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FIELD TRIP FOR EFFECTIVE HISTORY INSTRUCTIONS

LAZARUS L. MAIGORO

ABSTRACT

History as a discipline has attracted low patronage due to what some people piously take it for an illusionary and difficult subject. Perhaps this assertion might not be farfetched from the various methods of teaching employed by the various history teachers in the cause of instruction. This article has observed with the greatest chagrin the sheer lack of purpose, professionalism and commitment in the process of teaching where some history teachers do not use the required method for a particular topic. This, thus, is alleged to make the subject unnecessarily difficult, abstract and very boring. This write up has argued the case for field trip as the best method of history teaching, which should be imbedded by all history teachers and s administrators who want to promote the discipline.

a. INTRODUCTION

Teaching methods or instructional methods generally referred to the way and manner a subject matter or content is imparted in order to achieve targeted educational objectives. They are also used to assist students gather data and at the same time help the teacher to manipulate variables involved in the learning process.

Instructional strategies are wide and varied for use to achieve single objectives while others are utilized towards achieving multiple objectives. Some of these instructional strategies include field trip, devil advocate, questioning, problem solving, brainstorming, and discussion e.t.c. Of all these strategies, field trip is considered the best for history teaching largely because it is more practical with a very high degree of originality compared to others. As we discuss further, this position would be substantiated.

History teachers may be little awed by current development due to increasing varieties of hardware and soft ware in educational technology. There is no doubting the fact that history teachers need to possess a wide range of teaching methods in their arsenal in order to enrich their instruction and the trainee's learning process, mils (1977). It should be borne in mind by the teacher that the various modes of learning requires various modes of instruction.

Although a curious mind might keep pondering why the emphasis on field trip even in the face of overwhelming advancement in teaching strategies through the use of hardware and



software, this underscores the fact that field trip remains unequalled for history teaching which is what this write up aims to preach.

b. THE CONCEPT OF FIELD TRIP

Literally, field trip could be called or tagged an adventure out side the classroom with educational intention. Various authors and educationists have referred to it differently. For instance, Aina in maigoro (2006) calls it study trip, Jarolimek (1977) calls it excursion while mills (1977) refers to it as an instructional visit.

Sterling (1971) defines field trip as an educational journey usually designed to supplement and expand concepts already discussed in class. On a field trip, the entire class visits a point of instructional interest such as a museum, art gallery, factory, industrial center or government installation.

However, Aina (1979) refers to it as any learning activity that is carried on by the children as a group out side the classroom/ under the guidance of the teacher.

Based on the above definitions of a field trip, it could be observed that three elements constitute the nexus of a field trip. These include the teacher, students, the place of visitation and the outside the class nature of this all pertinent learning process. In this

regard, it will not be out of place to generally summarize field trip as the practical teaching out side the classroom whereby students see, hear, feel, face and touch the item or object of instruction. In other words, they place of visitation during a field trip to a history student symbolizes what the laboratory means to a science student (chemistry, physics, biology,) who perform practical in the laboratory.

Field trips require deliberate and painstaking effort by the history teacher in order to achieve the objectives it is set to score. For instance, he has to obtain permission from the school authority and parents, he has to arrange accommodation, feeding, first aid e.t.c. In addition, he must have made scheduled trips to the place of visitation and made prior arrangements preparatory to the visit. field trips, if well, planned, represent the best teaching method ever available to the history teacher. But a poorly organized field trip could turn out to be worst by being dogged with unforeseen circumstances as it may not be purposeful, jeopardize the safety of the students and even cause poor public relations between the school and the community where the school is sited or where the visitation place is located.



PROCEDURES FOR A SUCCESSFUL HISTORY FIELD TRIP

It is an undeniable fact that a history teacher with an advanced knowledge of the subject does not in any way mean the capacity to impart that knowledge to his students. Thus being taught by brilliant but boring person could be described as the mystification on the ignorant by the indolent. It is the duty of the determined history teacher to keep close taps with students hence by so doing he can assess the strategies, which might make him embark on a field trip for more effective instruction.

Field trip should not be misconstrued to mean something other than one out of the many teaching strategies at the disposal of the professional history teacher. The only difference lies in the fact that while other methods are adopted and expanded in the classroom, field trip strategy is conducted outside the classroom spanning from the backyard of the classroom to hundreds of kilometers as the case may be. In the same way a history teacher who is going to use lecture, teaching, discussion, demonstration, e.t.c prepares adequately well to go to the class to teach, the history teacher taking his students out for a field trip prepares in the same manner to ensure the success of this trip. Below are the necessary steps to take into

cognizance to achieve the desired success.

- i. The teacher must first of all plan a head by contacting both the area to be visited and informing the school authorities within reasonable time to enable them meet up with their own obligation whether financially or other wise. parents must also be informed of this planned trip as they also determine to a large extent, the success of this trip by providing finance for their wards on needs for the excursion, urging them to be of good behaviour while the trip last and for all time seek. This is what clerk (1990) refers to as undefined role of parents for successful trips. At other times, the teacher visits the area and go over some details regarding the object, time to be spent there, possible dangers, hitherto the commencement of the visit. While he does these, he also ensures that pressure is unabatedly mounted on the school to keep pace with their own part of the bargain as some school heads could be nonchalant and might even forget to provide the much needed logistics from there own end. Where this is the case, the planned trip might end up being postponed. The diligent history teacher must avoid this



- ii. The teacher must ensure that the movement from the school to the area of visitation must be in group and not in clusters or individually. To avoid this, he should best arrange to make use of a school bus where available or charter a bus as the case may be hence the safety of all students on the trip rest on his shoulders. He should also notify other teachers of his intension to embark on a field trip with his students to keep them informed on the students where about and reason for being absent for there lesions especially where the excursion will last for a whole day or more. It is advisable that a field trip should be embarked upon when school is on session so that the degree of attendance will be very high or hundred percent (100%) compared to when students are on holidays.
- iii. It is absolutely necessary that the history select some time early in the planning stage to discuss and plan with the students the reason for planning this trip. Some students could even assist greatly at this stage because one or two might have someone working at the visitation place to actually facilitate the visit. They teacher should plan with the students, ways in which to report field trip which could be through classroom discussion, group discussion or individual reports. Before any field trip is undertaken, the teacher is expected to have thought or introduced the topic to the students in the classroom. This is to provide the students with adequate background or prior knowledge of what the expect to see or hear to enable them to participate fully and actively. It could also be used to introduced new topics The students should be told to take along their note books with them to take down note as the guide or teacher speaks hence it is going to be a class of some sort.
- iv. It behooves on the teacher to discuss appropriate dress and behavior with the students so as to avert negative impressions people might have about them and the image of the school. Some communities (where the visitation site is located) might not bother much about the dress modes of the visiting students. However, in some communities, dress mode is seriously considered and where the students dress indecently, they may be refused access to some of the visitation sites. This mostly applies to students of territory institutions hence secondary schools and below have their



uniforms to contain with. If the class is visiting a business or industrial establishment, the guide or co-ordinator should be asked for additional informative materials where available.

- v. At the end of the trip, the class should evaluate its value, review its objectives and discuss interesting and useful points which they observed. At this juncture, the teacher might want to file report with the school authority about the problems encountered to guard against future occurrence, the worth and efforts of the field trip.

Before the ideal history teacher makes his intension of organizing a field trip to either the school authority or students, he must set the stage for planning the out come of the excursion within his inner mind, what Alae (1989) calls the setting of objectives. These should include questions like:

- a. Does the trip coordinate closely with the classroom work and the out side world?
- b. Does the trip stimulate interest in a natural environment?
- c. Does it challenge the pupils or organize their knowledge to creative use, thinking, and develop accurate of observation?
- d. Is the trip practical and useful for

learning or are there better methods such as films or speakers?

- e. Does the learning values of the trip justify the time, effort and inconvenience?
- f. Will the trip promote good community relationship with the school?
- g. Is the length of the trip adequate to accomplish the stated objectives?
- h. Does the trip have generalized learning Values?
- I. Does the trip benefit future classes?

If the teacher is fully convinced that the planned excursion is aimed at addressing these questions, then he can go ahead to organize it with every sincerity of purpose. But where it is vise versa, then the sooner he discards this strategy, the better for him and all parties involved though at a dear price to the students who would have lost the opportunity of gaining first hand knowledge.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM, THE HISTORY TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS IN A FIELD TRIP

No matter how skilled a history or instructor may be, learning is essentially the task of the learner. Thus, it is incumbent upon the instructor to employ every motivating tactics available in the book to arouse students interest in his discipline and a particular topic. One way a good and



professional history instructor achieves this feat is by organizing a field trip primarily for the purpose of better learning and also to bring students out of the boredom of the classroom. During a field trip or excursion, series of interactions occur between the students and the teacher on the one hand and between the students and a guide on the other. What are they?

1. The importance of such an excursion be made known to the learner for his learning and his future:

The particular needs and learning experiences required for that excursion should be adequately provided by the teacher. In this regard, Warner in Schein (1965) stated that, ... a child's behaviour is determined by his needs; teachers are organizing the field of education so as to best meet these needs. During the excursion, the students regard the history teacher as one who is bent on putting them on the right track and helping them to qualify for their academic future by taking his time to bring them to the reality of what he has taught them in the classroom. Here, the history teacher asks questions which serve as motivation and similarly, the students ask exciting questions which in the long run, add more value and colour to the entire exercise. It would also not be amazing to discover that on a field trip, students who are known to be

timid in the classroom participate fully or actively during excursions hence they are in direct contact with the object of discussion compared to the prior situation where everything seemed to be vague or in abstract form.

II. The use of competition and co-operation spurs learning:

Students could be divided into groups as a deliberate ploy to ensure competition or co-operation among them during a field trip. Competition in this respect stimulates greater output and members of a competing group learn skills or subject of discussion faster. One of the cardinal objectives in instruction is to produce students who are co-operative and those who can co-operate with their class mates in a spirit of loyalty and mutual understanding for the benefit of both groups based on good communication. It has been discovered that groups that have been inspired to compete and co-operate are in certain circumstances more efficient. A little friendly group rivalry can also be used in instruction on a field trip by the history teacher. One way is to divide the class into two groups with questions distributed to both groups which they fire at each other in turn while the teacher allots marks. This way, keenness and interest is developed through the competition of the opposing halves. Stirring up one



half of the class against the other, or one group against the other in friendly rivalry is more desirable than competitions between individuals which should be avoided by all means on an excursion.

III. Realism, curiosity and surprise stimulates interest and therefore motivate the class during field trip:

One of the most effective ways of stimulating students interest and commanding their attention is to make them curious and spring surprises to them as is evident in a field trip organized by the history teacher. This is because students get to see what they never expect to see. For instance, a teacher who taught his students the origin of an autochthonous group who claim decent from a hole and he takes the students to see the hole with their eyes, surprises and instill curiosity in them. Although there is an adage that says curiosity killed the rat, it nevertheless, help to keep a class alive. At this point of visitation, the instructor should ask his students real and practical questions from objects on the spot.

IV. Keep the class as active as possible: Students on excursion would want to express themselves and to take part in what is going on while pedagogy is on course. Moreover they would prefer their own way of going about learning a difficult topic

especially about an object they could see practically. Thus, within limits, the teacher should allow this attitude, but he should make sure that he is stimulating their natural curiosity and urge them to take part and do it themselves as they try to find answers to problems by direct observation and to gain experiences that cannot be brought into the classroom, Bozimo (2001).

FIELD TRIP FOR EFFECTIVE HISTORY INSTRUCTION

Although field trips have become increasingly expensive over the years especially in the face of the Nigerian economic bite, they nonetheless remain the most effective way of history instruction for the following factors:

I. Field trip is educationally valuable to the history teacher and his students to the extent that it meaningfully relates phenomena observed outside the classroom to the subject matter being taught in the classroom. For instance, students who were taught about the various weapons such as the flying ogbonigwes, forsyth (1977) manufactured by the Biafrans due to the arms blockade enforced by the Nigerian Government during the Nigerian civil war as a survival strategy and were taken to the National war museum in Ibadan to see it for themselves, would appreciate it better and relate issues



each time they are taught of diverse ways or principles people adopt based on circumstances of the day to serve their needs not necessarily war periods.

II The student is more likely to understand a concept better if he has had direct experience with its referent. Furthermore, the teacher at this point is placed in better position to explain clearly what he can see and touch with his hands. This way, history instruction is enhanced thereby dispelling the pious believe or dogma that history is merely a discipline of story telling. A typical situation is where a history teacher takes his students on an excursion to the museum in Jos and shows them the terra cotta heads of the famous Nok culture and civilization. On this account, the teacher might not even need to give elaborate explanation in view of the available opportunity being offered his students to come to direct contact with the subject of discuss.

III Again, field trips offers students more opportunities to ask questions. This is largely because they are prone to ask questions on what they can see practically. 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 in some great detail would now be exposed to the

students which could stir their curiosity to want to know what that thing is. 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 teacher 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 it's scattered gulags where alleged recalcitrant African chiefs were locked up. 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 Iyortsuun and kissock (1982) stressed that, at every stage in education, questions are the core around which all communication between teachers and pupils takes place.

IV Field trips serve a number of purposes such as original discovery, verification and motivation. Students



on a field trip get to discover the originality of instruction thereby getting amused and motivated in the process. This encourages them to develop more interest in the discipline.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FIELD TRIP

No teacher would like to organize an excursion that at the end of the day, would not meet the targeted aims and objectives. To avert this, below are some useful suggestions that if adhered to, would ensure the success of a field trip.

I As part of effective planning and with the students' cooperation, establish standards of conducts to be observed while the field trip lasts and for all time. This is to avoid a situation where the students misconceive the excursion as a pleasure or a mere social outing other than a carefully planned learning experience.

II The teacher should ensure that all students know the purpose and destination of the specific area(s) of visitation. He should also help them by spelling out in terse clear terms what they are expected to learn from such an experience.

III He should plan essential details with students before the trip by assigning the task of gathering advance information about the subject of study and help them

prepare a series of questions to be asked and answered. This is especially where a guide is responsible for the entire conduct of activities during the field trip.

IV The teacher should help students derive maximum benefits from the trip by subsequent or follow up students appraisals in form of tests, assignments, teacher led discussions and class reports. This will go a long way in ensuring that the trip serve educational purpose.

V He should ensure that students excitement, which is obvious, is not expressed in misbehaviour by instilling discipline among his students and also taking strict disciplinary measures against erring students to serve as a deterrent to others.

Conclusively, in spite of the fact that field trips could be expensive, time consuming and hazardous, they nevertheless assist in no small measure in clarifying quite a number of misconceptions about the discipline. It is in light of these that history teachers are urged to defy the odds of financial stringencies among others, to advance the cause of history pedagogy as field trip remains a strategy of history instruction that is yet to be parallel.



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