



Original Article

## Use of Field Trip Method in History and Government Instruction in Secondary Schools

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### Date Published: ABSTRACT

08 April 2021 The study's objectives were to investigate the commonly used methods in History and Government instruction, that is the field trip method. The study

**Keywords:** adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which employed a descriptive and qualitative survey. The sample was drawn from selected secondary schools in the Bureti district. A sample of 15 schools and 300 form three History and Government students were selected through a stratified sampling method. Purposive sampling was employed to select 25 History and Government teachers. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the reliability of the instruments. Primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires, while secondary data was derived from documented information from schools' past academic records and other related documents in the school and District Education Officer's office. The study revealed that most teachers and students did not use the field trip method, though their views were that the use of the field trip method had more benefits than the teacher-centred methods which they always use. The study recommends that History and Government teachers should increase the use of the field trip method in their classroom instruction. The findings would help teachers to evaluate and improve their teaching methods, focusing mainly on providing learners with opportunities to engage in most of the learning activities

*Performance, History, Government, Field Trip Method, Secondary Schools.*

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## INTRODUCTION

History and Government teach what man has done and what man is doing presently. This, therefore, makes History not to be overlooked in the secondary school curriculum. But for learners to derive maximum benefit from the study of History and Government, educators have to be careful about the organisation of learning experiences so that historical knowledge can be internalised, retained, and be made useful to the learners. This concern can be traced back to after independence when the Government of Kenya stipulated the general goals of education which aimed at promoting social, economic, technological, and industrial needs for national development. The provision of quality education through interactive methods was aimed at preparing the youth to play an active role in the life of a nation, promote individual development and self-fulfilment (K.I.E, 2010). It is due to this that the government-initiated improvements in the education system whereby the 7-4-2-3 system was replaced with the introduction of the 8-4-4 system with the main aim of making education meaningful to the learner in order to meet the needs of the nation (Eshiwani, 1993).

The field trip is the journey out of the classroom that needs to be viewed as just a small piece of larger classroom instruction. The teacher must prepare the students for the trip and what they learn must be connected to the topic under study. Advanced preparation of students and establishing a link between the field trip and the curriculum are the most influential factors in a field trip being educationally effective (Davidson et al., 2010). The field trip method provides students with experiences outside their everyday classroom activities as well as a chance to get out of the classroom and experience something new, which might enhance their learning. It allows students to have real-world

experiences. This view is supported by Brooks and Brooks (2001) who postulate that the method reminds the learners about the relevance of their knowledge as they experience first-hand information.

Davidson et al. (2010) viewed field trips that are more organised as having been shown to result in greater content retention for students. This is in consideration to learners being informed, prepared, and expecting learning to occur. Nespor (2000) noted that field trips have the potential to be powerful and authentic because they disrupt the often-mundane process of schooling. The transportation of learners off school grounds for part or all of the day and allow them to interact informally without the stringent monitoring and evaluation characteristic of regular school activities. This study investigated the use of the field trip method in the teaching and learning of History and Government.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Field Trip in History and Government

History and Government is an important discipline in the secondary school curriculum because it plays a key role in the development of society. Knowledge of the past is critical to the understanding of the present and to plan for the future. It is through the study of the subject that the development of a nation is able to realise the relationship between the events of today and the world of tomorrow. In order to realise the above aim, the right methods should be used as they form the most important link in the teaching-learning chain.

Strong (2013) accepts that teachers have a tremendous impact on students' mode of learning

and they vary greatly in their effectiveness. The research showed that most teachers in secondary schools are effective and are committed to their students' learning though most of them use the lecture method. Isutsa (2004) comments that History and Government teaching should be made wide to cover important areas of human development. The study recommends that the subject should be taught in schools based on lectures followed by discussions and research, which would reveal the hidden past and minimise memory work. However, it was found that a good number of History and Government teachers enter the classroom with dry notes and sometimes read directly from textbooks for the classes they teach.

A study was done by Baron (2010) on understanding teachers' and historians' different approaches to using different teaching methods show the same results that teachers were positive in using learner-centred methods like field trips. The study suggests that teachers should think about how they can integrate information from historical sites in their instruction and how they can incorporate them into the curriculum. This study found that the process used by the teacher in organising the trip, allowing the learners to record information and present them, showed that they understood and valued the method. This is supported by Alleman and Brophy (1994) who aver that teachers perceived field trip method as being so resourceful because they are plentiful throughout the country, including museums and National parks. The majority of these field trip destinations have education teams that can create and deliver programs for classes. O'Neill and McMahon, (2005) similarly found that teachers had a positive attitude towards the field trip method as they explained that the method aims at enriching, vitalising and complementing content areas of the curriculum by means of first-hand observation and direct experience outside the classroom. They also commented that when learners are exposed to moderate novelty, they're likely to become stimulated by the new environment and want to learn more about it.

Davidson et al. (2010) concluded that classroom teachers showed a positive attitude towards discovery methods like field trips as it provides students with an opportunity to build upon what they have learned following the trip and students are

likely to remember the content of the experience for long. However, despite teachers' positive attitude towards using learner-centred methods like field trips, the study found interesting revelations that teachers rarely used the method. Bogonko (1992) notes this may be attributed to unsatisfactory working conditions such as less pay as well as overcrowded classrooms coupled with a heavy workload. Too many lessons have impacted negatively in the preparation of lessons hence making many teachers resort to textbook teaching and lecture method that does not require a lot of preparation. These findings were inconsistent with the findings of this study and those other researchers as teachers were found to be one-sided in only using mainly the lecture method.

Therefore, it is the use of the right method that enables the learners to take an active role in the teaching and learning process as well as the teacher using the right kind of approach. In the process, teachers should support them by creating experiences for their students in which they will be persuaded to search for truth through active learning (Phipps, 2010). These findings are in line with the topic under study since constructivist theory lays emphasis on the part played by the teacher in enabling learners to acquire knowledge. Learners need to be provided with tasks and tools that will assist in constructivist learning. The method of instruction to be used by the teacher should not only be characterised by the teacher giving exercises and walking around the class with a red pen marking assignments but also on skills acquired by the learner.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopted a Cross-Sectional Survey Design where data were collected and inferences made at one point in time. It sought to observe, explain and describe the use of field trips in History and Government instruction in schools in the Bureti District without manipulation of the variables or respondents.

The research was carried out in the Bureti district in Kericho County. The district has no national school but has 41 public secondary schools and 5 private

schools. From these schools, a sample was selected from the teachers and the students to respond to the research tools.

The researcher sampled 15 schools in the District, with 20 students from each school and two teachers of History and Government from each school. Teachers were chosen because they were the main agents of curriculum implementation. The total number of respondents was, therefore 325. The selection of the target population was based on both feasibility and generalisation, which are important aspects of determining the target population (Koul, 1993). Therefore, a sample size of 300 History and Government students was randomly selected with the help of a class list for the study, while 25 teachers were purposively selected.

### **Research Instrument**

Questionnaires were the main method of data collection. A questionnaire is such a convenient tool because it facilitates quick derivation of information within a short time (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012).

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

All information obtained from the questionnaires, interviews were assembled and sorted out to check out completeness and clarity. The items in the instruments were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. The data was then quantitatively analysed. The researcher analysed data using descriptive tools of data analysis and data presented in the form of frequency distribution table, pie charts, bar graphs and percentages that facilitated description and explanation of the study findings. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to describe the aggregation of raw data in numerical terms (Newman, King, & Carmichael, 2007).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

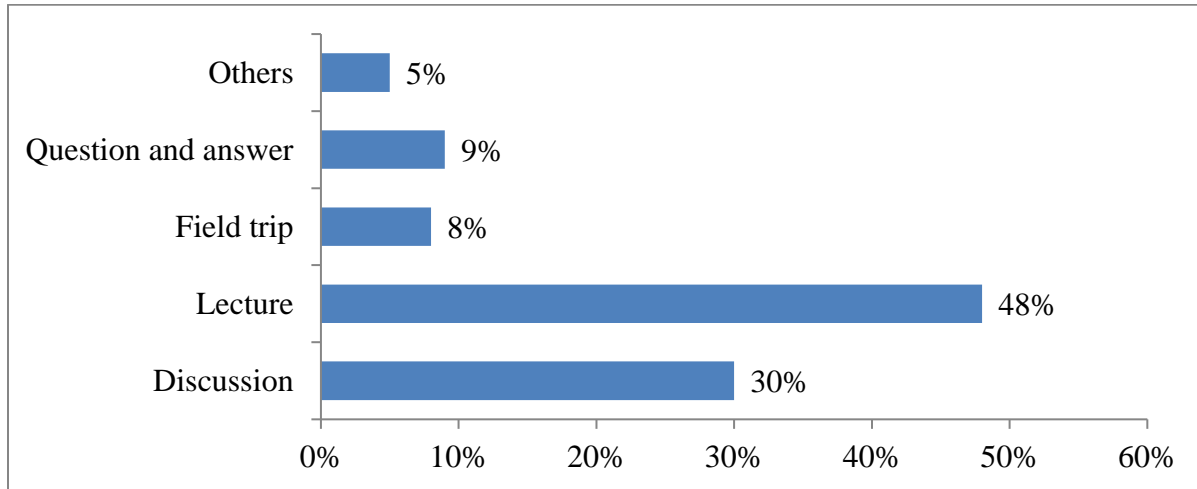
Methods of teaching can be explained as a way of causing one [learner] to acquire knowledge or a skill

as well as imparting necessary incidental information to achieve certain desired objectives. Since learning cannot take place in a vacuum, for it to be effective, the learners should be engaged by something challenging and of interest. The teacher, in this case, has to plan instructional activities that will ensure learning has to take place (Centra, 1993)

The teacher in a learning situation is, therefore totally involved and responsible for the selection and implementation of teaching activities and techniques. The teacher's degree of involvement with the selection and implementation of these teaching methods depends very much on the methods being considered basing on the topic at hand as well as students with whom each method is used. Okoth and Ndaloh, (2008) explain that a teaching method is an overall approach taken by the teacher to achieve instructional objectives; as a result, the learners and the teacher interact in the classroom environment in order to achieve these desired learning objectives. There are several recommended methods both exploratory and heuristic that teachers can use in order to deliver the lesson content to the learners.

K.I.E (2010) defines a teaching method as a general approach to teaching where the teacher decides what and how students will learn. The handbook also identifies that there are two approaches to teaching and learning: Teacher-centred Approach and Learner-centred approach, but the emphasis is laid on participatory learning [Learner-centred approach] where learners are involved in the learning process.

The research under study embarked on identifying the methods teachers commonly use in the teaching and learning of History and Government and found out that majority of them adding up to 48% accepted that they mainly use lecture and discussion methods whereas the field trip method was the least used at only (8%) as shown in *Figure 1* below.

**Figure 1: History and government teaching methods**

The study also reveals that all teachers were qualified to teach in secondary schools as they all had undergone training. Those with bachelors' degree in education accounted for 76%, those with master's degree accounted for 8% while those with diploma degree accounted for 16%. This was a clear indication that all teachers had the necessary training to use any instructional method in History and Government lessons as they were all exposed to various teaching strategies both expository and heuristic and this is expected will improve their effectiveness.

All these seem to originate from various colleges since institutions training teachers have not yet found practical alternative teaching methods for the large majority of their courses and since lecture is seen as quick and cheap, it becomes an efficient way of handling a large number of students in a particular field of study. Teachers, therefore, upon their graduation, coupled with the demand of the system to clear the syllabus in good time, are keen to use it in their classroom instruction. Though this is the case, constructivist theorists point out that the lecture method is mainly a one-way method of communication that does not involve significant learner participation and therefore it is often contrasted to active learning (Hennessy, et al, 2010). When learning takes place mainly in a classroom situation alone as indicated above might not address a holistic approach towards the subject since History and Government is a complex account of the past of mankind. Many of these are remote from the experience of the History and Government

teachers and students both in time and space, therefore may require the teacher to assemble the necessary and relevant materials from different sources in his attempt to effectively impart knowledge to the students. This being the case, it is imperative that the History and Government teacher spends adequate time in considering the most effective methods for use in each lesson in order to make it easy and interesting for the students to learn the subject.

This, therefore, shows that textbooks are more common materials used in the History and Government classroom than in any other content. Since there is so much dependency on these books, it is important that teachers incorporate them appropriately into classroom instruction and that students should acquire additional information from other methods. Kimwary's (2010) findings agreed with the findings of this research that the highest school teachers used lecture method in their History and Government lessons and explained that educators broadly agree that teacher-dominated pedagogy place students in a passive role denying them the opportunity to discover knowledge. Though education policies and implementation strategies encourage learner-centred, active pedagogy and the development of critical thinking among the learners, this is far from being achieved as teachers are not willing to use them. In such a situation, students often find themselves feeling disconnected and lost in the details, remembering very little of what they read.

Kodero et al. (2011) in their research suggested that in order to ensure effective utilisation of these methods there is a need for trained secondary school teachers to undergo regular observations and participate in regular in-service training. These should be organised by the stakeholders in education as part of continuing professional development with the aim of enhancing teaching effectiveness. These findings seemed to contradict the outcome of this research, which revealed that even teachers who had a master's degree in education in secondary schools still use the lecture method. Therefore, it is agreeable according to the findings that teachers should be provided with constructivist learning opportunities during their pre-service training. Otieno (2010) pointed out that if prospective teachers are trained with constructivist principles and methods, they can in turn train their students using these principles and methods in the future.

Sajjad (2010) findings in Pakistan provided an interesting revelation about the lecture method as students rated it as the best teaching method. The reasons they gave included: the teacher provides all knowledge related to the topic; it is a time-saving method; students listen attentively and take notes. This was based on the belief that the most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. The study also rated group discussion as the second-best method of teaching because of more participation of students, the learning is more effective, the students do not have to rely on rote learning and this method develops creativity among students.

In addition, Henson (2012) in a research on teaching methods found similar findings as the study showed that all teachers who train professionally receive instruction and practice in the use of various methods of teaching during their pre-service training, but little guidance and sustenance is done during their careers which have made them be one-sided in their methods of instruction. It is true that many of their skills can be sustained through their careers with the backing of in-service programmes.

The research under study yielded the same findings when it was found out that discovery methods like field trips are rarely used in most secondary schools by teachers. This is arising from the fact that schools

should offer a single, unified curriculum for all students, regardless of their ability or interest, meaning that all students are taught the same content at the same time. As shown above, there are a variety of methods of teaching History and Government where the emphasis should be placed on the discovery approach as the approach has the learners at the centre of learning instead of mainly using the lecture method which was found to be so common in most secondary schools.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study sought to find out the use of field trip method of teaching and learning History and Government in secondary schools in Bureti district; and in conclusion, it can be said that most of the teachers use lecture and discussion methods in their History and Government instruction. Moreover, the majority of the students and teachers indicated they had not attended any field trips, but of those who had attended, the commonly visited places were the museums.

The study recommends that the learner-centred approach of teaching and learning such as the field trip method should receive greater emphasis as teachers should see active students as those who will contribute to developing the world of tomorrow once they are out of school. Also, teachers should use the learner-centred approach in order to create a positive attitude among the learners.

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