

Modern Historical Scholarship in Nigeria: Digital Age, Challenges and the Quest for Prospects

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Abstract

This study entitled “Modern Historical Scholarship in Nigeria, Digital Age, Challenges and the Quest for Prospects” has been carried out to examine the role, relevance and impact of Digital Age on contemporary Historical Scholarship with a special reference to Historiographical Methods of Research, Historical Teaching and Learning aspects. The whole scholarly effort herein purely centres on an attempt to explore the nature, essence and extent of favoritism of Modern Educational gadgets/technologies to the academic life of the generality of historical studies, scholars and students. In the course of conducting the study, a very good number of relevant sources were used for data collection, presentation and analysis, aimed at producing a balanced study. The interest of the subject matter is to highlight the significant role of educational technologies in the digitization and revolutionization of Historical Scholarship as well as its tremendous contributions in generating a chain of new trends in Historical Research, and reawakening of intellectualism. The study argues that it is consequent upon the advent of Modern Educational Technologies and their application that brought about an increasing rate in the emergence, rise and influence of the class of intelligentsia, students and scholars of high philosophical minded idealism. The study further found that technological advancement under review also led to the formation of several schools of Historical thought, re-birth of the generation of Modern Historical Philosophers consequent upon the development of divergent views. Furthermore, the ideological concepts of Post Modernism, Formalism and Structuralism

also got prominence and continue to gather momentum within the academic communities and beyond. However, the last but not the least is the point of the identification of some major impediments militating against the progress of the subject matter under review. Among the obstacles include; the failure of the authorities concerned to rise against the responsibilities ahead of them, neurological effects of educational technologies, drug addiction, brain damage, eye defect, absence of moral and financial supports to state but a few out of the multitude number of problems confronting this subject matter.

Keywords: *Modern, Historical, Scholarship, Nigeria, Digital, Age, Challenges, Prospects,*

Introduction

This write -up titled “Modern Historical Scholarship in Nigeria: Digital Age, Challenges and the Quest for Prospects” examines the relevance, merits, as well as some major obstacles associated with historical studies in modern day Nigeria. The study has further explored the positive developments and impact of Digital Age on Historical teaching and learning aspects.

However, it is interesting to note that. it is against the above backdrop for a proper understanding of the central direction of the study, the paper will be subdivided into inter-related subheadings, such as definition of the term ‘Historical Scholarship’ and justification for the study of history as discipline itself, historian and his academic portion, historical methods and techniques of its study, historical philosophy and limitation of sources for historical research. It is also in the interest of the study to briefly survey the origin of man and his relationship with cosmic environment, modern technology, its role and impact on historical teaching-learning processes, (Digitalization and Revolutionary of Historical Methods of teaching, learning and research). At the tail end, this studied subjects matter offers appropriate solution against the identified challenges militating against the progress of the subject matter of study.

The Concept of Historical Scholarship and Justification for the Study of History as a Discipline:

The term ‘History’ to Karl Marx and Engels “*We know only a single Science, the Science of History*” This demonstrates that History can be examined from two perspectives and be subdivided into two inter related fields namely. The History of Nature and the History of Mankind, both the two are inseparable. The History of nature concerns with natural Sciences, while the other one History of mankind is nearly anointed to distorted interpretation or a complete abstraction of ideology/philosophy itself which is one of the aspects of this History. This study seeks to point out that History as a discipline should be regarded as a matter of frequent reflection without any dust. Similarly, it is also not out of place to regard it as a discipline that values human past as majority agreed by a multitude collection and team of grounded historical scholars, students and researchers in general.

However in any case, it is imperative to note that for a proper understanding of the term ‘History’ it is therefore very needful to differentiate History as a process, that is reality outside us and History as an academic discipline. To Karl Marx, History as a process could be confined to the understanding of relationship between man and his environment. This involves the events, the episodes the totality of the changes and experiences undergone/undergoes by human’s society. This discipline largely centres on the reconstruction and explanation of the experiences

and changes witnessed overtime. For E.H Carr, he views “*History*” as a continuous process of interaction between the present and the past” In a nutshell, this portrays that events of the past and their study equally get along with the aspects of History and the Historian’s interest to reconstruct the explored and examined related matter. This study highlights that whatever, the aspect of History, the Historian chooses to study, the chances are not randomly made because are usually motivated by some underlying concerns or interests whether these are overtly spelt out or not. The interest of the study in view of the above point raised by Oyedele to put it this way “*No study of History is interest free*”.

Historian and His Academic Portion

Historian is an individual personality academically trained to interact with the past, present happenings, causality, effects and changes for a proper Historical reconstruction to be attained. Historian himself is always interested in capturing the essence, nature and form of the particular aspect of History which he chooses to investigate, for it is the profound understanding of the essence and form of a Historical phenomenon that enables the Historian to discover the underlying laws, forces and principles leading social motion. It also offers an opportunity for the Historian to study the inter-related events aimed at establishing a sound chronology with which a key concept could best be understood. In this little scholarly effort, it has been learnt that the interest of the study is to highlight that History as a discipline is all about the events of the past and History as an account of events go hand in hand via the Historian. From the foregoing therefore, it is not out of portion for a better understanding of the term ‘History’ to quote, E.H Carr, for he opines that

“Both are in constant dialogue through the facts, his History as events of the past; History as an account of those events and the Historian, therefore ultimately merged together in the pursuit of the Historian’s interest. This interest is often determined by the Historical epoch. This is why Marx declared that every age has to re-write its own History. Ultimately however, the position which the Historian takes even within his epoch is determined by his own class, position and aspiration in society. He would normally write in defense, protection and promotion of his own class, interest, but occasionally he might, choose to write in favour of other classes, if he chooses to commit class suicide. Very rarely still, a Historian might write in favour or against his own objective class interest unwittingly or unknowingly. However, the central issue in both, the occurrence of events as well as their study is change. But to study change is to study continuity, the anti-thesis of change and changes can be gradual, rapid and radical or revolutionary.

However, it is worthy to note that the above seeks to portray that History and its nature largely centres on man in the past, but a past with concrete meaning and value to man in the past with concrete meaning and value to man in society now a days. This is basically because its subject matter is man, not as a biological being but man in society (Social Man), who is susceptible to change. Historical scholarship should consequent upon the above point raised be understood as a discipline which is concerned with the past, which is not in any way stagnant, but one in motion, a phenomena that makes change unavoidable. Motion such as; at the level of the environment, change in rainfall, temperature, ecology etc, both of these propounding affect man, demographic

changes including; increase and decrease in the number of human beings and changes in sex and age distribution, changes in settlement, (dynamic), quantities of material goods, communication and changes in languages i.e. expanding and contrasting language even Hebrew. The overriding concern here is to regard History in time dimension, historical change always begins from the past or fundamental grassroots which Paves way for a better understanding of Historical causality, effects, facts, evidences and changes.

In view of the above, it could therefore be interesting to be borne in our intellectual minds that philosophy of History has rightly pointed out that the past must always be fundamentally related with the present. This is basically because no matter how remote in time, events thus reconstructed could emerge to be History which refers to and derives its meaning from the present needs and situation in respect of the grassroots of the events explored to be studied or where the events under review vibrate.

Historical Methods and Techniques of Study

The above entitled subject matter being reviewed herein seeks to point out that both the two; Historical methods and techniques of study entail a high degree of scientifically and rigorous evaluation of sources and should be determined accordingly with what one is studying. Further to the above, it is interesting to note that the idea of realizing the fact that the founding fathers of Scientific History had equally failed to adhere to their own precepts as glaringly demonstrated by the events of the First World War of 1914-1918, which did not prevent Historians from making proud with the virtues of the Scientific approach. In contrary, thus study found that they were merely spurred to greater efforts. A very good and concrete testimony in respect of this could be exemplified with a famous inaugural lecture of Rigoorous, Professor of Modern History in Cambridge University, United Kingdom. For J.B Burry, on similar ground states that “*History is a Science, no less, no more*, History is not a branch of Literature, the facts of History, like the facts of Geology, or Astronomy, can supply material for literary art

But to cloth the story of human’s society in a literary dress is no more than the part of a Historian, as a Historian than it is the part of an Astronomer to present in an artistic shape, the story of the stars” Bury continues to make a comparison between ‘History’ as Literature and ‘History’ as a Science.

In another related development regarding the definition of History, Fafunwa (1974), views History as a discipline; “*As to people what memory is to the individual, people with no knowledge of their past are a victim of collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide post of precedence to shape their course*”.

In essence, the above quoted definition of the term ‘History’ connotes that people without knowledge of the past are likely to suffer from Historic myopia as their future will remain uncertain and invariable. For Jekanya (2010) “*History is the accounts of the past events, investigated, analyzed and interpreted in order to discover generalizations that are helpful in understanding the present and to a limited extent, in anticipating the future*”

From the foregoing, therefore, it is interesting to note that History as a study of the past to inform the present and to safeguard the future, in effect, History does not study the past in isolation from the present, but relates intricately, the successes, achievements and failures of antecedent generations to the contemporary case and set the stage for a better living while alive.

Limitation of Sources for Historical Scholarship or Reconstruction

Previous studies conducted have argued that part of the major limitation of sources for Historical studies, among several include; its purpose of study varies and its operation without memory of past experiences to live today. It is societal-social memory and the nature of the knowledge, the Historian generates about man, as a social being and his activities in operation, conducted or being conducted. The whole scholarly argument is the need to bring into notice that the major overriding concern of History as a discipline is the production of knowledge for mankind to understand himself better and his immediate globe.

The Concept of Historical Philosophy

The term 'Historical Philosophy' involves love, likeness or a search for wisdom or knowledge, which historically termed as philosophic in the Latin Language. This study considers this as a theory of logical analysis or principles underlying conduct, though and an inquiry into the nature of the globe. However, other inter-related disciplines ranging from Education, Science and History by and large have equally agreed to regard Philosophy as the general principles or laws of a field of knowledge or activity. In view of this, a scholar known as J.J.C, Smart puts it this way.

“Philosophy is primarily concerned with what there is in the world and what we ought to do about it”

To him, the above captioned portrays philosophy on the basis of conceptual, analytical and rational factors aimed at offering a medium for the expression of totality of Science. In essence, this provides a better understanding of oneself, of other fellow mankind, society, and people thinking of the actual world affairs, values and purposes of life in the world. It is also the role of philosophy, particularly Historical Philosophy to promote a deeper sense of understanding capable of indefinite expansion because it is like a soul without a specific boundary (Life Span). From the foregoing therefore, it is interesting to note that the study found that philosophy provokes rethinking of one's view and opinion for the purpose of remedy. Philosophy itself values principles of accurate reasoning, logical thinking and analysis on the basis of clear and unbiased mind that is prove to objectivity, critical and reflective process. Philosophers and philosophy have full liberty to raise fundamental questions on issues and problems that generate questions concerning human thought. At this juncture, one might be convinced to accept that philosophy of whatever academic discipline needs to study questions character and peculiar problems relating to a field of knowledge or a matter under study.

However, of prime importance and relevance here is the need to agree that one of the major features of philosophy is the predominant role of disputation and argumentation against one's life style, ideology and philosophy, especially, when it comes to the study of philosophical problems. From the foregoing therefore, it would be safe to justify that philosophy could best be understood under the pretext of Historical scholarship. The interest of the study is to highlight that in the recent past all scientific subjects were regarded as philosophy. But in modern

academic world today philosophy of matter has encompassed Psychology, Physics and Chemistry. Philosophy of mind encompassed Psychology and other related Behavioral Sciences. In any event, one should note that philosophy is very vast and broad to cover all fields of theoretical inquiry. In this study, it could be learnt that in an attempt to search for solutions. There is the need to search and apply for special methodology and perennial evaluation of argumentation in accordance with concrete examples.

In view of the above findings, therefore, it is interesting to note that it is not all philosophical problems that could be attempted by using the usual and dialectal methodology due to their nature and fundamental character. This highlights that it is very impossible and complex for some basic questions to be attempted accordingly by experimentation for theoretical clarity for instance, fundamental and psychological questions concerning the existence or belief in God, freedom, knowledge and morality, are as well irreligious, very difficult and complex to be attempted and concluded under philosophical investigation. In a nutshell, from the foregoing, it is quite convincing to state that it is not out of place in this write-up to briefly examine the origin of mankind and his relationship with his immediate world.

A Brief Historical Survey of the Origin of Man and Relationship with His Cosmic Environment

For a better understanding of the focus of the above subheading therefore, it would be interesting to bear in mind that recent past studies conducted have highlighted that the greatest circulatory movement in subsequent creation lies below the human paradise, the spiritual home of mankind, which has been described as the gigantic cycle of the Universe whose enormous size and extent are both by and human's imagination. However, it is consequent upon this, the study discovered that there are seven Universes, gigantic world system, which are complete in nature and themselves, pursue their mighty courses in the material world of subsequent creation. The earth belongs to the Universe, Ephesus with its enormous solar systems, sun families, star clusters, as well as clouds of gas and dust. The cycle of the Universe undergoes through Millions of years.

In view of the above points raised, it would not be surprising for the study to point out that man himself is opportuned only to be able to observe at least a short section of another cycle, which to his understanding is still very vast, in order to gain some ideas of the vestures of man's possibilities of development that lies nearest to us (mankind). Critically looking at the idea raised above, which are both scientific and historical research findings for analysis and reconstruction into reality. The interest of the study is to point out that the earth revolves around its axis both day and night. Similarly, after every 360 days, the earth revolves around the sun and it is a reason that brings about these seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter. As for the third movement, it is carried out by planet, which is principally caused by the power of attraction of the moon, its axis revolves like that of a top.

Furthermore, a relevant studies conducted have demonstrated that the Universe is very vast and enormous in size and contains Billions of bodies. In Ephesus, this is represented as our own solar system there around numerous galaxies which formed Universe. Past studies concluded have further indicated that very recent astronomers have probed the heavens with powerful telescopes and discovered more intriguing facts regarding the Universe, the stars galaxies by and large. A galaxy is a vast collection of stars, gas and other materials rotating around a central nuclear.

However, it is consequent upon the aforementioned issues associated with our immediate globe, the study explored that man himself has emerged from this lowly origin and found himself within environment containing plants and animals, rivers and rocks, stars and sun as well as other related or unrelated living and non-living organism. It is also of relevance to be borne in mind that religious accounts cannot be subjected to scientific testing due to the existence and belief in their super natural character/power.

From the foregoing, therefore, it could be safe to justify that *“History as a discipline is everything and there is everything in it. History itself it is both a Science and Art considering its academic prestige, intellectual contributions to the knowledge of different fields of study, it is parasitical in nature and a discipline without a boarder because no living or non-living organisms to be left unstudied”*.

Technology and Historical Scholarship in Contemporary Nigeria: Role, Relevance and Impact on Human’s Survival

In any event, it is interesting to note that the study seeks to point out that Modern Historical Scholarship and Digital Age have both tremendously contributed in revolutionizing and digitalizing Historiographical form of research, teaching and learning of History as a discipline. However, it is of paramount importance to stress that the two subject matters under review herein are partly responsible for the invention of many trends for Historical research, production of new generation of Historical scholars and students, emergence, rise and influence of intelligentsia, consequent upon which the period witnessed the re-birth of the concept of Post-Modernism, Formalization and Structuralism because of philosophical, ideological differences, interpretation of terms and analysis of contemporary Historical Philosophies.

Recent past studies conducted and interacted with have argued that many decades back Philosophers of History were predominantly more interested and keen on issues of explanation and narrative Historical discourse consequent upon which motivated them to largely, consistently and exclusively focused on the Historian’s scholarly published works (intellectual output), thereby neglecting that Historical scholarship is a practice of reading, thinking, discussing and writing, in which successful performance needs active cultivation of skills, attitudes and virtues. Certainly, it could be safe for the study to justify the importance of the application of modern educational technology in Historical studies, teaching-learning processes and in conducting Historical researches by and large and it should as well be borne in an intellectual mind that the impact of Digital Age Cannot be left unstudied.

Justification for the Study of History, Role and Impact of Digital Age on Historical Scholarship

Modern Historical and Digital Studies recently conducted have demonstrated that even the rapid emergence, rise and influence of grounded scholars and students of different discipline as well as the massive establishment of schools of Historical thought was as a result of the advent, acceptance and application of inter-related educational gadget/technologies of the teaching and learning of History. A concrete testimony to this could be seen how the scholarly works of the Philosophers such as Karl Marx (‘Marxism,’), Lenin (‘Leninism,’), Hegel (Hegelianism), Trosky (Troskym.), Abdurrahman bin Khaldun (Cyclical Theory) and Fernand Braudel to mention but a

few were revolutionalized, digitalized and have also made historical scholarship easily accessible.

In any case, therefore it could be quite convincing and acceptable for the study to argue that the significance of an online Historical scholarship, researches, conferences and seminars being conducted in modern day Nigerian system of teaching and learning are very vital, relevant, interesting and encouraging, especially in an institution where History is being offered and as well in the presence of the availability of all the required and relevant instructional materials for use. This will remarkably result in witnessing an increase in the number of ICT Driven Institutions, de-colonization of the inherited syllabus, curriculum and the invention of new teaching methods and strategies for the betterment of the academic life of the students and career progression of the teaching staff by and large.

Furthermore, studies have stressed that the advent of digital literacy, the role and position of teachers and students have both reached prominence and positively transformed, thereby making it possible for the teachers to become fully aware of the complex content for literacy. The study found that within the frame of digital literacy, teaching staff could be regarded as facilitators not knowledge providers and learners are no more but consumers of knowledge or participants/communicatees as they are being addressed. In view of the above, therefore it would be interesting to note that the use of digital system in this age for teaching, learning, academic record keeping, retrieving and accessing of all related data required greatly promotes academic performance of the learners concerned. Further to the above, it simplifies the scholarly works of the researchers, e.g. the application of Power Point for Seminar Paper Presentations, Workshops, and Symposium and conferences in general. The study has also explored that there is a need for the teachers to re-think regarding the task ahead of them especially in the educational context, where changes are very rapid and on frequent basis, because of the adequacy of scientifically and technologically invented resources and tools.

Some Major Impediments Militating Against the Progress of the Subject Matter under Review

Previous studies conducted recently have pointed out that the challenges confronting Modern Historical Scholarship in Nigeria are numerous among others, the study discovered that it was not only few decades back until today there are some Philosophers of History that are only interested in issues of explanation and narrative Historical discourse, out of which some are Post Modernists, structuralists, Formalists and others that are willing to rise to the task and equally move along with modernity in accordance.

- Low level of technological maturity, skills and inability to adequately make use of relevant educational technologies in teaching and learning processes.
- Absence of constant supply of electricity to empower and support literary/ intellectual activities by using educational gadgets/device.
- Heavy reliance on colonial teaching methods, syllabuses and non-challenge attitudes of the government, state holders, educationists and students to address the matter for solution.
- Digital education also generates negative developments among others include; neurological effects, e.g. brain damages, addiction, if stays longer than necessary

overworking oneself on Computer leading to the loss of communication skills that occur face to face.

- Inadequacy of the required computers and other relevant tools to facilitate the desired aspects.
- Administrative weakness and failure to implement, adopt and apply the needed educational technology in the context of teaching and learning processes.
- Absence of proper guidance, counselling, evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning aspects. There are also cases of failure to financially and morally support by the government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that for a better understanding of the central focus of this study conducted, an attempt was made to define the concepts of Historical Scholarship, Historian, Philosophy and the study has been able to justify why History should be studied as an academic discipline. The study has further highlighted the place and a quality of an individual personality refers to as a 'Historian in an International academic market'. However, it is consequent upon the above point raised, the study explored the validity, relevance and impact of modern Historical Methods and techniques of study and as well as the development of new trends in Historical studies. On similar ground, the study has briefly surveyed the Historical origin of man and his relationship with cosmic environment.

Modern technology and Historical studies in the context of teaching and learning processes. The study regarded this as the subject matter reviewed under which the study strongly argued that as far as concrete evidences drawn are concerned, the role and impact of educational technologies in the course of teaching and learning History as a discipline cannot be neglected or left unstudied. However, of relevance and importance is the need to note that it was positive impact of modern Historical Studies and Technology that tremendously led to the rapid emergence, rise and influence of class of intelligentsia, notable scholars and students by and large. It is also partly responsible for the production of modern Historical Philosophers, formation of Historical Schools of thought because of philosophical and ideological differences. The period also witnessed the re-birth of modern philosophers of different fields among which include: formalists, structuralists and post modernists to state but a few out of majority. On the whole, the study found that one of the major achievements of the advancement of Educational technologies and its impact on teaching and learning aspects is the digitalization and revolutionalization of the past events in accordance with the interest of modern academic world.

However, it is also worthy to note that the obstacles militating against the progress of the subject matter of this write up are numerous and the study has been able to explore some of such major impediments among which include, failure of the authorities concerned, parents, students, educationists and other related organs to rise up to the responsibilities ahead of them, absence of resource control, inappropriate implementation and application of policies, inadequacy of relevant educational gadgets for use, as well as other related challenges confronting Modern Historical Scholarship. At the tail end, the study suggested the ways forward among others are the following recommendations.

The Quest for Prospect to the Existing Challenges

The interest of the study here is to make a recommendation aimed at overcoming the challenges. The Technologies to be used in the teaching and learning of History should be relevant, convenient and easy to access data or information from the Internet.

- ✓ There is a need to ensure accelerated learning and full opportunities to practice what the students learn, and to explore new field or methods aimed at deepening the understanding of the most difficult concepts.
- ✓ The Authorities concerned, scholars and students should rise to the task ahead of them by reciprocating the gestures expected.
- ✓ Historical symposium, seminars, researches and conferences should properly be funded and morally supported.
- ✓ Availability and supply of modern educational technologies/gadgets are relatively needed for teaching and learning aspects to pick a right shape.
- ✓ Incentives, digitalization and revolutionary of Historical Knowledge should be one of the priorities of Nigerian Educational Sector.
- ✓ Renovation and modernization of Historical Monuments, Museums, National Archives and Historical Bureaus should as well be given a special consideration.

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