Multidisciplinary Approaches in History and Sustainable Development

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Abstract
This study discusses the multi- disciplinary approaches in history and how they can be used to enhance sustainable development globally especially in developing countries. This is especially in view of the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) that are meant to promote sustainable development around the world. The objective of the study is to ascertain the synergy that can exist between them and how the various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences can contribute to our understanding and promote sustainable development globally. The methodology adopted is the expository that exposes what the various disciples can offer and critical thinking methods that question the "how: and "why", while the method of explanation is the analytical. Initial finding is that the various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences can positively contribute to our understanding of sustainable development and enhance its application globally. It concludes in part that while they contribute to enhancement of our knowledge in the academia, they are beneficial to humanity through judicious applications.

Keywords: *sustainable development, multidiscipline, History, humanities, social science*

Introduction

History is derived from the Greek word historie which means inquiry[1]. This inquiry aspect has been overlooked in the past hence it was traditional to define history as just a record of past events. This probably guided some Greek and Roman historians as Herodotus and Thucydides to be satisfied with writing what they knew and found in chronological order. This has been described as wrong and no longer acceptable in view of the various definitions that have emerged to shed light on the subject of history.[2] However, Collingwood notes that the philosophy of history is neither concerned with the past by itself nor by the historian thought about the past by itself, but the two in their mutual relations[3]. This therefore, reflects the two-current meaning of history which is, the inquiry conducted by the historian and series of past events into which he inquires. It is from this that we can attempt to define history as the inquiry conducted by the historian and the series of past events into which he inquires. We can therefore from this definition say that history is an inquiry into man and his society, what he did in the past and why he did them. An inquiry into the past, a way to the past or a way to anything that existed in the past or happened. In carrying out this inquiry, the historian relies on sources i.e. anything that can be found about the past through archaeology or written documents or anything that has been said about the past through eyewitness accounts or oral sources. It is also a study of man through the evidence of his past actiona.[4] While

carrying out studies or inquiry, the historian relies on other disciplines so as to enrich his work. And because he cannot alone answer questions posed.

Multi-disciplinary Approaches

Is the relationship that exist between history and other disciplines. It can be described as a situation where the historian enriches or supplements his knowledge by borrowing ideas, methods and techniques of other disciplines to exploit relevant and specialized documents e.g. citation. This is because in carrying out his inquiry, the historian embraces several, other disciplines which contribute to his understanding of man through what he attempted to accomplish or accomplished in the past. Although these disciplines are not subsidiaries of history, they are inter-related in that there is unit of knowledge in them especially knowledge that deals with the study of man. Hence while other disciplines are necessary for full historical understanding of the past of man, history is also an important ingredient of other humanistic studies. This unity of all knowledge and the need by the historian for the services of other disciplines gave rise to multi-disciplinary approaches in history. [5] Also the historian cannot alone answer all the questions that he must ask in historical work or analysis or questions put to him. Differences also exist in orientation, perspective and specialization which are recognized in the study of man. They provide the historian theories on the ways in which human actions can best be studied and understood. He can therefore through them obtain unusual documents that can be used to deal with the difficulties of penetrating the distant past of for example, African societies through oral tradition, by using literature, ethno –graphic data and ancient artifacts. Thus when the historian examines the political aspects of society, who gets what and when, elections and electoral system, political theories, political institutions and developments, he is relying on political science and political scientists, and when this is applied to history, it is called political history. This reliance on other disciplines has led to the emergence of several branches of history such as military history, cultural history, economic history, diplomatic history, intellectual history etc.

Areas/impact on development

Humanities – in the humanities, all the disciplines that deals with the mental, spiritual and physical aspects of human development are relevant to historical studies to certain degree.

Physical and Biological Sciences- in the same vain, discipline in the physical and biological sciences have a bearing on history. This is because they assist man in understanding how man was able to adapt his life to his physical environment or tried to adapt his environment to his needs through development of technology

Psychology- is the study of human minds and behaviour. It analyses human motives and actions in societies. They engage in what is called clinical psychology which is an aspect of psychology where psychiatrics carries out psychological analysis of a person or psycho analysis. In it, they examine the files a person to trace the origin of a psychological problem. The historian borrows theories from it and use them in his historical work. They also use the results of such analysis to write biographies and auto- biographies. They in addition, use them to examine the origin of events such as wars and revolution and their impact on societies.

To historians, changes do occur in the society in the course of historical development. This change can be brought about by the actions of great men. Consequently, writings and the study of biography is important in order to discover the ways in which the actions and thoughts of such

great men shaped the destinies of nations e.g. Sanni Abacha, Mobutu tse tse Seko, Robert Mugabe, Nelson Mandela etc. In the study of such individual men, a knowledge of the principles, theories of psychology and psychiatry becomes relevant.

Medical Sciences – have been used in African history to study the relationships between peoples, through blood group and typology. The study of disease patterns and epidemics also have a bearing on the growth of population, fertility and virility of populations. Some diseases of the past can therefore, be diagnosed from skeletons or mummies.

Environmental Science- in environmental science, geography for example, assist the historian to understand partial and physical forces that affects human life and historical development e.g. climate change. That is, it enables the historian to know how man interacted with the environment, effect of climate change, location, settlement pattern, occupation, vegetation etc. One of such climate changes that affected historical development in Africa is the drying of the Sahara Desert which resulted in migrations of many peoples thousands of years ago. In Nigeria, geographical study of the savanna and forest areas has enabled the historian to understand influences of geography and climate on settlement patterns, occupation, vegetation and deference in historical development. An example is the salt water areas that could only support fishing, salt making and trade while the fresh water area could support farming and fishing.

Archeology – this is the study of the vestiges or remains of human activities in past societies. It is used in absence of oral sources and written documents to supplement them so as to go deep into the past. It involves excavation of the earth, material culture of the society focusing on socio-cultural and economic aspect. It thus helps the historian to trace the origin of, and development of man in the society and origin and development of society too.[5]
Thus, when the historian tries to study the society and go very deep back into the past, they often find that their traditional sources of oral tradition are no longer adequate to answer questions they wish to ask and answer. In societies where written documentary evidence is a prime source, the sources have been found to cover very short periods of the history of man. In Africa where reliance in the past was on oral tradition, the problem was more acute because it could rarely supply reliable evidence over an extensive period. Hence in such circumstances, the historian relied on archeologist to supply evidence of past human activities from the distant past by excavating the earth for the things made and used by man or parts of man that have been buried and preserved.
Archeological artifacts have therefore been very useful in supplementing and correcting the meagre evidence provided by oral traditions because it is impossible to argue against them. They have also been used to disprove earlier European claims that Africa did not have history or produce advanced civilizations. For example, it was through archeology that in east Africa, fossils of skeleton were discovered to support the claim that Africa was the cradle of man, where man first took shape and developed the first stone tools which form the basis of technology. This helped historian to know the stages of human development and civilization as evidence produced by oral tradition, written documents and archeological artifacts supplements each other or overlap and are thus collectively used in the reconstruction of the past.

Linguistics- is the study of languages and their relationship. Its studies relationship period, people and culture, cultural contacts, cultural change and change in languages. With it, one is able to study loan words , how they were acquired, how they were transformed from one society to another, the

study can reveal how the speakers of a language or a group of people who speak a language are related to another culture or a group of people from which their language borrowed some items.[6] An example, is Kanuri loan words found in Hausa language? After analyzing Kanuri loan words, Greenberg was able to point out ways by which the old Borno kingdom exercised influence over Hausa states in the past i.e., the Hausa taking several of the political titles of the Kanuri, learning the art of writing, religion of Islam and other culture derived from the Arab world through Kanuri which was the route through which Islamic influences penetrated Hausa land.
Thus, the use of classification of language enables historians to know how languages in Africa are grouped or classified into four classes of Negro Congo, Nilo Saharan, Afro Asiantic and khoisan. A study of the processes of language change over time has led to the use of linguistics for dating e.g. lexico-statistics and glotto- chronology have been used for African history.

Literature – are pieces of writing that are valued as works of arts with each work having historical context. Hence, they are of value to history.eg Chinua Achebe's things fall apart which gives an insight into the events in colonial and pre-colonial Igbo society, effects of colonial rule, Christianity and education such as the displacement of culture and religion. They thus, provide the historian insight into what happened in the period discussed and effects on language and ways of life of the people.[7]

Agriculture – is the study of the domestication of crops and animals. It provides data which enables the historian to infer on domestication of crops and animals, population, settlement pattern and civilization. With it, historians have been able to conclude that the Ethiopian highlands and the bend of the River Niger could have been early centres of crop domestication, population settlements and civilization with irrigated agriculture as the cornerstone of the civilization of the Nile valley of Egypt and that yam and palm oil were a part of the history of the forest area of West Africa.

Social Sciences – disciplines in the social sciences supply theories and generalizations on the operations of societies and process of change which are subjects of history. They supply data and insights for the historian who use them as basis for explanations of complex events.[8]

Mass Communication – provides methods of interview, photography, yield oral data, video graphic data, pictorial data, audio data used for historical work e.g., artifacts obtained by archeologist are photographed and documented with captions and used by historians.

Anthropology – is the study of the origin and development of man and his society, family relationships, kinship, pattern of culture and mode of behaviour. When for example, the British came into Nigeria, they met traditional rulership system which they adopted and used to operate the indirect rule system which was successful in the north due to the existence of the emir ship rulership system and in Yoruba land because of the obaship system. But it failed in Igbo land because its social system was not centralized but decentralized, democratic and are independent minded people. So, for the historian to understand cultures, ways of life of societies, he has to rely on the discipline of anthropology which has built up a number of historical models in Africa some of which have simulated productive reconstructions by historians though, not all have become generally acceptable. E.g. Talbot.

Economics – is the study of trade, exchange, productivity, consumption, distribution, marketing system, currency etc. Data provided are used for validation of claims. E.g. study of slave trade by Loveday and Curtis had data estimate. The use of such data has led to the emergence of a branch of history called economic history.[9]

Statistics – is a branch of mathematics that deals with the analysis and interpretation of numerical data in terms of samples and population. Data provided are called statistics or quantitative data. When historians use them in their work it is called quantitative history.

Sociology – is the study of human development, social institutions, relationships in the society, relationship between ethnic groups, kinship, the study of family, state, race, culture, belief system, changes in society, religion and interactions in their diversities.
When historian study inter- group relations in a society, they rely on them whether the factors are trade, trade routes, wars, diplomacy, marriage, markets, institutions etc. The data provided aided the study of West African societies e.g. the Igbo in pre-colonial time and the inference that it was receptive to changes and interacted.[10] Such study led to what has become known as cultural history. The use of the multidisciplinary approaches and their output, which could be regarded as contributions to knowledge, has led to the development of different branches of history that have aided developments not only in developing counties but the entire world. It therefore promotes development.

Sustainable Development
Sustainability is the ability to continue or maintain something with a focus on environmental and social responsibility, ensuring that resources are used in a way that does not deplete them for future generation[11] This paper therefore sees sustainable development as socio- political and economic developments that have occurred or taken place in a society or community over time and unhindered by negative factors. That is, development that are positive and progressive.
This informed the sustainable development goals established by the United Nations.
They were established in 2015 by the General Assembly of the United Nations by creating 17 sustainable development goals to address global challenges and create a better world in 2030 e.g. goal 4 which deals with quality of educations with targets.[12]

The goals are:
1. No to poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry
10. Innovation and infrastructure
11. Reduce inequalities
12. Sustainable cities and communities
13. Responsible consumption and production

14. Climate action
15. Life below water
16. Life on land
17. Peace, justice and strong institution and partnership for the goals.

This was in recognition that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequalities and spur economic growth while tackling climate change and working to preserve oceans and forests.

GOAL 4 – is meant to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all with targets.[13]

TARGET 4.1 – ensure all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030.

4.3 – ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education including university education by 2030.

4.4. Substantially increase the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneuship.

4.5. Eliminate gender disparity in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.6 – ensure that all youths and substantial proportion of adults both men and women achieve literacy and numeracy.

Challenges

1. Limited access to technology and infrastructure e.g. reliable internet connectivity, affordable devices and adequate infrastructure.
2. Teacher training and support to effectively integrate technology into teaching practices and apply digital tools to learning
3. Constant development and localization in diverse languages to reach marginalized groups to ensure inclusiveness
4. Digital literacy gap exists in different age groups, socio-economic background and geographical location with different levels of digital literacy who require targeted interactions to address them.[13]

Solutions

1. Investment in infrastructure by government and private sector and international organizations to expand internet access, provide affordable devices and develop robust digital infrastructure[14]
2. Promote teacher's education by equipping teachers with necessary skills and knowledge to integrate technology into teaching methods.
3. Promote the use of multi-disciplinary approaches to promote studies in the academia for solution to societal problems so as to ensure development.
4. Encourage collaboration and partnership between governments, NGOs and technology companies to develop content with specific solutions, innovations and pool resources together
5. Support content creation by creating culturally relevant and multilingual education content to cater for diverse learning needs and ensure inclusion
6. Promote lifelong learning i.e. continuous learning through adult education, community initiative to bridge digital literacy gap among different age
7. Monitoring and evaluation to track progress using data collected through survey assessment,

feed backs so as to promote transparency and accountability.
8. Address digital literacy gap that exist in different age groups, socio-economic background and geographical location using multi-disciplinary approaches in study and teaching.

It Governance

In this digital age, it is important to integrate IT governance into organization infrastructures so as to ensure success and sustainable development, IT governance must be integrated with established processes of organizations. It is the processes and practices used to ensure organization IT infrastructure, processes and resources are aligned with organization objectives. Or that the IT investments and decisions are made in the best interest of organizations and IT department is effectively managed and monitored.[15]
This enables organizations to maximize value of IT investments and manage risks associated with information security, compliance and privacy.

Types

1. **Strategic alignment** – ensures that IT initiatives and investments are in line with organizations strategic objectives and contribute to overall mission.
2. **Risk Management** – involves identifying, assessing and mitigating IT related risks so as to safeguard organization assets, data integrity and operations, assessing vulnerabilities, implement controls, develop contingency plan to address threats e.g. cyber-attack, data breaches, system failure
3. **Resource management** – involves efficient allocation of IT resources, finance, personnel and infrastructure to maximize value and minimize waste. This involves budgeting, resource planning, optimal resource utilization.
4. **Performance measurement**- has to do with establishment of matric and performance indicators (KPIS) used to monitor IT performance and access effectiveness of IT investments and activities. It is be used to track progress, identify needs for improvement and take decisions to optimize IT operations and support goals.
5. **Compliance /legal consideration**- ensures compliance with relevant laws, regulations and industry standards e.g. data protection, privacy and security. It requires being updated, conduct regular audits and implementing controls.
6. **Information security** – involves protection of sensitive information from unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration or destruction e.g. encryption, access control, security training and incident response protocol.
7. **Decision making structure-** involves defining roles, responsibilities and decision making process.
8. **Communication and transparency** – that is, regular reporting, stakeholder's engagement, communication of IT strategies, priorities and decision.
9. **Continuous improvement** – getting feedback, conducting post implementation reviews and implementing process improvement to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and agility.
10. **Vendor management/third party** – involves vendor selection, control of negotiations, performance monitoring and vendor oversight.

Conclusion

The reflection of historian on the subject of history and other disciplines has led to emergence of other branches of history such as economic history, political history, military history cultural

history, social history intellectual history etc. However, though the historian relies on these disciplines, the historian in practice carry out his work with great autonomy and use data from these other disciplines without allowing them to dictate the interpretation of historical events and processes. But the search and truth about the past of man is a cooperative enterprise in which every discipline work together though as independent units. Hence multi-disciplinary approaches in history has been of immense benefit to development and very relevant for sustainable development.

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Endnotes

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