

The nature of Historical Facts: History teachers' conception of it

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Abstract

The study focused on how History teachers conceived historical facts. With this, data illumination was done qualitatively. In all, a sample of 4 History teachers was used in the study. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the data. There were varying views on the developmental nature of historical facts. With this, the responses were related to two schools of thought, namely, the unique pattern of historical facts which undermines the developmental nature of History and the other aspect which talks about the element of development in History. On integration, it is astonishing that some teachers were ignorant of the integrated character of History while others acknowledged that the nature of History is such that it integrates with other social science subjects, notably, Geography, Economics, and Sociology. Regarding the element of subjectivity, responses were situated in the Positivist and Relativist philosophies. Those who identified themselves with the Positivists acknowledged Historical objectivity and yielded to no such thing as History being unobjective. The Relativists, on the other hand, intimated that History is subjective, no less no more. Finally, teachers in the study noted that there are no underlining theories or laws in History. Indeed, they all shared a view of the traditional Historians who do not accept and submit to theories and laws in historical explanations.

Keywords: Historical facts, History teachers, Nature.

1. Introduction

History at the senior high school level studies and explains past facts and changes in society that have contributed to the progress of humanity throughout time. It is not a plain description of the past, nor a relation of relevant dates, nor an explanation of what well-known individuals did at their time, nor a narration of tales or anecdotes (Gallo, 1999). Essentially, History studies humankind, societies and their changes (Florescano, 2000).

The History curriculum at the high school level, therefore, contains a vision of the country, which is sometimes stated implicitly and sometimes explicitly. In other words, the programme reflects multiple perspectives that contribute to Ghana's evolving realities. It fosters the building of a society that is pluralistic, bilingual, multicultural, all inclusive and democratic. The History curriculum also portrays Ghana not as a static and complete country, to be celebrated as it stands, but as a society that is still evolving towards a set of ideals; History does not become a study of a dead past but a means of mastering the present and shaping the future. Thus, especially in the high schools, the History curriculum seeks to introducing students to the continuing debates that surround the concept of Ghanaian identity over such unresolved issues as the nature of the various ethnic groups, evolving civilisations and cultures on the African continent, the meaning of democracy, and the differing conceptions of social justice. All these issues are captured in the History curriculum by means of historical facts established by historians.

2. The Research Focus

History differs from most other disciplines in the humanities in that its central concern is with the action of past people, and the significance and consequences of those actions. All human actions, activities and their significance within the scope of History are defined in time and space, social in nature and how socially significant they are. Physical factors such as drought, earthquake and the activities of the lower animals only fall within the range of History if they affect the social scene. A careful analysis of these facts in History and the attitude of different historians towards them reveal four major characteristics of the subject History which are worthy of discussion. These characteristics presumably inform teachers' pedagogical practices in the classroom which are likely to reflect students thinking regarding the subject. These characteristics include the fact that historical facts: are integrated in nature; are generally unobservable; can be grouped or explained in different patterns; have an element of subjectivity in the selection and interpretation. These characteristics would form the analytical framework of the study. Specifically, the study seeks to find out History teachers' perception about the nature of Historical facts.

3. Analytical framework

This section discusses the analytical framework of the study. It, thus, provides deeper understanding of how historical facts are conceptualised. It, therefore, focuses on explaining the various characteristics identified.

3.1 The Integrated Character of Historical Facts

Integration is one of the major attributes or characteristics of historical facts. The facts of History integrate with the facts of other related social science subjects like Geography, Sociology, Government and Economics in the use of concepts, knowledge, generalisation, theories and skills to describe a phenomenon. No matter how the subject is being taught, there is no way that the subject can be taught without elements of other subjects. This is true because no subject is an island. History deals with all aspects of human life, which encompasses the social, economic and political activities. These various activities are synthesised under the umbrella term 'History'.

The common ground between History, Sociology, Psychology and more especially Geography cannot be downplayed. That is why Lawton (cited in Mehlinger, 1981) maintains that although there are distinctive ideas and procedures that can be described as 'historical', many historical arguments are not so much concerned with matters of evidence as with non-historical questions about the human past. Therefore, the overlap between History and other social sciences, particularly Literature, Psychology and Sociology is so great that some degree of convergence is desirable. Travelyan (cited in Mehlinger, 1981) indicates that it is obvious that History remains Literature and Psychology by virtue of its needs for deep insight into the minds of men. Marwick (1989, p. 32) also buttresses the common ground between History, Sociology and Psychology by claiming that, "Today, no historian writes biological study without betraying something of the influence of Freudian and post-Freudian psychology." These observations explain the extent to which History integrates with other disciplines.

The facts of History also integrate with the facts of Geography. History, according to Garaghan (1946), is the study of past human activities which are definite in time and place, social in nature and socially significant. Certainly, it requires geographical facts to describe these activities. Place and time are often geographical concepts. Historical events do not happen in a vacuum but within geographical locations. For this, the nature of the subject requires mention of where the events occurred. Reference to geographical locations implies integration of facts of the two subjects as long as all historical events take place somewhere and the location needs to be referred to. This strengthens the saying that History without Geography wandereth like a vagrant without habitation (Afful, 1988).

Again, the relationship between History and Economics is indispensable. The internal facts of human activities integrate the facts of the social sciences like Economics. This comes about when the causes of historical events are explained or examined in economic perspectives. Historians often classify explanation of events into social, economic or political perspectives. For example, historians attribute economic reasons to the 'Scramble and Partition of Africa' by the imperial European powers. Unsurprisingly, Court (cited in Marwick 1989, p. 41) adds to this by indicating that "Economic History is that part of History which requires knowledge of economics for its full understanding." As a result, the History teacher, regardless of his period of study, is obliged to have some basic knowledge of Economics since much of man's activities in society are concerned with economic matters.

Generally, therefore, integration is an essential characteristic of History and it is an onerous responsibility of every History teacher to have a fair knowledge of other social science subjects if they should be able to teach History effectively. It is the result of the common ground between History and the social sciences that Garaghan (1946, p. 26) affirms that "History is an illustrated sociology and that sociology is History without proper name."

3.2 The Unobservable Nature of Historical Facts

Generally, historical facts are unobservable. According to Afful (1988), human actions which are regarded as History have two parts which are the internal facts and the external facts. Both the internal and the external facts are unobservable. The external facts of History, again to Afful (1988), are past and cannot be seen again but what survives of them are the impressions recorded by observers. These are derived from two categories of survivals which are the formal sources and the informal sources. The formal sources are those meant by their authors or producers to deliberately communicate historical knowledge or facts. These include written records like books, magazines and newspapers. On the other hand, the informal sources are those not meant by their authors to communicate historical knowledge or facts yet historical facts can be derived from them. Examples of informal sources include tangible remains like carvings, pyramids, castles, forts; and also intangible remains like language, customs, institutions, linguistic handover, among others. Although these survivals are still present, visible and observable, they are not the facts themselves. Rather they are historical raw materials or evidence from which the facts are established or what the historian uses in the quest of reconstructing the past. Afful concludes that these

remains only help the historian to reconstruct the past but the facts of History are the actual conclusions drawn from the available evidence.

Unlike the external facts of History, the internal facts, according to Afful (1988), are not observable even in the present. This is because a motive or an intention is not an object of normal perception or external observation. This, therefore, suggests that it has to be inferred or imagined or arrived at by the process of intuition. For example, there is a saying or generalisation that “War begins in the hearts and minds of people”. This generalisation proves that internal facts of History which occur in the minds or hearts of men is impossible to be observed. What is interesting is that sometimes an overtly declared intention for an activity may not be the true intention. It is as a result of this that Butterfield (1955) claims that the purpose of the historian is to understand the peoples of the past better than they understood themselves.

In conclusion, the facts of History are past forever and, therefore, cannot be brought alive for inspection. Historical evidence as seen in the form of castles, forts, monuments, artifacts and archaeological discoveries are just physical representations of what the past has left for people to see. This unobservable nature is what makes the choice of the appropriate methodology in teaching the subject difficult.

3.3 The Different Patterns of Grouping and Explanation of Historical Facts

According to Afful (1988), historical facts can be grouped or explained in different ways. Grouping means putting related events together so that they are easy to study or explain. And by explanation in History, it refers to the process of giving the causes of events. Historical facts can, therefore, be grouped and explained in terms of development, colligation, covering law and uniqueness. With developmental grouping and explanation, an event is seen as part of an unfolding development. This requires grouping of events that are related to the development of an aspect of life or institution. Jeffreys (1959) advocates that the historian should see each aspect of life in terms of its unfolding development. Examples are the History of development of writing, agriculture, education, constitutional development, economic development, among others. Afful (1988) also attests that to explain an aspect of life or institution, each phase in the development should be associated with previous studies to determine what necessitated the change.

Another pattern of grouping and explanation of historical facts is colligation. Here an event is seen as an unfolding purpose, policy, movement or factor. Basically, what is unfolding is not an aspect of life or institution but a purpose, policy, movement or factor. Events grouped together under colligation are those caused by the same purpose, policy, movement or factor. For instance, a number of events in the History of Ghana in the first half of the twentieth century are grouped or explained under the topic Nationalist Movements. These events include the National Congress of British West Africa, the United Gold Coast Convention and the Convention People’s Party.

Again, Covering law is another pattern of grouping and explanation of historical facts. Burtson (1963) explains this as essentially a law of general status which covers or explains not only one event but a whole class of events. Under this, events grouped together are those explained by the same covering law. With the covering law, the historian makes abstraction and generalisation to explain past occurrences and predict the future by judging that given the circumstance human beings would behave in the same way as those in the past. For instance, Ghana’s price revolution of the 1980s can be classified with the price revolution in Spain in the seventeenth century because of similar causes and similar consequences in spite of differences in time and space. Also, examples of political revolutions in different countries and times can be treated together in terms of covering laws as the British Revolution of 1688-1689, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Another pattern of grouping and explanation of historical facts is the unique model of explanation. With this model an event is seen in terms of where it is different from any other of its kind. The emphasis here is on the unique aspect of each event or happening, hence the idealist historians, the advocates of this pattern, point out that the whole purpose of historical explanation is to classify the uniqueness of each individual event. Oakeshott (1962) observes that explanation in History has nothing to do with causes in the scientific sense and that causes in History refer not to scientific definition of the word but to motives, purposes, intentions, aims and policies which prompt human actions. Oakeshott (1962) further affirms that it is the explanation of human behaviour by which the historian accounts for change by means of a full account of change. Therefore, in explaining historical facts, one has to focus on that particular fact rather than a recourse to other facts in terms of similarity.

3.4 Element of Relativity or Subjectivity in History

Historical facts also have an element of subjectivity or relativity in selection and interpretation. The information of History basically emanates from sayings and biases of historians. Statements about the past and past events

themselves cannot be brought to the class for inspection by learners of History. It is also true that the facts of History are very complicated and seldom repeated in the real sense of the word. It can, therefore, be observed that historical data are not available for observation and experimentation. Again, historical data are products of human thoughts and actions which are constantly changing. They, therefore, cannot provide dependable data for the formulation of general principles and laws. As a result of the above, one can confidently say that there is no objectivity in a historical narration because there is no way one can give an objective narration of an event that took place many years before the writer was born (Burston, 1967).

In selecting what is considered historical facts, there is no standard way of selecting and interpreting historical facts which all historians have to follow. What one historian picks as a fact is relative to his own understanding of the events and time through which he lived. Therefore, the facts of History cannot be purely objective since they become products of History by virtue of significance attached to them by the historian. Consequently, there is the tendency of the historian to select and interpret a past event from a point of view. The past can be viewed from various angles of interest. Burston (1967) confirms this by affirming that, as man is a product of his environment and time, the historian's work tends to bear a relation to his own personality and age and the circumstances in which he lives. Apparently, historians write for different purposes and, therefore, one event written by two or more historians may have different emphasis. History is often taught in schools as a body of truth not to be questioned, criticized or modified. Furthermore, historians often encounter conflicting accounts of events when they try to reconstruct the past and as such historical interpretation of events varies greatly in different times and cultures.

As manifested by the above, it is difficult for one to claim to be very objective in his/her narration. At best, the narration that is given in the form of History is based on what the writer might have heard or gotten from people. The fact, therefore, remains that what a historian chooses to present as facts to a group of people and the interpretation he/she attaches to the facts so presented are not backed by any universal laws and hence left to the discretion of the historian. After all, what one considers as facts of History are usually based on personal reflections, hear-say and biases. As a result, It can be summed up that, there is evidence that the body of historical facts may be over-estimated, badly chosen, interpreted differently or misused.

These characteristics of History are likely to influence how teachers and students perceive and behave towards the subject. In a way, how they (teachers and students) see these characteristics would inform their inputs and outputs. For example, having the idea that teachers and students ought to have some knowledge in the other social science subjects can make them think that History is very difficult and that it demands extra efforts from them. Students might also think that this would not be necessary and that they would memorise what is there instead of seeking to get knowledge from other disciplines to facilitate their understanding of historical events. This can also inform teachers' methodological practices. For instance, if the teacher is not well versed in the other disciplines, he/she may employ what Crookall (1975) calls note making approach which is the reserve of inefficient History teachers.

4. Methodological Consideration

The qualitative research paradigm was considered for this study. As noted by Cheng (1997), qualitative research enhances effective educational implementation and policy making. Therefore, research study into the perceptions of History teachers, who are directly involved in History instruction, could significantly increase understanding of issues related to the nature of the subject. In all, a sample of 4 History teachers was used in the study. This was in line with Boyd's (2001) assertion that a range of participants from 2 to 10 is an adequate number to reach saturation in a study that is qualitative in nature. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the data as it dealt with naturally occurring events and it provided thick descriptions and information that led to answers (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

5. Discussion of Results

The discussion is done within the analytical framework of the study. The characteristics of historical facts identified form the basis of analyses in this study.

5.1 Teachers' perspective

The findings revealed that History teachers had varying views on the nature of History. Not only were these views varied, but, for the most part, they were also mostly inaccurate. For example, on the issue of whether History is developmental in nature, one of them (teachers) understood History as "distinguishable individual events which are not connected in any form." A similar view was expressed as "History is a compilation of isolated events of the past and not developmental in nature." These respondents conceptualised History, in this

regard, as events in terms of where they are different from any other of its kind. In other words, an event is considered as a separate entity and not in association with others. The emphasis is on the unique aspect or distinctiveness of each event. Their conceptualisation is much situated within the thinking of the idealist historians who advocate the principle of uniqueness of historical events. These Historians point out that the whole purpose of historical explanation is to clarify the uniqueness of each individual happening. In the explanation of human behaviour, Oakeshott (cited in Burston, 1967) says the historian accounts for change by means of a full account of change and nothing else. That is, to bring about the individuality of an event and that the Historian must give a full narrative account of the circumstances leading to that event. According to Burston (1967), the concern of the Historian in historical writing is to establish or ascertain not where an event resembles other events, but where it differs from anything else, before or since. Burston admits that an event may have a parallel; but to him these parallels are “superficial reading of the events of the past.” He asserts that “no two events are ever exactly the same, and it is the peculiar function of the Historian to educate this individuality in each event which he studies.” For these History teachers, they are likely to teach Historical topics in isolation without establishing the interconnectedness of events and also how events of the past have influenced developments of today. In doing this, History students would not get a holistic and comprehensive picture of the past and they are more likely to think that nations developed in isolation.

Others expressed contrary views to the ones above. This category of respondents indicated that History is developmental in nature. With this idea, they noted that Historical events have connecting threads among them. The following comments reflect this: “In History, you realise that some events have influenced others. For example, certain developments have come about as a result of others,” “History is developmental in nature because most events are continuum in nature.” These participants recognised Historical events as part of an unfolding development. The basis of this position is that, an aspect of life or an institution is seen as part of an earlier happening or development. Jeffrey (cited in Burston, 1967), an exponent of this theory [developmental pattern], advocates that the Historian should see each aspect of life in terms of its unfolding development. His suggestion is that to explain the development of an aspect of life or an institution, each phase in the course of that development should be associated with previous stages and the connections so established will give the main explanation of the development. In other words, the cause of the change in an aspect of life or an institution is found in the change itself. The conception is that History is assumed to be going somewhere – to the present – and to have this as its purpose. History tends to be seen as a one-way street of over-determined landmarks on the route from ‘then’ to ‘now’. The logic of this conception is seductive: ‘causes’ make things happen; if things are made to happen they have to happen because of the reason that something has been started and that it continues to evolve (Historical Association, 2009). This brings about the lines of development programme which selects themes such as the development of transport for study in isolation across the History of different times and nations. In essence, there is no limitation to a specific time period or country. For example, a theme like Agriculture can be studied across different times such as Medieval and Modern times in different countries. More importantly is how these teachers would teach their students. It is obvious that teachers with this view would present issues in a more detailed light by highlighting the various epochs of every aspect of human development. This would in a way provide students with how the past has influenced life in today’s world. In any case, the different opinions held by the participants insinuate that the teachers shared different philosophies and that their respective positions might have been influenced by their philosophies. The findings also show that History teachers are aware of the various patterns through which historical events are explained based on how one perceives the nature to be.

There was a perception on the integrated nature of the subject History, which manifested in two ways. Firstly, it was surprising that some History teachers expressed no idea about the issue of integration in History. Secondly, the respondents appreciated the element of integration in History which, they acknowledged, always needs extra reading from other relevant documents. Two quotes illustrate the various positions: “History is a subject on its own which is unique and that it accepts no infiltration. Again, the subject was not organised on any principle of integration”; “The past covers the entire human past and the human past is made up of various aspects which are social, religious, economic and political in nature. Because of this, other subjects find their way into History.” The position of the former was completely wrong but admittedly excusable on the grounds of two possible explanations.

In the first place, it may be that these teachers were not exposed to the philosophical underpinning of the subject which acknowledges that because the past is studied holistically it makes use of other subjects. Secondly, it can be argued that because there are no clear-cut demarcations of subject boundaries as is often the case with subjects like social studies, integrated science and other known subjects, they do not think History is integrated. The latter which recognised the integrated nature of History accepted History as composed of facts found in

other disciplines, especially the social sciences, such as Geography, Economics and Political Science, and that the study of human action is not exclusive to History. The point is that the other social science subjects like Sociology, Economics, and Political Science deal with a cognate aspect of life or institution of a community but History deals with all aspects of life. For instance, historical events happen in geographical locations. All human happenings take place somewhere that is why it is said 'History without Geography wandereth like a vigrant without no habitation.' Again, the study of changes caused to the physical environment by man is both History and Geography (e.g. the Volta Lake in Ghana as a geographical feature is a creation of man in the historical perspective). This case in point may be termed as Historical Geography or Human Geography. Finally, both History and Geography involve the use of time. For example, the formation of rocks is explained according to geological ages. It is for this reason that one American writer has stated that History is pure and simple past social studies, even though this view is not wholly acceptable. This implies that historians draw on different perspective disciplines in their attempt to unearth past happenings.

Being informed by this position, a follow up question probed respondents about how they addressed the integrated nature of History when teaching. Those teachers who shared the opinion of integration indicated that they addressed the pedagogical implication of the integrated nature of History by employing knowledge from other social science subjects. "I always read other relevant books that help me to understand the terminology and vocabulary of those social science subjects that creep into History," one teacher echoed. If this is the case, one can conclude that these History teachers did not depend on the History textbook alone but also made use of other relevant materials that they thought could help them broaden their horizon with regard to acquiring knowledge from other disciplines.

The views of teachers on the observable nature of the subject History discussed in the analytical framework signalled the two aspects of historical facts: the external and internal facts. Traditionally, the internal facts of historical facts are unobservable. As a matter of fact, the general position of the History teachers interviewed on this issue is very clear: "The internal Historical facts are the motives behind past human actions and these cannot in any way be observed but rather inferences and assumptions help us to understand them." That is, the internal facts of History either in the present or in the past are not observable. This is because the reason for an action is best known to the one who performs the action. The Historian can only infer from the action what the reasons might be. There was also admission that even the past external Historical facts cannot be observed directly unless those actions were recorded. In the minds of the teachers, historical facts are generally unobservable. Both the external and internal facts do not easily lend themselves to direct personal observation. The external fact of an ongoing action is observable but the external fact of past human action is not observable unless a picture of it has been taken (e.g. motion films of events are observable).

Another question dealt with the element of subjectivity in History. An analysis of teachers' responses revealed that the views of many teachers were within the two major schools of thought: the positivist and the relativist. First of all, some teachers acknowledged that there is an element of subjectivity in History. The following comments illustrate this position: "There are so many views about historical happenings that do not convey one single idea. People, however, select what pleases and favours them;" "The subject is very subjective because what Historians write are those that they have come across. What they [historians] write are most at times influenced by their belief systems." The observations by these participants confirm the relativists belief that there is the tendency for the Historian to select and interpret a past happening (an event) from his/her point of view. This is because the criteria for such selection and interpretation are relative to him/her. As a result, the inquiries, the Historian's procedure, including the manner in which he/she conceptualizes his/her data and the principles of argument he/she employs may appear to be governed by subjective or culturally determined predilections that are essentially contestable and, therefore, out of place in a supposedly reputable form of knowledge. Such influences could be factors as: environment and time, the historian's personality, age and circumstances, among others. These considerations were reinforced by the fact that every historian, insofar as he/she has to select from the mass of material confronting him/her, is necessarily committed to forming judgments ascribing relative importance and significance; such attributions cannot, however, be simply read off from the facts and must, rather, be said to depend upon the prior acceptance of certain critical standards. Marwick (2001) also makes the admission that most historians, like, most scientists, are inspired by the urge to find out. Much absurdity is talked about historians' inevitably being "subjective". The real point is that, being mere human beings, they are "fallible", and subject to many kinds of career and social pressures, or indeed common incompetence. Historians do disagree with each other in their interpretations and explanations on same issues, as do scientists. But History deals with human values, in a way the sciences do not, so there is more scope for differences in evaluation.

Marwick further points out that historical evidence is fragmentary, intractable, and imperfect. Individual books

and articles may clash with each other; there will always be areas where uncertainty persists, but steadily agreed knowledge emerges in the form of works of synthesis and high-quality textbooks. To this extent, then, one is required to acknowledge the presence in historical writing of an ineliminable evaluative component, which is liable to obtrude itself into even so “objective” a field as that of causal analysis. In other words, subjective elements (as mentioned above) undermine the objective interpretations of historical events. Taylor and Young (2003), therefore, reject the view that historical knowledge is objective, that is, it consists of a body of information based upon unarguable facts that lead us to a single overwhelming conclusion – historical truth. Zinn (1994) then concludes that objectivity in History is neither possible nor desirable because all History is subjective which represent a point of view. That is, History is always a selection from an infinite number of facts and everybody makes the selection differently, based on their values and what they think is important.

But Oakeshott (cited in Burston, 1967, p. 67) condemns as unhistorical and unscholarly any attitude to the past which is devoid of detachment and objectivity. According to him, if History is to be regarded as an established and genuine field of scholarship “it must be written in detachment, not involvement, dispassionately, not as a partisan, objectively and disinterestedly, rather than from the point of view of a contemporary who regards himself as a participant.” For the participants in this study, their insights were sought on the basis of their teaching. On the case of the element of subjectivity, these teachers articulated that they were mindful of the History textbooks they used. Such books, they indicated, were of academic integrity and not those written to serve certain parochial interest. Again, they did not rely on only one book but rather supplemented the textbook material with information from other History books. The study of other good History books side-by-side with the textbooks would, therefore, give students not only different points of views on some topics but it would also broaden and deepen the information available in the textbook. Taylor and Young (2003) also note that teachers of History must seek and use sources in as objective a fashion as they can and avoid interpretations that may be subjective in their teaching, make use of range of sources, as well as the techniques that follow professionally accepted principles.

However, there were those who intimated that History is an objective subject. For them, the idea of subjectivity does not exist. Sharing a positivist view, they stated: “History is an objective account of the past. And the fact that huge quantities of sources are available, is indicative that the historian will never be able to use all the sources for his interpretations of historical events, and this does not constitute bias, “History is very objective because the Historian only deals with facts available to him without recourse to what he/she thinks.” This suggests that those personal elements do exist, but they do not interfere with the Historian’s work as he/she sets out to reconstruct the past.

The final issue addressed under this theme [the nature of History] was whether there were laws in History that sought to explain Historical facts. Teachers in the study unanimously noted that there were no laws in Historical explanation: “No, there are no laws in History as in the Sciences and other subjects.” This perception appears to conflict with some of the underlying theories and laws postulated by some philosophers such as Carl Hempel in his book *The functions of general laws in History*. In this book, he theorised that there is a law called the covering law that seeks to explain Historical facts by considering a whole class of events and not only one event. This approach, according to Croce and Collingwood, (1935), were recurrent and fundamental misconceptions regarding the method and subject matter of History. Central to these was the assumption that historical occurrences could be subsumed under, and explained in terms of, universal laws of the sort that played an essential part in scientific interpretations of inanimate nature. This assumption was, in their opinion, a gross error. As Collingwood (1946) puts it, the moment had arrived for History to be released from “its state of pupilage to natural science.” With this in mind, he went on to develop an account of historical understanding according to which the historian explains events by exhibiting them as the expressions of past thinking on the part of self-conscious purposive agents—thinking that the historian must imaginatively reconstruct or re-enact in his own mind—rather than by showing the events to be instances of general uniformities or regularities that are established by induction. The teachers opinions were, therefore, more associated with Collingwood's position.

After carefully examining the responses of the participants, it could be argued that the opinions of the History teachers might have been influenced by the traditional view of History as a unique subject. In this exposition, an event is seen in terms of where it is different from any other of its kind. In other words, an event is considered as a separate entity and not in association with others. The emphasis is on the unique aspect or distinctiveness of each event. The idealist historians who advocate this principle of uniqueness point out that the whole purpose of historical explanation is to clarify the uniqueness of each individual happening. Burston (1967) asserts that no two historical events are ever precisely the same, and it is the peculiar function of the historian to educate this individuality in each event which he studies. It can, therefore, be said that the teachers' position might have been located within the idealist philosophy. Inversely, there are Historians, especially philosopher historians, who

think that laws do work when it comes to historical explanation. They argue that historians, in seeking to explain past events, make use of certain laws they are not aware of. To them, these laws are mostly implicit in historical explanations. It can, therefore, be argued that History teachers are also on the same wavelength with historians who do not subscribe to theories and laws as guiding principles in historical explanations.

6. Conclusion

It has been shown by the findings of this study that there were varying views on the developmental nature of historical facts. With this, the responses were related to two schools of thought, namely, the unique pattern of historical facts which undermines the developmental nature of History and the other aspect which talks about the element of development in History (Burston, 1967). On integration, it is astonishing that some teachers were ignorant of the integrated character of History while others acknowledged that the nature of History is such that it integrates with other social science subjects, notably, Geography, Economics, and Sociology. The responses of teachers regarding the element of subjectivity were situated in the positivist and relativist philosophies. Those who identify themselves with the positivists acknowledged a strong historical objectivity. The relativists, on the other hand, intimated that History is subjective, no less no more (Burston, 1967). Finally, teachers in the study all noted that there are no underlining theories or laws in History. Indeed, they all shared a view of the traditional historians who do not accept and submit to theories and laws in historical explanations. It can be concluded that, generally, History teachers understand concepts such as integration, historical objectivity and the developmental nature of historical facts.

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