

Social History and Educational Development Crises in the 21st Century Nigeria; the Way Forward

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Abstract

This study titled ‘ *Social History and Educational Development Crises in the 21st Century, Nigeria; The Way Forward*’ It has been basically carried out to examine the Historical evolution of Social History, Subaltern studies, relevance, role, and impact on Nigerian state and human’s society in general. In the same vein, it studies and highlights some challenges associated with the Social-Historical Studies in Nigeria during the period under Historical examination for proper preservation, documentation and reconstruction into historical reality with a view to proffering solution for the progress and betterment of the discipline, Students, scholars, researchers and Nigerian Academic Institutions of Learning, particularly where History is being taught. In the course of conducting the study, a very good number of relevant sources were used and interacted with. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques of Historical data collection and presentation in an orderly manner were applied. In the first place, it examines the meaning of the above named interwoven concepts of Social-History and Subaltern Studies. Social History means a sub-discipline of the Historical sciences, which has in nature focuses on society at large. However, in both manifestations it has developed from marginal and tentative origins by the end of the 19th and the early part of the 20th Centuries. The study draws into light that this area of academic interest had witnessed a triumphant expansion from the 1950’s -1980’s and is currently gathering momentum in every nooks and corners of the contemporary academic world. Whereas, in the case of Subaltern Studies Collective was founded in 1982, with a view to establishing a new critique of both Colonialists and Nationalists perspectives in the Historiography of the colonized nations. The paper further highlights that this term is used in post-colonial theory in referring to the category of the marginalized people and the lower class. It in other words, implies the people of inferior rank and stations, either because of race, gender, sex, orientation, ethnicity or religious beliefs. Part of the major challenges explored include, the failure of the students, scholars, policy makers, cosmopolitan opinion leaders and Educationists/Academics to rise to the responsibility ahead of them, poor research grants/funding, institutional fragmentation and the inability to de-colonize the colonial inherited educational policies, curriculum and syllabuses. The last but not the least, is the point of the way forward which has also been suggested among others include, the need to rise to the task ahead, proper funding of researches, guidance and counselling should also be given a special priority.

KEYWORDS: Social, History, Educational, Development, Crises, 21st, Century, Nigeria, Forward,

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I. INTRODUCTION

In any case, it is interesting to state that for a proper understanding of the central focus of the study, it could therefore not going to be out of academic order of research, techniques of writings and orderly presentation of the data collected to equally examine the meanings of the subject matter of study. In the first place, it is worthy to note that this study titled ‘ *Social – History and Educational Development Crises in the 21st Century, Nigeria; The Way Forward* ’ has been carried out purely for the exploration, examination and reconstruction of the major terms here involved, relevance and challenges associated with Nigerian Social-History as an Academic disciplines with a view to proffering solution for the progress and betterment of social-History as an academic area of interest. However, it is against this backdrop, study seeks to relate Social – History with Subaltern Studies for a better understanding of the two interwoven areas of study by students, scholars, policy-makers, non-Historians and general reading public to a large extent. This may perhaps lead towards making a call for an appropriate solution against the challenges confronting Historical-studies and Nigerian Educational sector during this century under review for consideration and Educational advancement.

Historical Survey of the Origin and Meaning of the Concepts of Historiography, Social-History and Subaltern Studies as Academic Disciplines

The Term History: - to Erim is an organized and critical study of such past activities of human beings as had produced sufficient effects on subsequent course of events or on other human beings in the course of events.¹ In essence, this highlights that it is not just a study of the past nor is it an uncritical cataloguing of significant past events, still it is a study of the past events.²

It is both analytical and critical in the sense that the Historians seek to understand these significant past happenings for proper interpretation in the light of his knowledge of the present Historia;. The Greek word stresses that in its present concept of enquiry into the past the study of History has passed through a large number of philosophical periods each of which has left its imprints on the discipline or History as an academic course of study.³

Similarly, it is interesting to note that recent past studies conducted have argued that inspite of the Eurocentric view of the African History, Africans had developed historical consciousness time out of memory. Indeed, the Historiography of every society and age reflected its major concerns and embraced the world view known to the corresponding people for instance, oral traditions with almost identical characteristics are mode of tradition prevailed, even then, certain records in many parts of Africa. The Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Meroetic scripts, Amharic in Ethiopia, Vai-writings in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Nsibidi scripts of the Cross-River Basin of Nigeria were all used to record human activities on the earth.⁴

The Concept of Historiography: in any case, it is important to note that even from the foregoing one may be convinced to agree that it is the discipline dealing with the methods of writing history and techniques of historical investigation, examination and the proper reconstruction of the explored historical facts and figures.⁵

Social History And Subaltern Studies As Academic Disciplines; Their Relevance And Validity To Human's Existence:-

The term Social-History means a sub discipline of the Historical Sciences, on the other hand and to a general approach at large. However, it is interesting to note that in both manifestations, Social-History developed from marginal and tentative origins by the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century and had witnessed a triumphant expansion from the 1950's to the 1980's. It has also been defined as a term as what it wants not to be or against that to which it proposes an alternative. To some scholars of the area of Social-History is a new form of antiquarianism, celebrating experience at the expense of analysis. They further point out that the form of History Socialists write about, rescuing the past from the enormous condescension of posterity, mobilising popular enthusiasm.⁶

Furthermore, Raphael strongly argues that ever since its elevation to the status of a discipline and the emergence of a hierarchically organised profession, History has been very large concerned with problematic of its own making. Others, view it as a gaps which the young generation of researchers are advised by well-grounded scholars to fill, or by an established interpretation, which a researcher may be encouraged to challenge.⁷

The major areas to locate or differentiate Social-History as a newly invented area of academic interest with other areas of Historical Studies such as Economic History, Political History, Urban-History and so-forth, Social-History is quite different, as a discipline it touches on and arguably helps to focus, major issues of public debate; for instance, on British National Character, the nature or pattern of family life. Social-History also mobilizes popular enthusiasm and engages popular passions.⁸ The practitioners of this field are always counted in Thousands not less than that. Social-History concerns more with the search rooms of the records offices and the Local History Rooms of the Public, Libraries documenting family roots, the Volunteer Guides at the Open-Air Museums, railway-fanatics those that spend their summer holidays acting as guards/station staff, the marginalised and most neglected group of people in any human's society.⁹

Social-History as a pedagogic enthusiasm and latterly as an academic practice, it derives its vitality from its oppositional character. It prides itself on being concerned with real life'' rather than abstractions, with ordinary people rather than privilege, elites and also rather than sensational events.¹⁰ Similarly, J.R. Green in his scholarly work titled '' *The Short History of the English People, (1874.)* was specifically published to oppose and directly against the Greet Man! Theories of History championing the peaceful arts against the bellicose, pre-occupations of drum and triumphet History, for example, in France, the Annals School calls for the study of structures and process rather than the analysis of individual events, emphasising the grand permanencies of Geography, Climate and Soil''¹¹ However, studies conducted have further shown that urban History was pioneered as a Cottage Industry and Labour-History as re-defined in E.P Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*, this was a protest against the routinisation and narrowing of Economic History, together with side-swipes at the invading generalities of the Sociologists.¹² In another related development regarding the prestige and focus of Social-History, it could be understood that as a discipline, Social-History owes its current prosperity, both as a popular enthusiasm and as a scholarly practice to the Cultural Revolution of the 1966 and produces in however mediated a form its leading inspiration.¹³ This seeks to draw into light that one is dealing

here specifically with homologies rather than influences or, in any publically acknowledged sense, debts, so that anything contrary is necessarily speculative and might be seen impertinent to the Historians concerned.

A Brief Historical Survey Of The Beginning Of Social – History As Area Of Specialisation:-

For a proper understanding of our subject matter of write – ups, therefore, it would not be out of place but equally important to briefly examine the terms origin and central direction of the Social – History. Recent past studies conducted and interacted with have shown that the spirit of 1960s Social – History tacking in its own way to the ‘winds of change’ was pre-eminently a modernising one, both chronologically, in the choice/selection of Historical subject matter, and methods logically in the adoption of multi-disciplinary perspectives.¹⁴ In the case of Constitutional History studies have further proved that it had its own original heart in medieval studies, and economic – History as it developed within these periods 1930’s and 1940’s which was purely and centrally occupied with Tudor and Stuart Times.¹⁵

The New – Social – History And The Quest For Central Direction

The New Social – History, first in popular publication in the Railway Books (As of David And Charles) and later in its academic vision, was apt to make its historical homeland in Victorian – Britain, while latterly, in its enthusiasms for being relevant and up to date, it has further shown a readiness or even an eagerness to extend its enquiry to the present methodologically too, in ways presciently announced of the beginning of the decade in E.H Carr’s *What is History?*¹⁶ In view of the above, it is therefore interesting to understand that part of the major findings of our study is the identification of the faith that the New Social – History was hospitable to the Social – Sciences, and much of the energy behind the expansion of past and present – the most economical of the Social – History Journals, and the first to be pre-occupied with the inter-relationship of ‘History and Theory’ originated from the discovery of Historical counterparts for the categories of Social Anthropology and Sociology e.g. ‘sub – culture’, social – mobility, crowd, psychology, and latterly gender identities.¹⁷

However, previous researches done in the recent past have strongly argued that Social – History has distinguished itself from other essential segments of Historical scholarship. Social History as a newly developed area of academic specialization has focused much on dealing with the structures of societies, social – change, social movements, groups, classes, conditions of work, ways of life, families, households, local communities, urbanisation and mobility of ethnic groups.¹⁸

In view of the above, the study seeks to highlight how Social – History has today challenged the dominant historical narratives which were constructed around the History of Politics and the State, or around the History of ideas by stressing instead Social – change as a core – dimension around which Historical synthesis and-diagnosis of the contemporary World should be organized.¹⁹ With these targeted goals in mind, Social – Historians, including Historical – Sociologists, and Economic Historians herewith sought to uncover the relationships between Economic, Demographic, Social processes and structures, as well as their impact on political institutions, the distribution of resources, social movements, shared world views, and forms of public and private behaviour²⁰. The formation of this Academic field of study, expansion and specialization in Social – History is one of the major significant trends of Inter-War and Post – War Intellectual Developments to academically support the above points raised, one may be convinced to agree that in Germany, Social – Economic History had maintained a close links to social themes.²¹ Therefore, from the foregoing as far as concrete evidences, historical facts and figures are concerned. It could be accepted that the triumph of Social History in the 1960’s and 1970’s was a transnational phenomenon, because of the fact that majority of the themes, questions and methods were surprisingly equal in many or different countries.

To academically justify the study of Social – History in a brief form, it is therefore of prime importance to explore the meaning of the concept of ‘Diaspora! However, prior to the examination of the above mentioned term, it is worthy to note that every age and epoch seem to expand its understanding about the subject matter of History. This normally affects what is considered to be the scope of History and the process it is studies.

The term ‘Diaspora’ as applied to the World – Wide disposal of African peoples, has only been in use these past few decades, though it implies ‘transnational’ focus in respect of this has been an intellectual concern of African descended thickness and activities for much longer past studies contented have shown that many of such thickness had recognised that the History began with African History and that the first (Voluntary) ‘diaspora’ was an African.²²

Furthermore, Religion may also be used to make a case in justifying the fact that Social – History is valid to human’s life and existence. Religion itself is such a phenomena in human’s life that cannot be ignored even by sceptics, agnostics or atheists. There is no other phenomenon which moulds and controls man’s life. The Religious laws and order. Religious people give up not only their possessions, but even their lives²³. Thus, Religion has such a powerful grip on its worshippers that it cannot be neglected in any human’s society. To support this is to acknowledge the fact that this could only be found, understood and reconstruct into historical reality through Social – Historical investigation or studies. In another related example, morality itself is the

branch of philosophy that studies norms of human behaviour. This subject matter may be defined as the normative science of human's conduct²⁴. Religion and morality as interwoven concepts are inseparable from the views of some enlarging studies defining Social – History. Others outside the circle of Historical studies seem very complicated and uneasy.

Social – History And Subaltern Studies As Interwoven Disciplines; Role And Impact On Human's Society:-

In any case, it is very essential to note that Nigerian and African norms and values are important ingredients of Social – History and Subaltern Studies that have today been relegated to the background and neglected by some people, students and scholars outside the disciplines. However, the widespread underdevelopment of Nigerian societies has been largely attributed to this case of relegation and neglect of societal norms and value. However, some appropriate explanations for this trend have been diverse. Part of the major ones include from slavery to colonialism and Westernization which have combined to fuel the paradox of inequality between Nigeria, Africa and the West²⁵. In view of the above, it is worthy to note that the relevance, validity and positive impact of the disciplines on human's society cannot be over emphasised.

The Concept of Subaltern Studies And The Quest For Its Evolution And Focus:

Previous studies have proved that activities of some Prominent Subaltern Studies Groups including, Ganyatri Chackravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha and others, may be examined for a proper understanding of our study. The overriding concern here is to explore and portray the direction and similarities of these our subject matters of historical write ups, namely; social-history and subaltern studies. Subaltern Studies Groups (SSG) or Subaltern Studies Collective are a Group of South-Asian Scholars interested in the post-colonial and imperial societies of South-Asian in particular and the developing world in general²⁶. The academic purpose and the approach of subaltern studies is similar to that of social historical studies because from below focused more on what happens among the deluded masses at based level of society than among the elite. The Subaltern Studies collective founded in 1982, which begun with the goal of creating a new critique of both colonized Countries. The founding fathers of this area of knowledge, as an academic discipline include, Ranajit Guha, Ganyatri Chackravorty Spivak and Gayam Prakash. With this, it could be understood that this is one of the new academically invented post –colonial disciplines. The founding fathers had examined institutions such as colonial law, prisons, popular notion of kinship and diseases, and the position of Women in colonial society, popular memories of anti-colonial and sectarian Historiography²⁷.

The concept of Subaltern, is a term used in post-colonial theory to refer to marginalized group and the lower Class²⁸. In other words, it may also mean group of individuals or persons of inferior rank and station whether because of race, Class, gender Sex orientation ethnicity or religion. Similarly, Homi emphasises the validity of social power relations in his working definition of Subaltern Group as oppressed minority group²⁹.

Furthermore, there are some categories of people that view "Subaltern" as a concept which stands for subordinates in military hierarchies or groups that exist outside the established structures of political representation. Gayatri Chackravorty in her work titled "Can the Subaltern speak" strongly argues that the Subaltern has been denied access to both Mimetic and Political forms of representation³⁰. Gayatri as a bonafide member of Subaltern Studies Collective, had severally carried out a series of Historical researches and literary critique of imperialism and International feminism. Mostly refers to as a "Practical Marxist Feminist – Deconstructionist" examined and argued that each of these disciplines is necessary but insufficient by themselves yet productive together. Her overriding ethnic political concern has been the tendency for institutional and cultural discourses or practices to exclude and marginalize the subaltern women. In her recently published work titled "A critique of Post – Colonial Reasons" Written in 1999, she explored how major works of Europeans metaphysic (e.g. Kant and Hegel) not only tend to exclude subaltern from their discussion but effectively prevent non Europeans from occupying positions as fully human subjects. At this juncture, it is interesting to understand that Subaltern Studies is very pertinent and significant in understanding the Historiography and History of any given human's society. To some young students of History these Philosophical thoughts raised and treated above is quite convincing and usually argue that the two areas of study are irrelevant. Certainly, studies have shown that they have both contributed enormously with regards to the thinking which has gone beyond what is today called "Post-Colonial Studies" under which to some people Social – History is inclusive since it was founded between 1950 – 1960's even in Europe notably, USA and England³¹.

Subaltern and Social – Historical Studies are worth studying fundamentally for these reasons, there are attempt to reconstruct, promote and extend the perception and writing of History. In other words, it is quite convincing to argue that Historiography does not only concern with the Elites, but the marginalized segments of the society as Social – History also has respect for that. These marginalized ones, their History and views are firmly closed such as women, labourers ethnic groupings, deviants, refugees, prostitutes, blinds, insane and classless type of people and so forth³².

In a similar related development, the main focus of Subaltern Studies could best be understood in the field of its attempt to make meaning to reality in human existence. It focuses on the Histories of the disfranchised in the brought sense of the term, gays, lesbians and transsexuals, dispossessed indigenous communities, taxi drivers and labourers. In the case of Nigerian Social – History and Historiography, there are thousands of Historians who write about groups such as marginalized, relegated and neglected peoples within the Nigerian state area.

In view of the above, it could therefore be safely concluded that both Social – Historical episodes and the activities of Subaltern Studies have tremendously helped in shaping and reconstructing the perceptions of History, Historiography and ensured how Social – History in particular as a disciplines effectively relates with Subaltern Studies, earlier large historical experiences have much credence on the Elites, the powerful, the wealthy, men of influence, Nobles, Heroes and Heroines. In negation of the greater marginalized and uninsured section of women, and displaced people ³³.

Social – History And Educational Development Crises In The 21st Century; Nigeria; The Way Forward

The fundamental causes of the current challenges confronting Social – Historical studies and General History in the 21st Century, Nigerian state area may properly be understood and suggest the way forward under the pretext of some number of crises sequentially examined below.

Certainly, it is clearly apparent to point out that very little has been benefited from Western Education (especially its Tertiary Level Education Imposition), to lift Nigerian Social History up from peonage, dependence mendicancy, economic stagnation, cultural degeneration and ‘Messenger of the West and others, mortality from those who have been produced by these Tertiary Institutions- Western Education itself in the Western World, as rightly observed and noted built on its spiritual, social and cultural foundations, an infrastructure and superstructure which facilitate, under the guides and deepens socio-economic, technological, cultural and spatula development of the west along the lines of greedy conquest and wanton domination of the World.³⁴

The challenges of resources, technology brain drain and finances facing Social History in Nigerian area during the period under consideration make even the research and transmission of indigenous knowledge and History not even to talk, of properly documenting, preserving and making available. Contemporary Social – History, cultural norms and values of Nigerian society by its people. However, it is important to note that in Nigerian state area and most of the Third World Nations their social – Historical resources are wrongly being recorded and managed by Third parties. By so doing, there is no concrete way one’s History can be written by other to one’s satisfaction much less preserved in faithfulness and truthfulness ³⁵. From the foregoing, therefore one may agree that Social History and other related studies in general are not properly being examined, studied. Taught, reconstructed and documented. This is a serious challenge of the 21st century confronting Social – History, students and scholars.

Social – History as an Academic area of study has fundamentally been in crises as early as its inception. When it has been successful, it has embraced new ideas and domains of inquiry by holding these in creative tension with the analytical purchase of its past discoveries ³⁶. By the use of this way, these engagements variously with feminising post-colonial studies, Marxisms, Anthropology, and more recently, literary studies that it has achieved something like its foundational concern of a “History of Society” articulated by Block and Febure and reiterated variously by Hobs’bawan and latter Elay and Nield”. Studies conducted have further argue that there are several reasons responsible for this state of affairs or Social – Historical and Educational Development Crises. In the first instance, there is the case of Colonial Foundation of formal education in Nigeria which distorted Nigerian Social History with the inappropriate view that it began consequent upon the appearance of the Europeans in Nigeria and Africa at large. Another point or reason raises that popular literatures that emerged to portray the Nigerian Social – History included the stories that were devoted to the colonial discourse and not slave narratives ³⁷.

The 21st Century in the History of contemporary Nigeria has been argued by a very good number of intensive studies conducted to be the consummation of an achievement, progress and unification. But unfortunate for Social – Historical research in Nigeria, considering the case that the obstacles militating against the progress of Historical Studies, students and scholars are very critical, and numerous in number. Among the major ones include, poor funding of researches, failure to rise to the responsibility, Institutional fragmentation, implementation of inappropriate and irrelevant curricular and syllabuses, and above all there is the problem of inadequacy number well –grounded Social – Historians to cater the needs and basic requirements of this newly developed area of Historical study. ³⁸

However, it is still not out of relevance to highlight that the 21st Century the World coloured people steeped in abject poverty, debilitating sickness and diseases, disunited and psychologically dispirited and depressed. This has to some extent adversely affected Social – Historical Studies and intellectual developments in general, and has on the other hand also generated a lot of literatures to work about. Therefore, this study of ours is at liberty to fundamentally argue and relate the root causes of the problem with the cases of ‘Euro-

Literary-/Euro-centric” for example, when it comes to defining Nigerian ideas of progress, geo-politics, success, modernisation, culture, social-science and government, one may find out that Nigerians think euro-centric, dress euro-centric, interact and socialize euro-centric, by and large as Nigerians we at the end of every day dream euro-centric, and eventually labour to full fill a euro-centric vision for Nigeria.³⁹

Previous Academic studies recently conducted have proved that currently, Nigerians are witnessing the problems of social – dis-order, terrorism, poverty, sickness, diseases unemployment, corruption, moral decadence, lack of patriotism and sectionalism, the aforementioned are basically part and parcel of ethno-centric vision for Nigeria and Africa at large, From the very first time Europeans dropped on African soil, their vision was to dominate Africa by underdeveloping, undermining, and undertaking the task for “ Under learning” Nigeria and Africa in general⁴⁰. The under learning process concerns people from the point of “Afro-literacy means the totality of African expression, psycheis and culture. An Afro-literate system governed African people prior to the advent of Ethno-Christian Gentiles in Africa. There was Afro-centric system of Education, Social – Sciences, Economic – Trade, Commerce and good governance.⁴⁴

II. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, it could be understood that this piece of historical write-ups may be found handy and contributory to the knowledge of any given related area of study by students, scholars and team of researchers, in general. This title Social-Historical and Educational Development Crises in the 21st century, Nigeria: the way forward, it has been fundamentally chosen as a subject matter of research with a view to defining the meaning of concepts of Social History, Subaltern Studies, their beginnings as disciplines, relevance, validity, central directions, positive role and impact on human society, with a special reference to Nigerian state area and beyond as far as Africa and Asian continents are concerned to a large extent. However, in any event, it must be borne in the intellectual minds of the general reading public particularly the students and researchers that the overriding concern, goals and objectives of the paper have been achieved, basically because most of the problems associated with Nigerian Social – History and Educational Sector in the 21st century were chronologically and sequentially outlined and examined with a view to proffering solution for the betterment and progress of the discipline under critical and academic examination for proper justification to be attained have been highlighted. Among the identified major impediments include; stake holders, policy makers, cosmopolitan opinion leaders ,International Agencies and Educationists inability to rise to the responsibility ahead of them, Institutional fragmentation, over-dependence/heavy reliance on colonial inherited educational policies, curriculum and syllabuses, to mention but a few out of the severally identified and examined obstacles retarding the progress of the study of Nigerian Social – History and Education in general. The last but not the least, is the case of suggesting the ways forward against backwardness in the study of this subject matter under critical and close examination. Although ways forward have presented and highlighted above, but still it could be argued that as far as new trends in Historical research and philosophy are concerned, *it is neither a duty falls upon scholarship nor on Historian’s shoulders in general to pass down a judgement, Therefore, this study conducted expects of the critics to see the objects in itself as it really is.*

The Way Forward

This subject matter of our write ups titled “*Social – History and Educational Development Crises in the 21st Century, Nigeria, The Way Forward*” has been able to explore the major challenges militating against social – Historical Studies during the 21st Century, Nigeria and at the same vein interested in proffering solution to the problems identified. In the first place for the progress of History as a discipline and the betterment of the Nigerian state, the paper calls for the appropriate development and implementation of a comprehensive and well – designed curriculum for Social – Historical Studies or Academic – History in general. This will of course serve as an effective tool to bridge the identified group, which is seriously problematic. With the above points raised it is therefore equally important to note that the overriding concern here is to propose, adopt, implement and include Social – History into the curriculum of Nigerian schools, since Nigeria is a place where most culture – related subjects are taught as academic disciplines.

The Nigerian policy makers should be just, altruistic and rise to the responsibility ahead of them, moral and financial supports should be encouraged and promoted for relevant and desired academic researches to be carried out, i.e. research grants should be given a priority, over dependence on colonial inherited educational policies, curriculum and syllabuses, to mention just a few out of the severally identified problems retarding the progress of the study of Nigerian Social History and education in general. The last but not the list is the case of suggesting the ways forward against backwardness study of this subject matter under critical and close examination. Although ways forward have been presented, highlighted and above all still needs new trends in historical research. Further to the above, all colonially inherited curriculum and syllabuses should be decolonized, re-constructed and redesigned in line with genuine academic research results/major findings on top of the above, guidance and counselling should also be given a special priority.

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