

EFFECTS OF NOISE AND DISTRACTIONS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

SHEHU SULE PhD

Abstract

History is a subject or course that is dreaded by many students for its voluminous nature and dating patterns. At the post-secondary school level, the history curriculum departs from storytelling, pointing to a more demanding principle of chronology, narration and absolute dating. At this level therefore, the rapt attention of the student is required for easy comprehension and assimilation. This study finds that noise and distractions of the twenty-first century, especially emotional and physiological, resulting from peer pressure, use of satellite television, cell phones and consequences of poverty, have however acted as impediments to the teaching and learning of history as demanded by the curriculum. This study finds that awareness must be created for parents to reduce the access of their wards to satellite television channels; laws restricting the use of cell phones throughout the lecture day should be enacted; the government should do more to tackle the problem of poverty so as to allow full concentration by students. In terms of methodology, Quasi-experimental design was adopted for this study, a pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent group design which involves the use of non-randomized group and thus, an intact class was be used.

Keywords: Noise, Teaching, Learning, Distractions

Introduction

The strong tides of globalization and modernization have affected education in so many ways. Before the end of the 20th century, not many things distracted students from academic pursuit. That period witnessed a situation whereby students leave home with enough food stuff and provisions that were expected to last whole or part of the semester as the case may be, as little or no communication was available with parents or guardians till the end of the semester. The available means of communication was by letter writing and it took four or five weeks to get reply. Banks operated as branches and not a matter of general connectivity as obtainable now. Television stations were few and programs lasted only for few hours per day. However, not every home had television set. Under this condition, a learner's attention was not carried away by much distraction and therefore, an enabling environment for concentration was available. Furthermore, the gap between the rich and

Shehu Sule PhD
History Department,
FCT College Of Education,
Zuba-Abuja

Correspondence to
Shehu Sule
shehusule997@gmail.com

the poor was not so wide for a distractive display of affluence, which could affect some students negatively. The level of modernization witnessed by the society as from the end of the 20th century is enamoured; it has caused serious distraction to learners in general and there is the need to modify learners' behaviour and change methods of teaching if feedback is required.

History is one of the school subjects that students can only comprehend through rapt attention and active participation of learners. Attempts must therefore be made by history teachers to overcome noise and distractions which have effectively acted as impediments to learning in the 21st century. The use of conventional lecture method in teaching history is no more in vogue and has failed the test of time. Noise and distractions through cell phones, television sets, hunger, peer pressure and upsurge in student population among others, have created problems for the 21st century history teacher. In a bid to ensure success in the teaching of history, this study has experimented lack of use of cell phones for whole lecture day, the use of play-way method, questioning technique and audio-visual aids in learning. This strategy is compared to days when students had access to their cell phones and the use of conventional lecture method. The result achieved is encouraging as demonstrated in level 100 Historiography and Economic History classes and level 200 Local and Regional History and European Conquest and African Resistance classes in FCT College of Education Zuba, Colleges of Education Ankpa and Minna. The result has been presented in tabular form in the body of the work. The weaknesses of the conventional teaching strategy and the current noise and distractions have negative effects on students' academic outcome. It is therefore pertinent to search for more effective teaching strategies that can improve history students' academic outcome.

Civilization, poverty and mismanagement have increased the rate of noise and distractions among learners of history. In an effort to stem the tide, the teacher is expected to adopt measures and techniques aimed at making students understand his teachings. The use of modern means of communications, social media and inadequate infrastructural facilities are distracting the attention of students from learning history. Social media is so interesting that it puts the user into focus lock while lesson is on-going. Students put on their cell phones, especially in relatively large classes and watch movies, play games or chat with families and friends during lessons. Except if a lecturer is observant and in full control of the class situation, many students pay less attention because of noise and distractions.

Noise or distractions have been identified as barriers to communication in the classroom (Ajileye, 2011). Noise could be static, e.g., thunder storm, car horn, talking in or outside the class, use of cell phones, poor ventilation or physical injury, while emotional or psychological noise include day dreaming, boredom, family crisis, maladjustment, frustration, restlessness, death of family member, anxiety, good news or broken relationship (Ajileye, 2011). Where noise of any sort exists, the ability of the learner to imbibe what is being taught is hampered. It is in view of this that this research analysed the effect of noise on the teaching and learning of history in the 21st century and proffer possible solutions using 100 and 200 level history students of FCT College of Education Zuba, Colleges of Education Ankpa and Minna as case study.

Review of literature

Teaching is a complex set of activities which take place between the learner and the teacher for effective learning. It is a process that helps someone to acquire a change of attitude, behavior, knowledge, ideas, values, skills and appreciation (Achuonye and Ajoku, 2003). As observed by Ajileye, any effective teaching process, the following measures should be present:

- A clearly stated objective must be in place and learners must be intellectually ready to learn.
- Teaching must be geared towards assisting others to learn.
- Teaching entails the process of giving out information and monitoring how the information is absorbed.
- Teaching must be interactive between the teacher and the learner.
- Teaching must move systematically from simple to complex, known to unknown, easy to difficult task, concrete to abstract and general to specific.

The process of teaching is carried out by a professional known simply as a teacher. A teacher is the chief implementer of the curriculum who searches and utilizes information in the process of imparting and transmitting knowledge to the learner. For an effective, efficient and successful teaching and learning, otherwise

known as transfer of knowledge to take place, the teacher should understand both the theory and practical methodology of teaching. This is necessary because the ability of the learner to imbibe what is taught largely depends on the dexterity and methodology of the teacher. In other words, the success of the entire educational process rests on the shoulders of the teacher. It is in view of this that the National Policy on Education states that “since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development” (TRCN, 2012). The policy went further to state that:

- (a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- (b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (c) Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large, and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- (e) Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (TRCN, 2012).

There are different types of teachers; they are the competent and qualified teachers, the qualified incompetent teachers and the unqualified teachers. The competent and qualified are those who possess the required qualifications and have interest in the job. The qualified incompetent teachers are those who are trained but are never satisfied with the job. Those types of people only find themselves in the teaching profession by accident and have nothing to contribute to knowledge. The unqualified teachers are the type of teachers who do not possess the qualifications of a teacher but are competent and hardworking (Ajileye, 2011). In some cases, the unqualified but competent and hardworking teachers perform better on the job than the qualified incompetent teachers. Holding a certificate is not the true reflection of knowledge and passion for the job.

In a typical classroom situation, teachers can be classified by personality traits; the take-it-easy/permissible teacher, the autocratic teacher and the democratic teacher. The democratic teacher is the best because he gives help, guidance and assistance to his learners any time they are in academic need. There are a lot of teaching methods available for use by teachers, some of them are as follows; discussion method, lecture method, group method, individualized method, team teaching method, project method, case study method, role playing method and field trip method (Ajileye, 2011).

Learning is the acquisition of new ideas, skills, values, knowledge and experience which enables an individual to modify, change or alter his/her actions. Other terms like pupil and student can be used in describing the learner. Learning can be further defined as a conscious change of individual behaviour as a result of experience through formal schooling, apprenticeship and learning of norms from parents. Thinking, feeling and acting are all forms of learning. Learning is a private event that cannot be directly observed by another person, it occurs within an individual. The result of learning is the capability to perform certain behaviour or task in a given situation. Unlike learning, teaching is immediately observable and most appreciated by those who did not even possess any knowledge of what is being taught. Immediate and practical understanding of what the teacher is saying needs no professional touch but not so for learning. As learners sit silently and nod their heads in acceptance, it takes a very high professional and psychological acumen to determine those not following the process. Some scholars disagree with the idea that learning must not necessarily be followed by change in behaviour. It is in view of this that Ferrant, as cited by Oladosu, defines learning as the “process by which attitudes, knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities are acquired and retained. Whatever is so acquired should not be attributable to inherited behavior patterns or physical growth” (Oladosu, 2001). There are different type of learners, they include slow learners, late comers, lazy learners, bully, fast learners, extroverts and introverts. It is incumbent on the teacher to identify these traits among the learners and handle them accordingly.

The play-way method is an instructional approach which involves engaging students in activities that bring pleasure and enjoyment to them. In view of the high rate of emotional noise that students make in class, coupled with the vast demands of history as a subject, the play-way method helps in easing tension, stress or anxiety while the history teacher uses the relaxed atmosphere to pass vital information. History teachers who use the play-way method often have their classes filled to capacity while the atmosphere is charged. Under such atmosphere, problems such as congestion, heat, inadequate sitting, stress and daydreaming are easily pushed aside while attention is given to the teacher. The physical and emotional problems and engagements encountered by students in recent times make conventional lecture method boring and uninteresting. Much of history lesson centres on the past events of man. The play-way method therefore waters down the history lesson to storytelling and normal interactive event which ends up arresting the attention of the learner (Safiya, Yusuf and Sule, 2016).

In the present era of high static and emotional noise which has been interfering in learning, the question and answer technique of teaching should be graded on the Continuous Assessment. The writer has administered this on students and it has proven to be effective in contemporary learning process. This method makes students to retain a lot of information in their memories. Researches have shown that learners generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they hear and see, 70% of what they say and 90% of what they say and do at the same time (Salman, 2001). In a typical classroom situation if students know that questions would be asked, they could avoid lectures as a result while the brave ones stay behind and try to pay attention. In order to enhance full participation in the question and answer session, a percentage of the Continuous Assessment mark is set aside for that. If for instance 20 marks are set aside for that purpose, students will not only be encouraged to attend lectures, they will equally be encouraged to participate. A mark could be awarded for asking a question while two marks could be set aside for answering. Under this atmosphere, students who ordinarily did not feel like talking are forced to talk in order to earn marks. When they ask questions, the teacher must not stop there, they are told to listen to the answers given as they will be compelled to tell the class what they have just heard. The system is also helpful in converting some introverts into extroverts. Some students for fear of being jeered by others normally find it difficult to express themselves. After being forced to talk once or twice, they find their bearing and therefore begin to explode.

Methodology

Quasi-experimental design is adopted for this study, a pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent group design which involves the use of non-randomized group and thus, an intact class has been used.

Fig. 1. Format of the Research Design

Group	Pre-test	T _R	Post-test
EG	O ₁	X	O ₂
CG	O ₁		O ₂

EG --- Experimental Group.

CG --- Control Group.

X --- Treatment

O₁ --- Pre-test (First observation).

O₂ – Post-test (Second observation)

The population of the study includes all NCE II & III students in the department of history, FCT College of Education, Zuba Abuja, College of Education Ankpa, and College of Education Minna. The total number of the population is 430. All seventy-one (71) students from NCE II and fifty-three (53) students from NCE III of the history department, FCT College of Education Zuba; all forty-two (42) students from NCE II and twenty-nine students from NCE III of history department, College of Education Ankpa; all one hundred and twenty-seven

NCE II and one hundred and eight NCE III students of history department, College of Education Minna, making a total of 430. The reason for using NCE II and III only is that the NCE I students are new and their previous knowledge will not be enough to conduct the study.

After extensive research and tests conducted for students across the three colleges in focus, results are provided here in tabular form:

Work plan for Historiography NCE I					
LECTURE	TOPIC	CONVENTION	OUTCOME	EXPERIMENT	OUTCOME
1.	What is history and why do we teach history?	Teaching with access to use of cell phone	45% pass in test conducted	Teaching without access to cell phone	72% pass in test conducted
2.	Sources of history				
3.	Dating in history				
4.	Sources of history				
5.	Problems and issues in the study of African history				
Work plan for Major World Civilizations NCE I					
1.	What is civilization	Teaching with access to use of cell phone	38% pass in test conducted	Teaching without access to cell phone	66% pass in test conducted
2.	Factors that aid the spread of civilization				
3.	The Nile and Egyptian civilization				
4.	Mesopotamia				
5.	Abrahamic civilization				
Work plan for Economic History of Nigeria NCE II					
1.	Concept of Economic History	Teaching with access to use of cell phone	22% pass in test conducted	Teaching without access to cell phone	69% pass in test conducted
2.	Pre-colonial units of production				
3.	Trade linkages and inter-group relations				
4.	The colonial economy 1900-1960				
5.	Post-colonial economic development				

Work plan for Local and Regional History NCE II					
1.	Origin, migration and settlement pattern of the Gbagyi, Nupe and Egbira				
2.	Origin, migration and settlement pattern of the Gade, Koro and Hausa	Teaching with access to use of cell phone	37% pass in test conducted	Teaching without access to cell phone	77% pass in test conducted
3.	Political organization of the Gbagyi and Hausa: Comparative analysis				
4.	Relocation of Nigeria's federal capital from Lagos to the FCT				
5.	Economic life of people of the north-central region				

Result of Findings

From the forgoing, after five lessons of Historiography NCE I, there was an improvement in learning outcome after the experimental class. Before the experiment class, conventional teaching with access to the use of cell phone resulted in 45% pass while at the end, 72% pass was recorded. At the end of the lessons of Major World Civilizations, 66% pass was recorded as against the pre experimental outcome of 38% pass. In the NCE II Economic History class, a noticeable improvement in outcome was recorded; 22% pass after conventional teaching and 69% pass after experimental teaching and test. In the NCE II class of Local and Regional History, the same trend obtained. The test after conventional teaching with access to cell phone recorded 37% pass while the test conducted after the experimental class revealed 77% pass.

Conclusion

Availability of various channels on television and satellite networks has increasingly occupied the attention of learners. Television stations and satellite providers operate on 24 hour basis, dishing out interesting and thought-provoking or captivating programs. At the end of the program, viewers are left to think about possible outcomes of next program or even nostalgia of the previous one. These positive aspects of civilization leave the learner with only his/her physical body in class while attention is fully shifted to programs and information on television and social media. Some learners participate actively in watching local and international movies while others follow football trends in major leagues of Europe. This trend is a direct opposite of what obtained in the past when very few television stations existed and no satellite networks. The few television stations opened from 4pm to 11pm daily and showed more of educational programs and news items. There were no mobile networks with all items attached. The level at which students assimilated lectures in those days is higher than these days because of all and more of the attractions enumerated above.

Population explosion in schools and the lack of enabling infrastructure to accommodate students is another

major impediment to smooth transfer of knowledge. A lecture room initially designed to accommodate 70 students may be occupied by over 200 students. Sitting arrangements are either lacking or incomplete in such classes; to make matters worse, such rooms are usually hot, without electricity and therefore not conducive for effective teaching and learning. In most schools, hostel accommodation is largely inadequate thereby forcing many students to live off-campus. The host communities are left with the option of providing accommodation for the teeming student population. In a free society like ours, such accommodations are exorbitant and below standard, usually with poor sanitary facilities, unstable electricity and near zero water supply. In an effort to overcome these challenges, the students have to sacrifice a lot of their educational time and energy. In view of the problems bedeviling students which are major barriers to instructional communication, this work has selected the appropriate teaching methods that suit the present condition so as to achieve the primary aim of transfer of knowledge.

References

- Achuonye, K.A. & L.I. Ajoku, L.I., (2003). *Foundation of Curriculum Development & Implementation*, Portharcourt: Pearl Publishers.
- Ajibade, U.A., (2001). "Evaluation of Students' Learning Outcomes IV", in Abimbola, I.O., (ed), *Fundamental Principles & Practice of Instruction*, Ilorin: Belodan & Tunde-Babs Publishers.
- Ajileye, M.A., (2011). *Rudiments of Instructional System*, Minna: Sanny Prints.
- Egga, I.I., (2011). "Continuous Assessment & Examination Ethics", in Abolarin, E.E., et al (eds), *Measurement & Evaluation for Students & Teachers*, Abuja: Mat-Sunshine Prints.
- Jika, S.A., Yahaya A.Y. & Sule, S., (2016). "History Education: A Source for Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria", *Aso Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1.
- Oladosu, A.G.A.S., (2001). "Concepts in Education Related to Teaching I" in Abimbola, I.O., (ed), *Fundamental Principles & Practice of Instruction*, Ilorin: Belodan & Tunde-Babs Publishers.
- Orji, U.E., (2011). "Meaning & Scope of Measurement & Evaluation", in Abolarin, E.E., et al (eds), *Measurement & Evaluation for Students & Teachers*, Abuja: Mat-Sunshine Prints, 2011.
- "Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers", (2012). a publication of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria.
- Salman, M.F., (2001). "Formal Instructional Method IV", in I.O. Abimbola (ed), *Fundamental Principles & Practice of Instruction*, Ilorin: Belodan & Tunde-Babs Publishers.
- Sule, S., (2023). "Tutoring Teaching Strategy and Academic Outcome of economics and History Students in Selected Colleges of Education in North Central Nigeria", *Lasu Journal of History and International Studies*, Vol.5, No.1.
- UBEC (2021). A Training Manual for History Teachers in Basic Education Schools.
- Ukwuije, R.P.I., (1989). *Educational Measurement & Evaluation for Teachers*, Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers.