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**TOWARDS IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF  
HISTORY IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS; THE PLACE OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING  
METHODOLOGY**

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**Abstract**

The success of any lesson is determined by the preparedness of the teacher, learners' interest, instructional resources and conducive environment for learning and above all the method of teaching adopted by the teacher. The selection of the method to be used by a teacher depends on the skills of the teacher and the knowledge he/she wants to impart. History as one of the important school subjects needs to be well taught in order to make learners appreciate the relevance of the learning. For this to happen the students' participation in the lessons is very important and therefore selection of appropriate teaching method which should be student centered is necessary. The paper discusses the position of history teachers and teaching processes in history lessons, teacher preparedness which is also useful for effective teaching and learning of history and most importantly some innovative methods of teaching history. As part of the way forward the paper recommends that our institutions of learning should make history education programmes attractive so that students can enroll into history programmes in order to train more teachers for history and also government should make adequate provisions in the educational policies that will ensure full implementation of the teaching of history in our institutions of learning.

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**Introduction**

The study of history is very important as it equips people with knowledge that will help them to understand their past in order to make comparison between

scenarios with the intention of making plan for development. According to (Namamba and Rao, (2017) history helps students to understand the past for posterity, develop a sense of nationalism and nature reasoning skills. Teachers are at the centre of events to achieve these goals and different methods were employed by teachers to attain such skills by students. The method of teaching used determines the attainment or otherwise of these skills.

The major problem history is facing is the method being used by teachers in imparting such body of knowledge to the students. In fact, there are various methods of teaching ranging from discussion, lecture, inquiry methods and the like. But majority of teachers of today tend to over emphasize the use of lecture method. The over usage of this method, makes history as mere story telling, boring and irrelevant. Most importantly the student's participation as major tool for successful teaching and learning has been eliminated.

Therefore, for the effective teaching and learning of history to be achieved the effective methods of teaching should be adopted. These methods are what referred by scholars as innovative teaching methods (ITM). Stegers (2012) is of the opinion that innovative teaching methods brings about innovative history education. This is a kind of education that render students challenge the basic stories since they are demanded to have an open mind, empathic understanding as well as think critically through questioning, analyzing, interpreting and judging the themes being imparted in history lessons. Mwale (2018) also share the same opinion when he pointed out that, with innovative teaching methods, students constructs their own learning through active participation in class room activities. Innovative teaching methods encourage student's participation in the class activities hence their assessment is never on memorization but on their ability to apply what they have learnt into practical life situation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A teaching method comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable students to learn. Those strategies are determined by the subject matter to be taught and the nature of the learner on the other side. The appropriateness and efficiency of the teaching method depends on its relation with the characteristics of the learners and the type of learning expected.

There are certain suggestion with regard to plan and selection of teaching methods with must consider not only the learners nature but the subject matter as well as how students learn. In our schools nowadays the trend is that it encourages a lot of creativity.

The constructivist learning theory encourage participatory teaching and learning approach. And the constructivist theory articulated that learning occurs as learner's are activity involved in a process of meaning and knowledge construction as sported to passively receiving information. Under constructivism as developed by Jean piaget, humans make meaning in relation to the interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Hes view tended to focus on human development in relation to what is occurring with an individual as a different from development influenced by other people. Constructivist theory has over the time had an impact on learning theories and teaching methods in education, and is considered as a foundation for education reforms. In the constructivist classroom, students work primarily in groups to engage with daily activities. Constructivist teaching method emphasizes communication and social skills, as well as intellectual collaboration. This is different from a traditional classroom where students primarily work alone, learning through repetition and lecture. Activities encouraged in constructivist classroom include among others: Experimentation, Research project, fieldtrips, films class discussion and campus wikis. In student centered approach in learning while the teachers are the authority figure in this model, teachers and students play an equally active role in the learning process. The teachers' primary role is to couch and facilitate student learning and overall comprehension of materials.

### **Teacher Preparedness for Effective Teaching of History**

Lesson preparation is very crucial in teaching of history. The success of the lesson depends on the level of preparation by the teacher and the other factors. The history teachers should not claim or assume monopoly of knowledge. He should therefore always engage himself in further reading and studies. This is in order to make him academically sound and always ready to face the challenges of his students. He should always remember the famous saying that "above every possessor of knowledge there is still one more learned". Boudu, (2015) has this to say "History teachers need to read from variety of sources and accounts in order for them to be well positioned to integrate the different historical accounts to make students gain understanding and appreciation of the past. Beside the subject content, history teachers also need to understand the rationale and philosophy of teaching the subject as well as possess knowledge about other disciplines before they go to teach. In the words of Colin (1969) "it is necessary for teachers to read and study far beyond the level required for their lessons".

Planning a lesson will bring about effective teaching of history as it will bring orderliness and systematic presentations. To sum it up Boudu (2015) suggested that to have an effective teaching of history. History teachers must acquire adequate subject matter knowledge, understand the philosophical and theoretical positions on the subject, understand learner characteristics, plan adequately in terms of lesson objectives, methods of teaching resources to use and also consult other teachers on strategies to improve instruction. These in the perspective of history teachers would present the necessary conditions for the effective teaching of history.

### **Teaching and History Teachers**

Teaching involves transmission of knowledge but it is also much more than that. Theories of teaching have to be sensitive to the processes through which students acquire knowledge or in the other words how students learn. Fernando and Marikar (2017). Since teaching is the transmission of knowledge in other words guiding and assisting someone to gain knowledge or acquire skills the role of teachers in teaching history is very crucial, while effective teaching is the expected end of a good teacher. History teaching is a very challenging task due to the nature of the subject. On this, Taylor and Young (2003) expressed that history is a complex task encompassing the transformation of subject matter into a form that enables learners to gain meaning, while at the same time, retaining the integrity of the subject.

For effective teaching of history to take place the teachers must possess a sound training in the art of teaching as well as assessing the learning outcome of their students. This is to help the students acquire the required knowledge about history and the necessary skills to allow them to make comparisons and connections in order to plan for better present and the future. Owoyeni and Adesoji, (2012) stated three characteristics of effective teachers as follows: personal qualities, teaching skills and subject matter mastery. The basic requirement for effective teaching of history is the possession of a firm knowledge base in history and the skill to convey or transmit such knowledge in ways that are meaningful and useful to the students.

### **Innovative Methods of Teaching History**

Traditionally, history lesson consisted largely of taking notes and learning dates by heart. Most of the history teachers emphasize the use of lecture methods that

may not effectively facilitate learning of history even though sometimes they may be useful. Of course the teaching of history is one of the most difficult tasks. The popular process in most schools is to memorize the corresponding names and events. The teaching of history in the school is to memorize the prizes in most dates and events after which the knowledge gained may be lost sadly, most teachers of history do not portray the subject as an exciting and interesting field of learning during lessons periods (National Academy of Science, 2007). Adeyenka (1989) also discovered that most history teachers are tied to using traditional mode of delivery, with little or no innovation.

During history lesson, teachers should demonstrate mastery over the content, show enthusiasm relate lessons to students prior knowledge, use multiple instructional methods and resources, in conveying content, create a supportive assessment techniques. Boudu, (2005). The topic in a lesson determines the method to be adopted by teachers as suggested by Lumpkin and Multon (2013) that there is no universally accepted stand on how effective teaching should be defined and how it should be measured. A possible causative factor for this difficulty is that different subjects are organized differently and also have differing approaches as regards inquiry and analysis.

Innovative teaching methods have been described to encourage shared understanding between a teacher and student providing cooperative solution of educational tasks, arouse cognitive skills as well as acquisition of positive communicative skills among students (Suslov, Salimgareev, and Khammatov, 2017).

Also according to Fru, (2015) innovative teaching methods make students understand other peoples culture other than just idolizing the culture of the dominant group in a country. Therefore some of the teaching methods considered by this study as innovative are discussed as follows:

**Field trip:**

Field trip or excursion method is used in teaching history and facilitates fast and lasting learning. According to Fadeiye (2004) “the learners (students) could be led to and excursion by a teacher places of historical significance”. Such as educational visits to Museums, zoological gardens, water springs, rocks, industries, dams, and other important historical places help to stimulate the interest of the learners in history. The methods of history involve the search for new sources, the critical re-examination of old ones, the assembly and testing of

evidences, the inquiry into new methods of social investigation. The application of man's relation with a changing society.

A good teaching method must be such that the teacher actively engaged the students and such for first hand information's, extensively use relevant instructional materials to achievement the objectives of the lesson.

According to Malawi institute of education "field trip" is part of ongoing study and teachers should prepare in advance activities for students to do at the outings for the purpose of strengthening what is learnt in the classroom. The differences between the field visit and the educational visit is that in the field visit the teacher has to prepare activities to be done at the field site while in the educational visit the teacher does not play a major role at the visited site.

### **Lecture method**

The lecture method is one of the oldest and most widely used methods of teaching history. Despite its weaknesses the method is still helpful in teaching history. The method implies that the teacher treats a given topic through verbal explanation. The teacher may ask some questions during the course of the lesson and write the summary of the lesson at the end for the students to copy. The major problem of lecture method is that, it renders the students passive as they hardly contribute meaningfully to the lesson or benefits maximally, from it, Fadeiye (2004). For the teaching to be effective this traditional method should be combined with participatory teaching methods. Where the students will be involved in the lesson. The idea of combining the method with other methods such as "question and answer", "discussion method". According to Marikar and Fernando (2017) is to generate an active learning experience. In the contemporary era PowerPoint presentations are utilized to provide a visual aid to this process. According to the Malawi Institute of education the lecture method is useful in certain situations and highlighted its advantages as follows: 1, it is useful in presenting summaries or overviews to the students 2, it is useful when used together with other participatory techniques. 3, it can be used for teaching groups of any sizes. 4, it help the teacher to cover a lot of content in a short space of time (Malawi Institute of Education 2004).

### **Discussion method**

Discussion method is another method of teaching history which when used appropriately is considered as innovative and facilitate effective learning of the

subject. In this method the teacher introduces the topic to the class and invites the students to participate actively in the discussion. The teacher only coordinate the views of the students in order to arrive make at a point. By involving the students in the lesson they are at the liberty to benefit more from the lesson. Under this method, when the teacher introduces the topic, the students must be ready to accept responsibility for their own study. The students works in groups to achieve the task set by the teachers to share their own historical knowledge with each other and design a means of presenting their results to the class. This requires careful preparation, organization of the room space and constant assistance and supervision. Suslov, Salimgareev and Khammatov (2017) observed problem based, design and game methods, case study as well as discussion as example of innovative teaching methods used in teaching history.

### **Role play**

Role play is another method of teaching history that encourages students participation in teaching and learning process. Small group work, primary sources and role play are mentioned by Maloy and Laroche (2010) as innovative teaching methods used in teaching history. Consequently, such innovative teaching methods have been found to attract attention, offer vivid understanding of what happened and excitement to students. The role play method can be used to stimulate a real life situation pertaining to the subject or topic being taught. The use of the role play method can give the students an opportunity to use their creativity in the process of learning. The role play method can be employed using groups of students. Each group of students can act out a real life situation pertaining to the subject or topic being taught with other students and teacher watching. The students can comment on each other's role play. Marikar & Fernando, (2017). It will be very important and encouraging if history teacher will consider factors that will ensure successful learning activity. On this therefore teachers are encouraged to organize activities that would facilitate easy learning other than delivering lectures all the time which makes the students very passive. Erturk (2015), therefore suggested that role play as an active teaching strategy can incorporate these two positive elements of enjoying learning and digesting knowledge, when designed accordingly and implemented successfully.

For a successful implementation of role play teaching, certain criteria must be considered which include: the teacher should clearly describe the actions to be

played as well as the nature of their action. The teacher should also give time for the student actors to prepare for the role play. He/she also should guide the students and encourage them to be creative in acting out the roles. At the end of the role play the teacher should must discuss the play as performed by the students and also ensure that the students see the role play as more action or stage performance for the sake of learning.

### **Conclusion**

Student's participation in the teaching and learning process is very helpful in facilitating effective learning of history. Most of the review of related literature indicates that teacher centered approaches make students very passive in the classroom interaction. It is up for the teacher if he/she realizes that one particular method is not helping the students to learn, he/she should switch to another methods that will make students participate in the lesson. As a teacher it is very important to note that your students have different ways of learning or cognitive processes. So effective teaching of history involves the use of learner-centered approach or method of teaching in order to identify with past events and motivate them to make personal judgments based on evidences. The teacher in the instructional activities should only serve as a guide to students to assist them explore and share the past in a manner that appeals to the emotions and intellectual faculties of the learner. History teachers are encouraged to use multiple methods as these help teachers to meet student's individual needs and cater for their differences. During the learning design process and in preparation for the lesson, it is important for teachers to consider the numerous factors on which successful student learning depends.

### **Recommendations**

History teachers should be encouraged to engage in training sessions as well as seminars and conferences to help them identify new techniques in enhancing the teaching of history. History teachers should be resourceful, innovative and creative in selecting various instructional resources appropriate in teaching history lessons. Institutions should provide required support.

Instruction s should increase in the calendar of activities, the trips and educational visits to local historical and cultural sites in order for the students to have a realistic learning.

Government should modify the educational policies in order to make adequate provision for history and its place in the present century. Ministry of Education should initiate policies that would ensure full implementation of the teaching of history in our schools and colleges.

Institutions should make their history education programmes attractive so that students can enroll into history student-teacher training so that more history teachers would be trained.

On over crowding in classes, schools managements should make arrangement to divide larger classes into smaller ones so that each student could be reached by the teacher during classroom activities. On this, more teachers would be needed to handle the additional classes.

Institutions should make adequate provisions for history rooms as they are very important teaching and learning of history. For the institutions that have an existing history room it should be updated to meet the standard while those that don't have their own history room should provide a resourceful one.

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