

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEWLY DEVELOPED 9 – YEAR BASIC EDUCATION HISTORY CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is predicated on the newly developed and circulated 9-year Basic Education History Curriculum which has been sent to the various Junior and primary schools for immediate implementation. This is coming at the hill of several agitations by the Historical Society of Nigeria, academicians and well-wishers in the country, who have yearned for the introduction of History studies at these levels of education long before now. The researchers received this fit with high excitement and admiration, but for every new programme stands to be corrected to make it more standardized, for it to stand the taste of time. This is because anything worth doing is worth doing well. And it is based on this premise that this paper wants to make a critique of the curriculum, to see its strengths and weaknesses, so as to proffer a tangible solution to the programme which will fulfil its purpose of developing the nation's educational system. This paper is a theoretical one and the instrument that will be used in this assessment is the 9-year Basic Education History Curriculum which has been sent to various schools for implementation. The researchers would use the expository method of assessing documents and also used an argumentative approach for the analysis of ideas and points. From the findings, the curriculum was found to be developed without taking the age and ability of the children at those levels into consideration. It does not adopt the known to unknown strategy of teaching pedagogy and in fact most of those that were invited for the development of the new curriculum were not specialist in history curriculum which is a flaw as the whole document is domicile in education where their inputs would have been of immense help. The paper recommended that the age and ability of the pupils should be considered while planning a curriculum of this magnitude the local history of the pupils or history of the immediate community should be emphasized more than the history of those communities outside their immediate environment so as to have a paradigm shift from the complaints in all educational quarters on the old history curriculum for senior secondary schools.

Introduction

History is one among the oldest subjects studied in Nigerian schools, it is in fact as old as formal education itself. It was one of the most cherished in school then by students. This assertion has been supported by Sanda and Gotom (2018) argued that history in the school curriculum in Nigeria is still very important, that it is a distinct discipline in the school curriculum and has been given prominence since the attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960. In fact, the knowledge of arts remains superficial without history. History developed in the students critical, narrative, analytical, reflective, manipulative, chronological skills. It also enhances in students the spirit of nationalism and patriotism, it sets in them world mindedness approach, and it makes them learn from past errors in other for them to forecast the future with an indomitable spirit. The justification for the inclusion of history subject in Nigeria's school curriculum is on the basis that our live expectancy as human beings is on the decline hourly, and so, one cannot wait to make mistakes and equally proffer tangible solutions to his errors, it is based on this premise that one needs to study other persons mistakes and reforms in order to shape his future. Ayot (1979) states that without history of our past, we would not be able to know who we are, who our relatives are, where we came from and how we came to be what we are today.

However, despite the myriad of the importance of history in addressing human political, economic, religious, and socio – cultural problems, it has come under attack in the past two decades of our educational pilgrimage and growth. Government educational policies were not favourable to history. Curriculum planners seemed to have been against it, and other recently introduced subjects like social studies, government, and civic education are not just competing with it, but are calling for the substitution of history with them and even parents perception of the subject was tilting to the negative. Bozimo (2001) supported this view by stating that the problem of history subject began with the very narrow perception generally accepted by the populace. This has straight jacketed history thereby confining it to a study of past and present activities of heroes and heroines dead and alive. Interestingly, despite the cold war, the subject is still showcasing its relevance in the scheme of amiable disciplines, without which the much anticipated national development can only be a mirage and a good yearning in futility. That is why Sanda and Maigoro (2007) recommended that for Nigeria to develop, teaching of history has to be inculcated into her future generation, so they can develop nationalistic feelings.

There have been calls, agitations and counter agitations for the resuscitation of the lost glory of history back into the curriculum of Nigeria's

educational system. The most recognized agitations were those coming from various stakeholders which included Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), and the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). Since 2006, government collapsed the junior secondary school and Primary schools into what is called 9 – Year Basic Education Programme, with the names Upper Basic Education and Basic Education respectively. The justification there is that, there would only be one common examination to be written after JSS3 and the former common entrance examination at the completion of primary six (6) was expunged from the system. Here, it was believed that the child on entering class one will scale through up to JSS3 before he would select which subjects he will want to specialize in. Even then history was not taught at any of these levels. Now that the Federal Government of Nigeria has included history into the New 9 – Year Basic Education Curriculum, historians in Nigeria can sigh a sign of relief, but not without the enormous responsibility of seeing how best the curriculum can be implemented.

According to the New 9 – Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) History (2017) regarded as a document on Education for change – A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2016 – 2019) was approved. This initiative gave rise to a series of activities to re – position the education sector in Nigeria, including the disarticulation of History from social studies curriculum. History is now to be taught as a separate subject at the Basic Education level. The New History Curriculum was designed to, among other things;

- a) Expose learners to the body of knowledge that will enable them to appreciate history as an instrument of national integration and nation building.
- b) Promote the study of Nigerian and African history as a requisite for better understanding the challenges and appreciation of the challenges of globalization; and
- c) Deepen the understanding of the similarities and differences between the various Nigerian peoples as a basis for appreciating our unity in diversity.

It is based on the forgoing that this study wants to make an assessment of the History curriculum at these levels (Junior and Primary) to see whether its intended objectives can be achieved going by its content, organization and administrative developments.

In realizing these objectives, the history teacher should focus his / her teaching strategies where;

- a) Students who learn history will develop knowledge and understanding of the past in order to appreciate themselves and others; to understand the past and the present and their contributions to the debate about planning for the future.
- b) Develop critical thinking and perspective on the past and learn how to compare different accounts so that the conflicts and ambiguities are

appreciated. To achieve these two major purpose, the pupils and students should be taught.

- c) Identify and describe reasons for and results of historical events, situations and changes in the period studied (Gillespie, 2001).
- d) Pupils should be taught to recognize that the past is represented and interpreted in different ways, and to give reasons for this.
- e) Pupils should be taught about the cultural, social, religious and ethnic diversity of the society within their communities considering these elements of the knowledge, skills and understanding to promote “open mindedness” to history where different interpretations are considered and tokenistic views of history are avoided.

A Critique of the New 9 – Year Basic Education History Curriculum

Based on the simple definition of the word critique by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 7th Edition (2009) it means to judge the good and the bad of the quality of something to bring out its strengths and weaknesses. By this explanation, it can be negative or positive based on the assessor’s angle of reasoning.

First and foremost, the newly developed curriculum or template to be used at the level of our educational system for history is commendable because it has met the yearning aspiration of historians and other stake holders who are interested in the study of history. But as it has been pointed out in the teacher’s guide, at the primary school level Nigerian History the topics to be covered (NERDC; 2) and the curriculum of JSS 1-3 are similar in content and coverage. This could lead to over – loading the Nigerian child with the same content which is demoralizing and therefore impede students interest in the subject and indeed to a larger extent national development. It should be noted that one of the problems with history subject is the voluminous nature of its curriculum and to solve the problem is to diversify the curriculum to other levels. If the voluminous nature is being repeated, it would cause inadequate coverage of content by its teachers and will invariably course students to go for extra lessons elsewhere which will be over – schooling as a matter of fact. The curriculum is also repeated in the senior secondary school level. As Longkat, Sanda and Maigoro (2016) had observed, the reasons for dropping history and other single subjects for social studies and integrated science was because most pupils at the primary and junior schools were incapable of comprehending the hard facts of History, Geography, Economics and or Biology, Chemistry and Physics. If our pupils and students are to be attracted to history, they should be taught the history of their locality, as the pupils and students at this level, history of the immediate community to the child should

be enhanced and promoted. It is in this perspective that Sanda (2008) emphasizes that in the area of history ethnic education which is aimed at building cohesiveness by helping students' gain better understanding of the diverse people in the children society should be upheld. Also in concord with the argument Bozimo (2001) states that ethnic heritage education is intended to acquaint the students of history with multiethnic composition of our society help them become more aware fully, who they are as individuals and as a nation. It is directed towards the ultimate goal of improving the quality of human relations in contemporary Nigeria.

The second objective which is to develop critical thinking and perspective on the past and learn how to compare different accounts so that the conflicts and ambiguities are appreciated. This leads to the understanding of the similarities and differences among the various Nigerian peoples as a basis for appreciating our unity in diversity. But at the basic education level, the child is exposed to comparing and contrasting the major centres of civilisations like Nok, Ewo –Ileru, Igbo-Ukwu. Yet in Jos we have centres of civilization in the heart of Jos like Gwash / Gwosh, Jott, Chelnyap from where Jos derived its name. This could be the starting point where pupils and students develop critical thinking. Topics that could be developed are listed below.

A. The History of Jos

- i. The Physical Features of Jos Town\
 - Rivers - Dilimi, Chwelnyap, etc.
 - Hills - Chwelnyap
- ii. The People of Jos
 - Origin of Jos
 - The Berom view
 - The Anaguta, Afizere, Rukuba views
 - The Hausa View
 - The Colonial Writers View.
- iii. The Growth of Jos from the Earliest Times to 1900
 - Farming, Hunting and Other Economic Activities
- iv. Jos and Tin Mining
 - The Hausa and Tin Mining
 - The Rukuba, Anaguta, Gus, Berom, Afizere and Tin Mining
 - The Europeans and Changing Pattern of Tin Mining
- v. Jos as a Colonial Administrative Area
- vi. The Evolution of Chieftaincy in Jos

- Chieftaincy among the Berom, Rukuba, Anaguta, etc.
- Chieftaincy Among the Hausa of Jos
- The evolution of the Gbong Gwom chieftaincy institution
- Relations between Jos and other Towns during the Colonial Rule and thereafter.

B. The History of Lafia

- i. The Physical features of Lafia Town and environs.
 - Rivers
 - Hills
- ii. The People of Lafia
 - Emergence of Lafia
 - Gwandara of Shabu & Kwandari
 - Kambari/Kanuri
 - Koro
 - Eggon
 - Alago of Doma and
- iii. The Growth of Lafia from Earliest Times to 1900AD
 - Kambari/Kanuri Conquest and Annexation of the Area
 - Farming, Hunting, Fishing, Trade and other Economic activities that facilitated the Growth of Lafia.
 - The Emergence of Lafia as a Colonial Administrative Set-up
 - Relations between Lafia and the adjoining towns and villages.
 - Relations Between Lafia and Doma, Keana, Awe
- iv. The Evolution and Development of Chieftaincy Institutions in Lafia and Environs
- v. Relations Between Lafia and other towns and Chiefdoms
- vi. The Growth of Lafia as a Commercial and Administrative Centre.

It is in this light that Bozimo (2001) asserted that topics found in history should do much to build cohesiveness by helping students gain better understanding of the diverse people in the society master truthful accounts of the multiethnic composition of the society, and develop a respect for the contributions of all groups to the life and culture of the country.

For the topics that have been developed to be used at this level, those that are welcomed are the simple meaning of History and not its definition most especially in the lower basic. Historical knowledge of local heroes and heroines those having local outlook in the children local communities should be taught them first not those that are known nationally as it is stipulated, for

in every community there exist people that have made remarkable marks in the fields of education, political scene, religious spheres, economically facets and others. The study of these eminent personalities will mean much to the children at this level than taken them far from their communities. Local political development and knowledge in fact those that they can understand such as the family politics, village politics, local geography and knowledge of their immediate community will make more sense to the child than the ones inscribed in the template. The child at some stages in the primary school needs to know sometime about his or her family and village genealogy and the family tree, but this should start from simple to complex as advised by many scholars in education. The settlement pattern of their villages or immediate communities and how they come to be should be traced more at this level, for they will subsequently be trained on the settlement patterns in Nigeria, Africa, and the universe at large in other stages of educational development. This idea is being supported by Plumb (1971) that history seeks to deepen understanding about men and society in which they lived, not for its own sake, but in the hope that a profound awareness will help to reshape human attitudes and human actions and inactions. Ikime (2006) further posits that in enabling us to acquire knowledge of who we are and how we have come to be, history fulfils a definite and salient role in the task of sustainability.

They can visit for example local potash, blacksmithing spots, a woman who produces local maggi “dawadawa”, producer of palm oil, water sites, local hunter, traditional medicine doctor, identify some places that the white man ever stayed or harbor in the local areas, schools and churches sites where they were and their present site and the reasons for the shift in their former places to present location, history of the local wars and counter wars and the lessons they can learn from such adventures and others. The pupils should be made to understand local processes of things in their local communities, before crude oil. This historical knowledge will be of immense help to the child than teaching them about Nok culture which they are not familiar with, except for children the Nok community.

Local economic activities for example identification of local markets nearest to them, name of the local commodities produce from their villages and those ones that came from elsewhere, farming implements those use in the past and those in use today and the reasons for the changes should be stated to them. What are some of the crops grown in the local environment and why are some not found in their local environment and the identification of different professions. Based on the forgoing Sanda (2008) states that the different occupational activities ranging from farming to trading and other forms of economic activities found in many history topics across the syllabus, can also

be used for career education, with the sole aim of the total development of the man, to be fully functional, self – directed, socially responsible person, especially the youths who are the future generation of this great country. Antonio (2006) supported the above by stating that effective history teachers, for instance seem to find ways to bring contemporary personal and societal relevance to historical subject matter that is well removed from the experiences and times in which their student live. This is true of the fact that the child first knows his mother first before any other person because that has been the first person he comes in contact with, so teaching every child his local economic activities before transmitting him or her to colonial economic engagements in the southern or western parts of Nigeria will do good to the child.

Inter group relationship between and among their local inhabitants should be the ones to be traced at this level of our educational development, for example in Pankshin Local Government Area which has the Ngas, Mupun, Chip, Fier, Kadung people should be the one to be imparted to the pupils and students and not enlarge Nigerian people history for example the three larger ethnic groups Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba and the semi larger ones like the Efik, Ibibio, Tiv, Idoma and a host of others. They can begin with clan formations, the peopling of the local inhabitants which they will be chronologically disseminated to them as they grow educationally. Local migration or movements in their local areas, and the local settlement patterns and not having Nigerian view point will educationally sufficient to them. Even the local areas different families' settlement in some areas because of some special needs and migrate from one part of the village to another because of some reasons base known to them. Some of the reasons are for royal status in Ngas land lived in the hilly areas for security and easy dissemination of information to the followers, some migrate because of some spiritual attack, some in search of fertile land and water, and some might be because of family disputes and disagreement, some because of inheritance and so on. These can be the starting point for younger ones in search of historical knowledge. However, nature of history, origin and sources of History, Migration and Settlement patterns of the people of Nigeria, the Nigerian geography and environment, major Historical sites and civilization centers, centralized and non – centralized politics, British colonization of the Nigerian territories should be expunged from this level for another one at even the extreme of this level or the senior secondary school level. The basic historical knowledge should be those that are fundamental and very local to them. Learning should start from known to unknown – simple to complex. That type of learning will help in maintaining, sustaining and retaining of pupils' interest in history, for

given them heavy content at this level will at the end discourage their superficial interest in the subject, thereby leading to dysfunctional education. That is why Sanda and Maigoro (2007) attributed

some of the reasons for students' negative attitude towards history to include the broad nature of history content which is wider than government and so students normally opt for government which has smaller course content that can be covered within a short time. This is so because students do not want to suffer themselves reading bulky materials, they prefer subjects that have smaller content that can be easily crammed. This has made students to prefer Government and Civic Education to history (P. 47).

Additionally, the only way we can avoid cramming of hard facts of history as the Mombasa conference averred, is to revisit the teaching of history in the primary and junior secondary schools. Cooper, (2000) has come up with a strategy for teaching history in the primary schools where she made a case that children in the primary age range are able to engage with historical learning effectively if they are supported with appropriate learning experiences and effective teaching. Cooper went further to argue that psychologists' work on reasoning suggests that young children may be helped to develop arguments about historical evidence if we teach them how and that they can make suppositions about how people in the past may have felt or thought. For example, children who grew up in Jos may not know how the name Jos came into being. Both British and Austrian curriculum has suggested after a long period of slumber that children from primary three to six can imbibe historical facts by the following prompts;

- What do we know about the past?
- How did people come to find themselves in Jos?
- How has the past influenced the present in Jos?
- How did people live in Jos and other places?

In a country where ethnic and religious clashes have left many people dead at a time when we are supposed to be reaping the dividends of democracy after a long period of military rule; our curriculum should take into consideration the needs of the country and not necessarily meeting the needs of MDG and NEEDS which has informed the restructuring our current curriculum. The major problem of curriculum development in Nigeria lies in the fact that each government or people will want to twist educational policies at will. Bozimo (2001) also supported this view by asserting that there is a dire

need for content adjustment in history education programme, if the issue of relevance in a changed modern society will be worthwhile. This is basically to avoid over- schooling in terms of content overlap associated with history.

The field trip can be done locally, for example visit to the traditional ruler, visit to an old knowledgeable local historian, visit to important places which are historical sites and centers in their local environment. This will give them more meaning than taken them out of there areas for sight-seeing in the name of excursion. History teachers who are innovative can create this programme locally and not taken pupils and students at this age bracket to Nok culture, Igbo Ikwu sites far from them physically and academically. For the pupils / students in Jos town, a simple field trip to the Central Bank of Jos and the area around the present Command Secondary School Jos, Government College and Federal Government College with some Anaguta, Afizere and Berom will show that Jos is derived from Gwash / Gwosh and Jot are names for hunting grounds spring water. The pupils are said to mention heroes and heroines. Do they know about the concept of heroes and heroines at this level? The concept is unconceivable at this level of primary education. Local heroes and heroines should be emphasized for example Nde Langkuk, chronological circles of Bong Gwom Jos, and some prominent people be studied and a host of others and not King Jaja of Opobo, King Nana of Itshekiri and others. This can reduce the abstractness of history subject.

Political development should be streamlined to local politics and politicians like ward councilors, chairmen of village associations and local government councils. On the issue of economy, trade and commerce the path of local economy, trade and commerce should be emphasized. Political development such as the four early regions in Nigeria should be discourage at the primary level of education. This is because they do not know about the divisions of their villages, districts, local government areas and states, talk more of taking them to the former regions in Nigeria. Sometimes it is good for the history teacher to start at this age from present to the past to give connection and strong nexus to the children, which is known as regressive teaching in education.

How can a primary one pupil or six-year-old child begin to talk about his family history? It is a bit outrageous, but can be simplified for some. Here they should be taught recognition or identification of family members before coming to terms with their family histories. Children at this age like to be taught using songs, music, folklores, folktales, rhymes and jokes instead of concrete historical concepts like the one selected in the curriculum by the developers. Songs of wars, songs for harvest, songs for traditional counselling,

lamentation songs, songs for hunting, songs of celebration of victory, songs of circumcision, and others in the local areas should be enhance. The age and the reasoning capacity of the pupils should be taken into cognizance. Emphasis at the primary school level should be on the pupils' local history, while all these topics outline for primary school pupils here should be shifted to junior secondary school. Some of them are British rule in Nigeria, military rule in Nigeria, and the four early regions in Nigeria and others that are not captured here. This is with the view to decongest the already congested curriculum of the senior secondary school history which has become an albatross to students' hatred of the subject.

The most worrisome situation is that from the list of the participants who were selected to develop the New 9 – Year Basic Education Curriculum for History, educators who major in History and Education were conspicuously not invited. It is expected that among those that were invited should have been people with some professional knowledge in history education, pedagogy, child psychology, were not involve, most of those, if not all, were historians without education knowledge, knowledge of historical pedagogy, child psychology, curriculum development in education, educational technology, philosophy of education, history of education, measurement and evaluation, research methodology and a host of other to provide expertise in the rudiments of the early stages of developments of the child. This is a very big error for this issue is domicile in their area of training and specialization. They would have provided an expertize contributions to the curriculum to uplift itto a level of acceptance. Some of these observations are their but they would be unearthed frequently to have a standardized curriculum at this level of our education.

Recommendations

The following tips have been spelt out as a remedy to the observed problems in this work.

1. The age and educational capabilities of the pupils or students should be put into consideration while planning a curriculum like this.
2. Local history or history of the immediate communities should be emphasized more than history that are physically, mentally and socially distant from the students for a reburst learning to take place at that level. That is why language of the immediate community is preferred to be use as a medium of communication at the primary school level.
3. There is the need to train more history teachers to meet up with the challenges of shortage of manpower has those in place now are

astronomically minimal for the task, this is in order to save the already precarious situation from quacks.

4. More colleges of education which will help in training teachers for that level of education should as a matter of fact be established for the ones in place now are grossly inadequate.
5. History should be made compulsory so as to achieve the desired objectives.
6. Simply local history should be taught at primary school level, Nigerian history at junior and senior secondary schools, while the regional and continental history should be at both the senior secondary schools and tertiary level.
7. Professionals in the area of concern should always be invited in the planning not given them a cooked curriculum to implement.

Conclusion

This study focused on the assessment of the New 9 – Year Basic Education Curriculum for History. The researchers appreciated the Federal Ministry of Education and other stakeholders who have something to do with the ultimate realization of the curriculum. This is a fit worth commending as it were. The study sought to make a critique of the curriculum so as to bring out its areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to have a viable instrument for both teaching and learning of history. Local history should be emphasized to the children more than history of distant communities; and professional history teachers should be involved in the planning of the curriculum for it is domiciled in their area of jurisdiction among others.

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