

Postgraduate Historical Research Format With Reference To Sudan and Nigerian Methods: A Comparative Perspective

Dr. Kabir Mohammed

Department Of History And Diplomatic Studies, Faculty Of Humanities, Management And Social Sciences,
Federal University, Kashere P.M.B 0182, Gombe State, Nigeria.

Abstract: This study titled “Postgraduate Historical Research format with reference to Sudan and Nigerian Methods” A comparative perspective has been established to justify historical research procedures, examine the concept of research, assess the role of essential ingredients i.e tools of research, purpose of academic research and characteristics. The overriding concern of the study is the examination of the similarities and dissimilarities associated with Sudan and Nigerian postgraduate techniques of historical research. The study found that at the point of entry postgraduate admission in Sudan its acquisition is subject to the presentation of all authenticated original Certificates duly signed for official scrutiny and consideration, Research proposal copy, for circulation and confirmation for the avoidance of repetition and plagiarism. Where as in Nigeria it is not practicable. Furthermore, in Nigeria abstract in the text cannot be more than one or prepared in any other language than the language used while conducting the research , writing and compiling the work for submission. In Sudan a thesis written in any other language than Arabic must have two forms of abstract e.g English and Arabic for the consumption of the general reading public especially those that cannot understand the language under which the Dissertation/ Thesis is prepared. By responding to the criteria governing the submission of the thesis. The focus of the thesis may best be understood by the Arabs who cannot understand any other language rather than theirs. In Nigeria Research results and recommendation are not directly stated in sequence in the text of historical works conducted. In Sudan, it is compulsory for easy identification of the major findings and recommendations. Some Nigerian scholars argue that it is not a duty for the historian to speculate, predict or pass down judgment. The study has found that some of the scholars of these two respective countries are hardworking, versatile and committed. It further implores the University academic staff to be found answerable, questionable, promising and be tolerating the intellectual shortcomings of their postgraduate students for constructive criticism and intellectual encounter to have a place at the tail end, and has in the final stage recommended a way forward.

Keywords: Postgraduate, Historical, Research, Format, Sudan, Nigeria, comparative.

I. Introduction

This comparative study on historical methods of research has been carried out to examine similarities and dissimilarities associated with Sudan and Nigerian Research format/methods for a better understanding of the criteria governing the conduct of research i.e research guidelines. In fact what motivated the study to be conducted include the experiences acquired over the years by the author, truly a Nigerian who both obtained his B.A and M.A History in Nigeria. When enrolled as an International Student for a Ph.D programme in Sudan differently found a complete change in historical methodology and for academic success had to be re-trained. Therefore, it is against this background, the author felt that the formats of the two English speaking African colonies are worth studying for the sake of knowledge.

The Concept Of History And Its Basic Relationships With Other Disciplines.

Many scholars are of the view that reconstruction of historical event is very complex and systematic just as historical process is. M.D Suleiman defines history as all about activities of man in time perspective i.e what was done, being done, and would be done. In other words, the past, present and the future. To Y.B Usman, it is about the totality of human existence overtime. For Abdulkadir, it is because of the sheet size of the environment in which we live the numerous number of human groups, states etc, occupations diversity in weather, climate etc that historical investigation must necessarily involve some stages for clarity and to systematize it. History as an academic discipline which concerns with the totality of human activities over time. This course relates itself with other disciplines that concern with the activities of man to enable a historian get further insight in the reconstruction of the past. Some of these disciplines include, Archeology, Political Science Economic Geography, Linguistic, Religious studies and Human Physiology both have relationships with History.

The Concept Of Research And Its Basic Ingredients (Tools Of Research)

Studies have shown that many definitions of the concept of research have been presented aimed at highlighting what research is all about and the tools associated with it which help in making a study successful and reality. Karlinger defined research as “A *systematic control, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical proposition about the presumed relation among natural phenomenon*” Similarly, Leady Views research as “*a procedure by which we attempt to find systematically and with the support of demonstrable fact, the answer or the resolution of a problems*”. In any case, a word research can be regarded as a detailed and systematic attempts often prolonged to discover analysis the fact pertaining to a specified problem. Every profession has certain tools used in carrying out its projects. Researchers, likewise have their own tools to carry out their plans/research work, e.g.

- (i) Facility with language i.e. language of communication it can be French, English, Hausa or any official Language of the researcher’s immediate society/country.
- (ii) Library and its resources
- (iii) Knowledge of statistics either for the sake of quantifying the period for instance or for sampling or percentage and
- (iv) Knowledge of computer and other relevant and genuine sources of data collection.

Essential Stages Of Historical Research, Data Collection And Reconstruction

The followings are the most appropriate, accepted and prescribed techniques of conducting historical research both in Sudan and Nigerian postgraduate centers of historical scholarship.

Selection of the most researchable topic/framing the topic of research.

In Sudan a postgraduate Research proposal seminar paper must first be prepared, typed and submitted prior to the provision of the admission. Similarly, all relevant and original certificates of the candidate must be authenticated by Sudan Embassy, National Ministry of Education, Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Federal Ministry of Education. This aimed at finding out how valid the candidate’s certificate are? then be verified, processed and attached with application form for admission after official consideration.

A Bibliographic list of relevant research materials to interact with must also be produced in all the two countries Making a literature Review

Clarification of concepts and definition of terms is compulsory in all the two respective countries also

Theoretical framework/conceptual framework

Formulation of the Research Question

Statement of the problem

Tentative chapter outline

Library research and application of its related resources

Interacting with archival materials, colonial files memos, traveler’s account/notes, memoirs, colonial gazettes, and journals.

Construction of oral interviews

Constructing and administering of questions not all historical researchers are administering a questionnaire, depends upon the condition, nature, essence and the target of the researcher

Sieving, sorting and organizing data collected in accordance with the basic needs of the various sections of the research output i.e. B.A History projects, M.A. and Ph.D theses.

Drafting the research outcome

Involves the style of presentation

Proof reading, editing and correction for the submission of the officially required copies in partial fulfillment of the award of Master’s or Ph.D Degrees.

Purposes Of Research

This is an attempt to portray why an academic research is conducted. Among the principal reasons include the followings to acquire the desired knowledge.

To acquire the desired knowledge

To rebuild the past literature in connection with the present through comparative study for proper reconstruction and analysis

To intellectually contribute to the development of knowledge of the field

To satisfy our long-term intellectual commitments

To Satisfy the basic academic requirements of our institutions of learning for the award of degrees or any other certificates

To intellectually respond to the moral, academic questions such as why? What? When? and how? and as well as to provide the required answers to constructed questionnaires and

To discover the unknown areas of knowledge through an investigation beyond the surface.

In any case, the aforementioned points are the principal reasons or purposes why research is being carried out in Sudan, Nigeria and entire academic world in general. Next is the examination of some major types of research, their nature, essence and extent for a better understanding of the concept of research, its characteristics, reasons for its execution as an academic project and as well as the major existing differences of postgraduate historical research between Sudan and Nigeria in particular.

Survey research involves an examination of the opinion, attitude and perception of the subject on the topic of interest to the researcher. This type of research often employs questionnaire and interview for data collection and analysis.

Historical research this involves a critical examination evaluation, and assessment of past historical data collected/sourced for reconstruction.

Causal comparative research it distinguishes the normal from the abnormal.

Experimental research it sets up experimental situations e.g. the effectiveness of two or more teaching approaches could be compared for analysis after conducting an intensive study and the last but not the least of the selected types of research is evaluation type of research which largely concerns with evidence to pass down judgment.

II. Characteristics Of Research

The study argues based on discovery that both in Sudan, Nigeria and entire academic world a research work must be carried out along with the followings.

There must be question in the mind of the researcher looking for direction towards identifying facts, figures and accurate data

Research requires a definite plan or design based on orderly procedure i.e. how one should conduct his research, it could be under the pretext of conducting an oral interview by way of interacting with relevant published and unpublished works, in other words, there must be a methodology for the research.

There must be a clearly identified problem to proffer solution through research and problems must be stated

Research must be built upon facts and its findings should have a convicting meaning and implication

Research is cyclical for it begins with a problem for solution through data collection and analysis for comprehensive conclusion and the conclusion must be logical and convincing.

III. Sudan And Nigerian Postgraduate Research Methods

And The Quest For Comparism

The study found that in all the two respective countries, a thesis or dissertation must be typed, written and printed on good quality A4 paper. The typing must be doubled spaced and on one side of the page only. Copies must be clear, there should also be a 5.cm margin on the left and 2.5 cm margin on the right side of the page. Typing should be about 4 cm from the upper edge and there should be a 2.5 cm margin at the bottom of the page. Pages should be numbered consecutively and a number should appear below the center of the lower margin. In Sudan, each copy of the thesis or dissertation must be bounded in black colour. The spine should be embossed in gold with the initial and surname of the candidate, the degree for which the thesis or dissertation is being submitted and the year of submission where as in the case of Nigerian Universities, the type of colour to be used in binding, required copies of the thesis depends on the interest of the University and it is not uniform. Furthermore, it should be borne in our intellectual minds that in Nigeria and Sudan for any research to be presented for the award of either B.A., Bsc, M.A. Msc, and Ph.D must contain the following preliminaries. Title of the thesis should be written in capitals and the name of the candidate concerned should be in bold, for example,

A phrase should read “A thesis submitted to the University of Bakht-Er-Ruda for the award of degree of (name of the Degree)and (name of the discipline)”. In Sudan Republic, if the submission is in partial fulfillment of a degree then the above phrase should be replaced by the following:-

“A Thesis Submitted to the University of Khartoum in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of (name of the degree)” the method applied is almost the same to Nigerian Universities the only field to locate a difference is that in Nigeria some Universities recommend the postgraduate students on completion to write e.g “A thesis Submitted to Postgraduate School, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for the Award of Ph.D Doctorate Degree in History” not the University directly unlike Sudan.

Full name of the candidate, previous qualification of the candidate must be stated. This item (ii) is being done in Sudan but in Nigeria it is needless to do that, name and the title of the supervisor, co-supervisor, name of the department, faculty, university, month and year of graduation/completion must be boldly stated nearly in all Universities of the world for a proper comprehension of the focus of the study and the intellectual contribution of the candidate to the knowledge of the field and the year of the completion can be used for reference by researchers.

Declaration: Every thesis either in Nigeria or Sudan at whatever level of study must be accompanied by a signed declaration to the satisfaction of the institution e.g. stating that it has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution. This appears on a separate page following the title page.

Dedication: it is optional everywhere and also appears on a separate page following the page of the signed declaration

Acknowledgements: Involves the names of those who have directly or indirectly assisted while conducting the research either through findings, supervision, constructive criticism, provision of material or facilities, advice, encouragement and technical assistance.

Table of contents: The table of content of any meaningful academic work/study whether complex or simple must go with the title as they appear in the text the titles of the preliminaries and the page of each item should be in Roman letters like this (i,ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x,... etc), they are used for numbering the preliminary pages in all academic institutions.

List of figures: This follows the table of contents when figures are used in the thesis. It shows the page number as well as the titles of the figures as appears in the text. In most disciplines table and figures are used to illustrate some data or information that could be incorporated in the text when relevant except for long table which should be shifted to the tail end of the thesis as appendices. The same data should not be presented in both a table and a figure. If such a need arises the duplicate table may be attached as an appendix. Each table and figure should be found self explanatory or otherwise it adds or gives a further dimension rather than duplicating the information in a repetitive way. Each figure should also have a title and a source of information. The text should contain reference to the number of these illustrations.

List of table: it follows the list of figures it shows the page numbers as well as the correct and exact titles of the table. Every table should have a short well-written and intelligible titles and a source for the information it contains.

In the course of discussion as regards to the table the researcher should give some basic information and general trends in a manner that adds or gives a further dimension rather than duplicating the information in a repetitive way.

The Concept Of Abstract: may mean a mini version of the thesis. An informative abstract includes the nature and main objectives, purpose, methods, scope and the main results. The abstract should not include reference to the literature, tables, figures or appendices used in the thesis, the length ranges between 250-500 words and in the Universities of Sudan both Arabic and English abstracts must be identical.

List of Appendices: There are some theses that require the addition of some appendices at their tail end. This may be in the form of text, table or maps that cannot be incorporated within the text or that represent important raw data that has been used in the study or that may be utilized in future historical investigation.

This follows the list of table when appendices are attached at the end of the thesis it should include the pages and the exact title of each appendix and each appendix must have a source. It should also be noted that there are theses or dissertations that have more than one appendix and as such it is expected to be presented separately. Appendixes should be organized in numerical order e.g. 1,2,3 etc or alphabetically. When referring to data in any specific appendix the title and number of the appendix must be mentioned.

Abstract in the University of the Republic of Sudan are of two forms. For instance a thesis written in English language must also have an abstract translated into Arabic language unlike Nigeria, here, it is interesting to note that both the two countries were colonies of the British with English language as their official language of communication some years after nation's independence the Republic of Sudan withdrawn English and replaced with Arabic as an official language of expression. Until today in the Republic of Sudan academic researches, seminars, symposium, workshop, and other intellectual activities are allowed to be conducted in English language especially in these Universities namely Universities of Khartoum and African International University, Khartoum to mention but a few. In Nigeria two languages cannot be used to form an abstract in a single thesis. The former (Sudan form of abstract) provides an opportunity for the non-English speaking Arabs to understand the central focus of any given dissertation or thesis written in English with an Arabic translated Abstract. Abstract in other language in Nigeria is only applicable if the thesis or a dissertation is written and prepared in a language other than English, Arabic, Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba in the case of Nigeria.

The text in Sudan, both in Humanities and Educational Sciences, the text of thesis or a dissertation is not strictly defined by specific chapters or sections as in basic and applied sciences. The thesis often starts with an introduction then followed with a review of literature or past studies conducted, a number of chapters and

ends with a conclusion and recommendation. The thesis include also a list of references, figures, tables and appendices it is almost the same with Nigeria.

The length and components of the thesis or dissertation depends entirely on the nature of the problem under investigation. In Humanities and Educational Sciences it is almost impossible to follow a strict standardized format regarding the number of pages or the structure of the text.

However, it should be understood that there must always be an introduction at the beginning of the thesis and conclusion at the end followed by a list of references. Between the two structural ends of the text, i.e. the introduction and the conclusion. The individual chapter or section which vary in number and organization according to the area of investigation and the nature of the topic under consideration represent the bulk of the work. This is in practice in all the two countries for proffer analysis and historical reconstruction.

The Principal Components Of The Text

The Introduction: in most Humanities and Educational Sciences is treated as a separate chapter which defines the research problems, describes the main questions and hypotheses, methods of data collection and analysis and outlines the structure of the thesis or dissertation.

In addition, the introduction should be a clear indication of the objective of the study and should end with a short account of the problems encountered during the preparation of the thesis in order to justify any possible shortcomings in the work at final stage.

Statement of the Research Problems: This defines the nature, relevance and importance of the problem to be studied for solution and the justification for carrying out the research. Under this objectives, scope and boundaries, time and place of the research must be outlined for a better understanding of the focus of the study. Research Question and Hypothesis, Qualitative research in social/sciences often uses questions that cover most important parts of the study, Quantitative studies often employ hypothesis, which should open avenues for investigation. The research problem should be divided into analytical units for easy data collection and analysis.

Research Methodology: This part addresses two major issues i.e. data collection and data analysis used in the thesis or dissertation

Data Collection Methods: In Social Sciences and Humanities there are two types of data primary and secondary data the primary data is collected through the use of questionnaires, interviewing, case study, direct and participant observation, whereas secondary data is collected from books, journal, reports, official documents and legal procedure.

Data Analysis Methods: Qualitative research in social sciences and humanities worries about description of phenomena, setting, arranging and comparing data components extent and reason of interrelations of concept, quantitative research uses quantitative data, models, statistical packages etc.

Literature Review: In some faculties such as Humanities and Educational Sciences of Sudan and Nigerian Universities, Literature review is arranged as a separate chapter. It follows the introduction and to some people it represents a critique of the previous relevant work conducted. In other words, it means an interaction with the past studies conducted aimed at sourcing an accurate and relevant data for the successful completion of the research undertaken.

The relevant works to interact with should be considered or arranged in their historical sequence or according to the strength of their relevant to the topic under investigation. Sometimes it may include concepts and definitions. It reflects knowledge of the past studies on the topic and highlights contributions given to the field of knowledge, and as well as it also gives new analytical additions or interpretation of previous findings and research results.

Research Result, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation: This is an important area where one may locate the major differences of postgraduate Historical research format between the two countries under comparative study. For instance, Historical research in Nigeria does not go with research result, discussions conclusion and recommendation boldly stated or written as subheadings. For one, most of the Nigerian historical scholars believe that it is not a duty for a Historian to predict or pass down judgment for recommendation cannot be isolated from prediction or passing down judgment which must be included in all the historical research, seminars and workshops of Sudan postgraduate historical studies.

Furthermore, research results and discussions in Nigeria under historical research on completion of the study at the tail end are not directly stated and sequentially numbered in bold. But they are indirectly stated and tested aimed at proffering solution from the lesson derived or knowledge acquired through historical research conducted.

In some faculties of Humanities and Educational Sciences of the Universities of Sudan, M.A, MSc and Ph.D research results, discussion, analysis and conclusion constitute separate section, part or chapter. In the case of Nigeria, this format may purely be found Scientific. In the faculties of Arts or Humanities of Nigerian Universities the procedures of conducting historical research may also not necessarily be the same/uniformly even for the sake of Marxism points of view i.e. ideological differences.

In the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Universities of Sudan, the thesis or dissertation is divided into separate chapters which include results, discussion, analysis and interpretation. The conclusion and recommendation are arranged in the final chapter. This is also applicable in Nigerian unhistorical researches.

It should equally be understood that the researcher is expected to fully describe his/her research problem, hypothesis and give a summary of the main results of the study, this normally follows a systematic method of result presentation and analysis. Similarly, the researcher should be able to interpret and evaluate his research results in this part more focusing and highlighting of the main research questions and issues and should be done with reference to the research findings and results. However, looking of the nature, essence and extent of the above examined techniques of each of the above mentioned. It will be safe for one to argue that the methodology is purely scientific not historical but equally applicable to Nigeria and Sudan social sciences and pure sciences researches in general.

The last but not the least of the basic ingredients of research is the issue of conclusion at this level the researcher gives a summary of the main findings of the study, showing their significance and contribution to the knowledge of the field of study in respect of the problems identified and solutions proffered. Here the researcher should be capable to link the findings and recommendation with public policy and the extent and depths of social implication emanating from the link especially in social sciences and historical researches.

Reference: The reference section comes at the tail end of the study/text it comes just after the section of general conclusion and recommendation.

Today there are two major citation styles namely, the Harvard styles begins with name, year, title publisher and place of publishing. When cited in the text only the surname, year of publishing and pages are stated according to the Harvard style and details should follow in the reference list. For oxford styles it starts with name, title, place of publishing, publisher and year publishing, reference according to the oxford style are written in the text in the form of numbered foot notes, cited either in the bottom of the page or as end notes of the chapter. All references cited in the text must be included in the text reference section and vice-versa and that the spellings of the names of authors and year of publication are the same in the text as well as in the list. The reference list also includes further readings that were not mentioned in the text. The author's names are every where being alphabetically arranged.

In a situation whereby an author has more than one cited reference in the same year, then small letters should follow the date or the year to facilitate the reference inside the text.

It has been generally accepted world wide that each reference or full notes should include information on the following name of the author of each work interacted with, the institution or group responsible for the creation of the work, the date of publication, title of the work whether the work originates from part of the larger/volume work such as an article in a journal or newspaper or a chapter in an essay collection where the work was published and the person that published it an access, number for an electronic data base.

Footnotes: they are used in or order to throw light on an information/data sourced which has no place within the text could either appear at the bottom of the relevant pages or appear as a group at the end of the relevant section in all the two countries at whatever the case footnotes must be used in research and are consequently numbered in the text where they appear, some scholars hold that it will be more appropriate to write the footnotes by using a letter size smaller than the ones used in the text.

However, from the foregoing one may be convinced to accept the fact that this study has found a multitude number of differences as regards to the procedure of research of the two countries under consideration. It is interesting to note that the similarities are more in numbers than the dissimilarities. In view of the above, it is pertinent to note that well grounded historians of the two respective countries under consideration have argued that historical reconstruction is very complex and systematic jus as pointed in the beginning. In view of the above examined and compared methods of research, it is therefore not surprising to have witnessed lack of uniformity, methodological differences and complexities in historical research because of the vast scope and logistic nature of historical studies and investigations.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be understood that as pointed earlier that this study has been undertaken to compare the similarities and dissimilarities associated with Sudan and Nigerian Historical Postgraduate Research Format for a better understanding and application of the most appropriate methodology while

conducting a research work. The study discovered that there are differences as regards to abstract, research results and the recommendations. In the first place the study examined the concept refers to as “Research” from scholars point of view, its major characteristics, purposes why academic research is necessary in any given academic community, types of research and has further been able to justify the study of history in respect of its significance to the life of mankind and his society. The study has in the long run proffered solution for the academic progress of our academic communities and the world at large.

Recommendations

The followings are offered as solution to historical research and research in other academic disciplines in general.

Historical scholarship strongly argues that it is not a duty for a historian to speculate, predict or pass down a judgment as regards to the past and the present. A historian should not be too judgmental.

Soft copy of all academic researches conducted should be uploaded for global academic consumption aimed at minimizing high rate of plagiarism.

Research supervisors should be available all the times, constructive in criticisms, available, questionable and answerable to their students.

Both the academic staff/supervisors and students should develop a culture of tolerance, patriotism, dedication, determination, moral and academic discipline for the smooth running of teaching and learning processes.

Postgraduate researches should independently be allowed to take place free of psychological disturbance, tension and frustration.

Academic digression such as ASSU or NASSU strikes and temporary closure of the Universities should be tackled.

Postgraduate studies and researches in general should be allowed to take place free of political, tribal, geographical, socio-cultural and religious sentiments.

Mutual understanding, trust, love and pride among the staff students should be encouraged and promoted

The philosophy, goals and objectives as well as the mission and vision of the Universities should properly be addressed, maintained and defended.

General guidelines for writing, conducting research and submitting completed dissertations and theses should be designed and equally shared for the benefit of the researchers.

Enactment of law i.e rules and regulations governing the conduct of research should properly be designed, and presented.

The supervisors should have it at the back of their minds that they are counselors, mentors, facilitators, agents of positive change and construction of society not destruction by frustration.

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