (2011) defines fieldtrip as a trip to the field or place outside one's immediate environment. It is a journey made to acquaint oneself with what we have at another place different from one's. The distance of the trip might be short or long depending on some salient factor of time, fund, personnel, calibre of pupils/students involved and organisation. He further asserts that, fieldtrip is an exercise embarked upon by school, department or parastatal to experience

practicals of what had been taught in the classroom. Omolewa (1978) defines fieldtrip and historical excursion as the practical or laboratory work of the historian. Historical excursion is more pleasurable and involves visits to places of historical importance. Whichever way one is looking at it, fieldtrip is one of the inquiry based History teaching and learning method which allows students to interact with their environment.

Fieldtrip is not only peculiar to History. It is much used in other subjects in the humanities and natural sciences such as Geography, Geology, Archeology, Social Sciences etc. Hence, its relevance is appreciated and understood better when it is used in History, given its objectives. Omolewa (1978), quoting Ojo (1966), adds that introduction of fieldtrip and historical excursion would be a projection into history of what has already been done in other subjects. In nearly every subject, more and more importance is being attached to empirical studies.

Agun and Imogie (1988) state that fieldtrip brings a break to the monotonous way of verbal classroom instruction. It was further stressed that it must be an approved planned educational activity that involves students in learning experiences difficult to learn in a classroom situation. Fieldtrip 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. They also add that a well planned trip affords the students the opportunity to become actively engaged in observing, collecting, classifying, studying relationship and manipulating objects.

Since the students will be able to see and think, the field trip introduces them to their local area, the country side or other areas visited. They will be able to see and

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observe as much as possible examples of features of what the teacher has discussed in the class. In this respect, they would be encouraged through simple searching questions that evoke reasoning about “the how's and the why's”.

In addition, fieldtrips 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 developmental factor of a particular kingdom, provinces or empire and phenomena.

Also, since travelling is often regarded as part of education, students would be able to know, apart from places of interest, many other towns and villages; since field trip/ excursion could take them pass across many states. The fieldtrip exercise will enable students to see, touch, feel on field rather than what they were unable to do during classroom teaching-learning exercise. According to Omolewa (1978), travelling or movement from a known to unknown place has been generally accepted as a portion for clearing one's mind of bigotry, narrow mindedness and prejudices. It also makes students to serve as personal observers.

In the contemporary study of history, there is need to talk to people because they are conscious and unconscious custodians of their history. Like the social anthropology, the historian visits the field to collect oral tradition and evaluate the culture of the society which produces the social and cultural

motivations. Even in the period which is well documented, fieldtrip remains an essential aspect of historical investigation. In addition to documents in the central archives and libraries, visits to local records such as local libraries and inspection of municipal and village minute books and local newspapers are now indispensable to comprehensive historical accounts.

The modern historian must actualise and substantiate existing generalisations. He can do this by mastering the use of personal, reported and recorded type of document, record of his own observation and the collection of social data and statistics from the field. Since history writing involves proper understanding, historical excursions could both serve as a stimulant to proper understanding of events and a source for more critical evaluation of historical episodes. Through the fieldtrip method, students will know the method by which historians produce their works. They would learn about the method of collecting and collating information and the use of both oral and documented works and secondary sources by first hand. In addition, it assists the pupil to attain the objectives for history learning at school, namely observation, acquisition of historical knowledge or facts, inculcation of moral values, promotion of tolerance, critical thinking, imagination and the art of expression.

Fieldtrip and historical excursion are not just mere travelling, they have stages. Jekayinfa (2005) states that there are five stages in the effective handling of fieldtrip/excursions. These include the need to obtain the factual background and technical skills required to understand the specific purpose of the trip, preparation and orientation prior to the trip itself, the follow up or post fieldtrip activities and the students' observations in relation to later learning.

Orion and Hofstein (1994) assert that novelty space is an important factor to be considered when embarking on fieldtrip as this affects the levels students are able to learn on a given fieldtrip. The three components of student 'novelty space' he identified are geographic novelty which refers to the students familiarity with the fieldtrip site, psychological novelty which refers to the extent to which students make previously considered fieldtrip to be social rather than learning activities, and cognitive novelty which refers to the skills and concept the students encounter and are expected to master on the fieldtrip. The higher the novelty levels, the less likely it is that the students will have a meaningful learning experience. However, the recent innovation in Instructional Technology (IT) on the fieldtrip could be used by assessing fieldtrip via internet using the computer to access up to the minute information right in the classroom about places such as museum, cities, countries or archives.

While planning for the fieldtrips, there is a need for reconnaissance trip. The teacher in-charge, who becomes the organiser will acquaint himself with the places to visit and how to get there without any problem. This is necessary so that proper arrangement could be made concerning accommodation, feeding and security of lives and properties during the exercise. Where to visit is also very important particularly during the period of insurgent groups in the country. The teacher could organise historical excursion and fieldtrip to the homes of leading Nigerian nationalists such as King Jaja of Opobo, nation builders such as Queen Amina of Zaria or one of the several seats of Nigerian Arts such as Benin, Ife, Esie, Sokoto Museums and better still to the neighbouring countries

like Dahomey and Ghana.

In planning for field excursion, there are roles for both the teachers and students for the successful conduct of the exercise. Teachers' role during fieldtrip includes adequate and effective control of places/events where necessary, enforcing discipline on stubborn/rude students. The teacher is also expected to carry out advances or reconnaissance visit as earlier said. Others include arrangement on transportation, accommodation and supervising students on how to write field trip reports. Tribe (1995) pointed out that arrangement on where to visit, when to visit, how much students should contribute are parts of what the teachers should do. Teachers should also take along with them, some materials such as tape, maps, photo camera and if possible video camera and tape recorder.

Method of Data Collection

Ninety five (95) part II History students were divided into two groups A and B. Group A went to Benin Museum and paid a visit to Oba of Benin who lectured students on the History of Benin, its political organisation, the role of Benin and the functions of Uzama (Council of Chiefs). He (Oba of Benin) knowing fully well that the students are from Oyo State, made efforts to compare the political organisation in Benin and that of Oyo, Group B were taken to Sokoto State Museum and Argungu Museum (also owned by the State Government); they visited Emir of Argungu and Sultan of Sokoto.

Findings and Discussions

The same set of students who offered HIS 212 in 2013/2014 session (Fieldtrip and Research Methods) must also registered for HIS 311, Nigeria History in the 19th century. HIS 313, comes up at the First Semester of Part III, after students have embarked on the fieldtrip/execution. This course is also compulsory for all students. The questions set

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for HIS 311 for the first semester examination in Part III are:

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|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critically examine the view that abolition of slave trade in the Niger Delta was more of economic, rather than humanitarian factor. 2. Give reasons for various changes that took place in the Igboland in the early 19thC | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. List and explain factors for the outbreak of 1804 Jihad in Hausaland 4. Give detail explanation of consequences of the fall of Oyo Empire 5. Describe the political organisation of Benin Empire |
|---|---|

These questions carry equal marks. No compulsory question(s), this means students are free to answer any three questions out of five.

Table 1:

Number of Students who answered questions 1 – 6 in HIS 311

Group	1	2	3	4	5	Total
A	24	08	12	18	33	95
B	06	17	49	04	19	95

The above table 1 shows at a glance the number of students who answered various questions. 49 students answered question No. 3 out of these students, 49 of 50 students who went to Sokoto attempted the question, making 98% of the Group B.

33 students attempted question 5, these 33 were out of 45 who went to Benin for their fieldtrip making 73.3% of Group A. Further to this, it is discovered that students apart from attempting questions in the areas they had visited, they equally performed well in these questions. 32 out of 50 students who answered question 3 in Group B scored above 12 out of 20 making 65.3 of the

performance, while 39 out of 45 in Group A scored above 12 out of 20 making it 86.6% of the performance.

Further to this finding is the revelation that students passed more in HIS 311: (Nigeria in the 19thC) where questions relating to Benin and Hausaland were given than other courses particularly HIS 312: World History from 1919 to the present and HIS 313: Southern Africa and HIS 314: Africa in the 19th Century. HIS 313 is elective to HIS 314. The same lecturer with the same teaching methods, table 2 shows the percentage of passes in His 311 compared to other courses.

Table 2:

2014/2015 Course Title

S/N	COURSE TITLE	UNITS/ STATUS	COURSE TITLE	NO OF CANDIDATE	A	B	C	D	E	F
1.	HIS 311	2Units C	Nigeria in the 19thC	95	21	30	16	18	6	4
2.	HIS 312	2Units C	World History 1919 - to the present times	108	4	18	32	26	12	16
3.	HIS 313	2Units E	Southern Africa	37	-	2	21	7	6	1
4.	HIS 314	2Units E	African in the 19thC	58	1	07	18	14	12	6

Table 2 above shows the results of History Department for First Semester 2014/2015 academic session at a glance. As discussed earlier, there were 95 students for HIS 311, the percentage of passes is higher, falling between A – C. Also, it was in HIS 311 that the highest number of passes were recorded. The major findings of this study revealed that there was significant difference in the percentage of passes regarding the questions attempted by the students. The significant issue here is that fieldtrip and historical excursions assisted history students to have more thorough grasp of the subject matter of the courses offered. The ability to acquire historical judgment is not an art which is the gift of God but something acquired over a period of training and apprenticeship which initiates him into movement of historians in the performance of students based on their choice of fieldtrip. The use of fieldtrip method did produce significant difference in the performance of high, medium and low scoring students. The finding of this study as shown in table 2 is evidently clear that percentage of passes is higher in HIS 311, when students answered question relating to Sokoto Caliphate, and 19th Century Jihad and Benin Kingdom where they visited. It is an indication that performance of students in History would greatly improve if students are allowed to interact actively with their environment, using fieldtrip method of teaching. This is an indication that the fieldtrip was effective than lecture method in History students' academic performance.

The observation method which fieldtrip entails generate a lot of better understanding of the content of history in the minds of History students as expressed by Omolewa (1978). In his view, the modern historian must actualise and substantiate existing generalisation, such an exercise could always bring more clarity and elucidation into historical problems being investigated.

Conclusion

Students' exposure to fieldtrip provides room for interaction and enhances students' academic performance in History. The field trip provides opportunity for the students to constructively interact with their environment and provide a more productive learning environment which stimulates students towards higher achievements. Fieldtrip and excursion projects eradicate the misconception that history is dull or that a great deal of it must be invented and put an end to the erroneous view that historians are only excited by events of a thousand years past.

History can no longer be taught for entertainment or as interesting accounts of the past, or its accounts be substituted for bedtime reading. The dictum that historian are born and not made can no longer be valid on the face of new approach to history teaching and learning. If we exert ourselves to that end, then history has a future. But we shall have to adjust ourselves to changing times and needs and not be bound by customary conventional approaches.

History teachers should review the traditional approach to teaching and learning of history. It is suggested that the adoption of fieldtrip and historical excursion would assist history teachers to realise the new objectives. It should therefore be generally accepted that history should be made useful and real and not considered merely as a source of acquisition of information. Fieldtrip and historical excursion could be profitably used as aids to history learning and teaching in colleges. In this case, there will be a conversion of attitude for the teacher, since the teacher can no longer be an indifferent disseminator of information and knowledge but an educator, one who assists in the full training of the young apprentice historians in school.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are given to further enhance the relevance of the course (HIS 212) to the teaching and learning of History. It is observed that field trips and historical excursion do not last for more than three days and at most a week. This does not allow for a thorough assignment. Students are expected to visit local places and study fairly contemporary issues. Questions such as the following can aid the research by the students: taking oral evidence on the foundation of the village or town; interviewing the Oba and Chiefs on how they came to assume the leadership of the village or town; discussing the system of government in the village or town with the local people; finding out from residents of the different quarters the meaning and origins of the place names in the town or village; information should be obtained on the nature of relationship which exist among the neighbouring inhabitants and means of promoting inter-territorial trade. This would help to further broaden students' horizon and launch them into full stream of more meaningful historical studies.

Fieldtrip should be geared towards assisting the students to have a more thorough grasp of the subject matter (History) and to introduce them to the task of historical presentation. This exercise is a means of translating these objectives into reality. In this case the school should be responsible for students' excursion in all ramifications. The payment for excursion could be embedded in the school fees or at best paid for by the students from Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND). This will enable every student to partake in the

fieldtrips. Experiences have shown that some students were unable to pay for the fieldtrip which always made them to defer it to the next available trip. Since HIS 212 is a compulsory course that must be taken and passed by every student before graduation. Some students always find it difficult to feed themselves which always lead them to begging for money from their colleagues and their teachers. This will not be so if the school is responsible for transportation, feeding and accommodation of students.

It is also suggested that a semester be made compulsory for students of History to undergo a fieldtrip as we have acculturation for students of languages (i.e. French, Hausa and Igbo). Long essay and fieldtrip should be made of a single course of 50% each. Fieldtrip should be a prerequisite for writing long essay and topics to be chosen for the long essay should relate to their area of fieldtrip. If need be, the credit unit should be increased to 4 (Fieldtrip 2 and Long Essay 2 = 4Units).

Since historical excursions are generally organised for many students at a time, it makes it less of an academic exercise and robs them of the needed concentration and attention. In order not to satisfy quantity for quality, it is suggested that students should form themselves into groups of not more than twenty to a lecturer for thorough supervision. The department should also purchase tape recorder, video coverage camera and photo camera for the use of the students during such exercise.

To make fieldtrip to have more academic impact on the students; the exercise should be made a complete 100% course along with the long essay.

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