


The Role of History Education in National Development: A Jos Case Study

Stephen Hosea Vongdip
Gindiri Theological Seminary, University of
Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

Jock Matthew Agai 
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,
University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Abstract

History is a study of the past and the subject is vital for many reasons, including the careful collection, the preservation, and the creation of consciousness about the past that can guide towards the present and the future. The subject suffered a blow in the Nigerian curriculum because of its regular exclusion and inclusion by various administrations in the country. Another challenge that the subject of History suffers is that the indigenous peoples of Nigeria have not been writing their own histories; instead, other people write their histories for them. These researchers encourage Nigerians to begin to write their own histories. The research focuses on the importance of History as a subject to national development. The study employed a qualitative methodology is qualitative and this is necessary in order to obtain results on the perceptions of Nigerian students and teachers on the subject of teaching History in Nigerian schools. A case of two private schools in Jos has been collated. The study found a strong correlation between history education and national development. The researchers recommended that there is a need to revamp the curriculum of History in Nigeria with a view to emphasizing its roles towards national development.

Keywords: History education, national development, teaching

Introduction

History used to be one of the most important subjects included in the Nigerian curriculum by the colonial masters when they arrived in Nigeria. Early missionaries who introduced the four-wall classroom system of education in Nigeria prioritized History as a subject to be taught in both primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, the history curriculum they developed for Nigeria had more European and American History than those of Nigeria. It is not surprising that Samuel Johnson, a renowned writer of Yoruba History, complained that indigenous Nigerians knew more of European History than their local History. This background motivated him to write *The History of the Yoruba* (Agai, 2017, pp. 75-85). It also led to the review of the Nigerian curriculum in 1966 by the National Education Research Council, the September 1969 curriculum conference, the 1973 conference that led to the establishment of the National Policy on Education in 1982 with subsequent policy formations in 1977, 1981, and 2004 (Ibukun & Aboluwodi, 2010). In the end, History as a subject was accepted and sometimes not accepted.

In 2016, the minister of education, Adamu, declared that History be restored to the secondary school system of education in Nigeria (Nwoke, 2021). Sadly, this is fully adhered to and the introduction of civic education as a subject has continued to diminish the relevance of History. Many public schools have no history teachers and the subject is not taught. Very few private schools have history teachers, yet the subjection is made as one of the alternative requirements for admission for those who want to study law, international relations and diplomacy,

single honor history, and many more. There seemed to be a deliberate move by the public and the Nigerian government to shelf-aside History as a subject. Yet, there are a number of universities in Nigeria that still have the departments of History or the department of History and international relations where individuals can study History as a single honor or History and international relations from first degree to doctoral degree levels. The question is, wouldn't it have been better to study History from primary, secondary and tertiary levels than studying it only at the tertiary level?

This research is a study of the perceptions of secondary school students and teachers over the subject of History being taught at Nigerian schools. The research is case study research that targets Jos North. The majority of the public schools in Jos North do not have history teachers and this made the researchers concentrate on two private schools in Jos North that have history teachers and history students as well. Using the two schools as case studies, including the use of literature that highlighted the role of history education, the researchers are of the view that there is a need to revamp and popularize the role of History in national development. The aim is to encourage relevant policy-makers to initiate means of honoring History as a subject in Nigerian primary and secondary schools.

Background

History is a subject taught in many schools around the world. The subject is made compulsory in many American public schools and South Africa is advocating that the study of History be made

© 2025 The Authors. Published by Innovare Academic Sciences Pvt Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.22159/ijoe.2025v13i2.53606>. Journal homepage: <https://journals.innovareacademics.in/index.php/ijoe>.

Acknowledgment: None. **Authors' Contributions:** Both authors are equally responsible for the case study. **Conflict of Interest:** There was no conflict of interest. **Funding Source:** There was no source of funding.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jock Matthew Agai, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. **Email:** leadershipserve@yahoo.ca

compulsory for all students from grades 9 to 12 (Fisher, 2004 & SA News Gov. Za., 2018). The debates on this subject in Nigeria are different because the Nigerian government has included and excluded the teaching of History at its primary and secondary schools time after time (Ibukun & Aboluwodi, 2010). There seemed to be a decline in students' interest in learning History and, especially in Jos. Jos is a Local Government Area and the capital city of Plateau State, Nigeria. The region is further divided into Jos-North, Jos-South and Jos-East. Jos-North is the capital city of Plateau State (Agai, 2014). The entire city of Jos is economically viable and has so far attracted numerous settlements of various groups of people in Nigeria and from the western parts of the world, mostly due to the discovery of tin in 1902 (Je'adayibe & Kudu, 2012). The weather in Jos is one of the coldest and most moderate weather in Nigeria. Je'adayibe and Kudu (2012) described Jos as "one of the healthiest places in West Africa." The plateau and the vastly distributed mountains in Jos added to its beauty (Je'adayibe & Kudu, 2012).

Despite the beauty, tourism attractions, and beautiful weather of Jos, the entire and especially Jos-North has recently experienced various religious and ethnic conflicts to the point that people were killed and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. The writing of the History of Jos has also been distorted due to religious and ethnic biases and due to the poor documentation of Nigerian History (Agai, 2014). These researchers suggest that one of the reasons for the many conflicts in Jos and Nigeria is the misplacement of the role of history education in national unity and national development. If the history curriculum is renewed, it is likely that it may promote national development and cohesion.

More so, the teaching of History and the revamping of its curriculum seemed unstable in Nigeria and this made it possible for history education not to be valued the way it should have been among many of the Nigerian populace. For almost a decade, the Federal Government stopped the teaching of History in primary and secondary schools in the country (Ibukun & Aboluwodi, 2010; Unya, 2019). In 2017, the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) even announced it was set to reintroduce History as a subject, beginning in the 2018/2019 academic session. The former NERDC Executive Secretary, Prof. Ismail Junaidu, had stated that the curriculum was ready after the National Council on Education (NCE) had approved the re-introduction of the subject (Lawal, 2019). In addition, in 2018, the Federal Government unveiled a new curriculum for the teaching and learning of the subject in basic schools across the country. The new curriculum was approved at the 63rd meeting of the NCE, which was held in Kano in June 2017 (Lawal, 2019).

It is important to note that History no longer exists as a basic subject in many Nigerian secondary and primary schools (Lawal, 2019). Nigeria, during the 2009/2010 academic session, removed the study of History from primary and secondary schools' curriculum. Official reasons given for removing History as a subject were: that students shunned the subject as well as the perception that only few job opportunities exist for history graduates and that there is a poor availability of history teachers (Unya, 2019).

This research is a study of the perceptions of the importance of history education to national development. The researchers emphasized the need to include History in the national curriculum of education in Nigeria. As a case study, emphasis is laid on two selected schools in Jos-North: Zion High School and Victoria Salem High Schools in Kwang, all located in Jos-North Local Government. Jos-North is one of the many local governments located in Plateau State that has the postal code 930. The total area is 291 km² (112 sq mi) with coordinates of 9°55'N 8°54'E. According to the 2006 census, the local government has a population of over 429, 300 people and due to the rise in population, the local government hosts over a million people today (Agai, 2021; Jos North, n.d.).

There is another misconception according to which the chances of securing a career in History are either low or completely unavailable. This has led to a decrease in students' desire to study History. It is important to note that one of the reasons for the decrease in students' interest in History is the perception that the subject offers very few

opportunities for employment, especially when compared to the so-called utilitarian, job-oriented, practical subjects or disciplines such as business management, accounting, agriculture, and engineering, among others. Dwarko (2007) indicated that some parents hold such a perception to the point that they threaten to stop sponsoring their children's education if they choose History from senior high school and pursue it in the university. There is a view among some people that the only job destination of the history graduate is the classroom. This is a misconception regarding the value of teaching history (Unya, 2019).

Evaluation of Case Study

The researchers started by emphasizing the problems encountered with the teaching of History in Nigerian schools and they finally encouraged the need to develop and renew the history education curriculum in the Nigerian education system in their recommendations. Primarily, the researchers did fieldwork that involved responses about history education among some students and teachers of two schools, all located in Jos-North Local Government Council. This makes the research qualitative with interest to a case-study type of qualitative research. The two schools involved in the survey are Zion High Secondary and Victoria Salem Secondary schools, respectively. All the schools are located in Kwang along Ray Field Road and both schools are private institutions, both of which have primary and secondary schools, respectively. The quantitative result of the study is presented below. The result evolved from the responses provided by the history students and history teachers, likewise non-history teachers and non-history students. Public schools in Jos North are exempted because there were no teachers in public schools that teach History despite the fact that a number of students were interested in offering History in public schools. Table 1 presents the number of participants and the method of study that led to the collation of data and the results of the research.

Table 1
Summary of the Participants and the Method

School	Zion High School	Victoria Salem High School
Number of History Students	30	25
Number of Non-History Students	20	10
Number of History teachers	3	2
Number of Non-History Teachers	10	10
Method of case study	Interview	Interview

The researcher selected History students, History teachers, non-history teachers, and non-history students for the interviews from Zion High and Victoria Salem High Schools in Kwang, Jos-North LGC. The research involved interviewing students from SS1 to SS3. Both history and non-history teachers and students were equally interviewed. The major theoretical framework of this research is qualitative. This type of research involves the use of information or results or data obtained by the researchers through what they read or observed or through the use of the information they received from interviews, field notes, artifacts or questionnaires or from video/audio recordings or from other sources that indicate a practice, be it digital and non-digital. In this case, the researchers interacted with the sources and argued for or against the views from the sources proffered or used. The results or the outcomes of this type of research are influenced by the environment, the belief systems, or the context and the background of the sources, together with the views of the researchers. These researchers used literature and conducted some interviews to analyze, evaluate, assess, and promote the importance of history education to national development.

At Zion High School, 30 students studying History agreed that History is indispensable in national development. However, 25 students disagreed with the suggestion that History should be made a core subject in their school and all schools in Nigeria. They emphasized that even though African History should be studied more than any other type of History, it should not be made compulsory. All 30 interviewed students believed that tolerance among people develops through engaging in History. The belief that History is important in terms of career endeavors was also stated by all the asked students. Only 15 students, however, could firmly believe that History or at least History education provides multi-disciplinary jobs. On the contrary, 20 students believe that the history curriculum should be renovated and rearranged in order to make learning more interesting for them and to develop a sense of national unity; 10 students did not want the curriculum to change.

All the interviewed teachers unanimously agreed that there was a need to further educate Nigerians about the importance of History in national development. They expressed apprehensions over the undervaluing of History in Nigeria due to the lack of awareness by other teachers in regard to the importance of history education. The teachers complained of inadequate support by both parents and school administrations, especially in terms of providing the necessary teaching tools for History. Despite this, all three teachers held that the current history curriculum in its entirety responds well to the goal but emphasized intense instruction for effectiveness. They strongly believed that History at this juncture bears full possibilities of relevance in addressing all ethno-religious skirmishes in Jos and Nigeria alike.

All the teachers interviewed strongly agreed that there is a need to further educate Nigerians on the place of History in national development. They opined that there is a misplacement of the role of History in Nigeria and they felt other teachers do not value History as they should because they are ignorant about the importance of history education. They said they do not receive adequate support from both parents of students and sometimes their school administration regarding the purchase of relevant teaching tools for teaching history. The 3 teachers strongly agreed that the current curriculum for history education is in order to promote national development but that it should be taught rigorously to learners. They strongly agreed that History can help in checking the many ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and in Nigeria at large.

Five non-history teachers agreed with the fact that History is relevant to all because History develops an appreciation of individual identity and diversity. To them, History should be taught to all students. On the contrary, five other teachers believed that History is a relevant subject yet has no meaningful relationship to national development; hence, there is no need for it to be included in the curriculum.

Among the 20 (non-history) students not majoring in History interviewed, all denied the importance of History since they claimed it did not relate to their future aspirations. They said that the graduates of History are confined to teaching jobs and do not have any other opportunities in their professional lives.

A similar case occurred in Victoria Salem High School, where the sample consisted of 25 history students who concurred that History is vital for national development, while 20 of these students believed History should be included as a core subject throughout primary and secondary school in Nigeria. All 25 fully agreed that History is indispensable to fostering tolerance among its people, which benefits them in the future. However, only 13 strongly believed that History or History education provides a field with diverse career opportunities, while 15 felt it is not a field that offers bright specialization prospects. On the curriculum, 10 were of the opinion that it should be overhauled to meet current challenges, especially ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and Nigeria as a whole, while the remaining eight expressed satisfaction with the current curriculum. The two history teachers interviewed expressed a need for Nigerians to understand that History has something to do with national development.

The two history teachers interviewed emphasized the need to further educate Nigerians on the vital role of History in national development. They observed a general misconception about the subject's importance and noted that many teachers undervalue History due to a lack of understanding of its relevance to fostering national progress. Both teachers expressed concerns about inadequate support from parents, students, and sometimes school administrations, particularly in acquiring essential teaching resources for History. They highlighted challenges in organizing History-related tours, as many parents are unwilling to cover the associated costs, which dampens their motivation. While they agreed that the current History curriculum is well-structured to promote national development, they stressed the need for more rigorous teaching methods. Additionally, they noted that History education could play a critical role in addressing ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and across Nigeria.

Of the non-history teachers, five agreed that History is essential in the development of an appreciation of individual identity and therefore should be taught to all students. The other five agreed that History is important, but its inclusion or exclusion from the curriculum makes no great difference to national development.

All 10 interviewed students who were not studying History dismissed the importance of the subject, citing that it does not relate to their respective career paths. They viewed History graduates as confined to teaching, as they could not see where else one could apply such a career.

Proposed Solution

This research pertained to the role of history education in national development. From the results obtained in this research, it can be argued that History revives national consciousness, thus enhancing nationalism. When an individual knows himself/herself and his values, he or she preserves their respective heritages, including human lives. This can help the individual to value all lives so he or she understands his/her origins. Omoyibo and Agbonzeke (2010) stated that History promotes tolerance, enhances unity and reminds people to appreciate their cultures in unity (p. 284). Afolabi and Loto (2012) argued that History is important because it promotes national development and it encourages people to value and understand themselves and the contribution they can make to national development. Obasanjo (2010) also stated that history education trains individuals to relate and interact meaningfully with others in society.

History can serve as a tool for uniting people. It might be recalled the Yorubas, for example, embarked on various internal conflicts among themselves in the 19th century. Samuel Johnson began to compile the History of the Yorubas where he mentioned that the Yoruba various dialectical groups emerged from one source and had one ancestor. Johnson's writing of the Yoruba history contributed to ending the 1817 to 1824 Yoruba wars (Agai, 2017, pp. 95-101). Brett and Guyver (2021) noted History is a tool for national development. They added that History connects people's past stories. It gives them a sense of identity and common value and, as a result, helps unify the people. They contended that sharing History can help relieve people of emotional enmity. Should History be taught with a view of national development in Nigerian schools, it can likely check the incessant ethno-religious conflicts in Jos.

More so, Nwoke (2021) mentioned that History gives better information to its citizens regarding their environments where patriotism, culture, and religious and ethnic tolerance are prioritized (Nwoke, 2021). The realization of peace in a society is a great contribution to national development as Lawal (2019) equally noted that history education is relevant for nation-building or development and that History enhances an individual thinking and relational capacity. These researchers, therefore, proposed that history education be made a compulsory subject in Nigerian primary and secondary schools, considering its huge importance towards national development.

Based on the findings of this research, it can clearly be said that 100% of the History and non-history students interviewed agreed that history education is relevant for national development and that it promotes tolerance among all groups of people. However, the non-history teachers interviewed agreed that with or without History, it makes no difference to national development. The major weakness found in this research is that most of the people interviewed see less career opportunities in studying History. More so, on the subject of curriculum revamp, most history students and teachers interviewed seemed satisfied with the current history curriculum and they emphasized that what is most valuable at the moment is the implementation of the curriculum which they felt should be taught wholly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these researchers have been able to carefully illustrate that despite the discrepancies in the application of history education curriculum and the instability in its policy implementation, yet, more people are aware of its importance towards national development. We suggested that the history curriculum should be revamped to accommodate further teaching and instructions on how History can be used to further unite Nigerians in tolerating one another. This is necessary so as to assist the Nigerian citizenries in checking the incessant ethno-religious conflicts that engulfed many parts of the nation. Seemed history education enhances moral and cultural values; it thus suggests that it should be taught and encouraged by teachers, parents, government and school administrators, and governing bodies.

Recommendations

1. Both federal, state, and local governments should earmark more money in their budgetary allocation so as to accommodate activities that promote history education. Such activities include historical tours around heritage sites in Nigeria and supporting the production of historical sources authored by Indigenous people of Nigeria;
2. There should also be a need for strong political will among political leaders to ensure the continuity of educational policies in the country. Education should not be politicized and there should be a steady political environment to ensure the continuity and maturity of educational policies, especially those that pertain to history education;
3. private agencies and relevant Non-Governmental Organizations should support the course of history education by creating private museums, sites, and artifacts preservation that have the tendency to boost the value of history education;
4. If history is properly taught and its curriculum well and further developed or revamped, it can help the Nigerian people to learn to accept and tolerate one another, thus checking the rate of incessant ethno-religious conflicts among its citizens.

References

Afolabi, F. O., & Loto, A. B. (2012). Sociopolitical vicissitudes and bureaucratic constraints on educational formulation and implementation in Nigeria. In V. O. Edo & E. F. K. Salami (Eds.), *Issues and trends in Nigeria's development: A festschrift for rev. (Fr.) Abiodun* (pp. 330-339). F. A. John Achters.

- Agai, J. M. (2014). The rise of Islamic Jihad in northern Nigeria and its implications on the Jos-Plateau religious conflicts. *Social Sciences*, 3(3), 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ss.20140303.11>
- Agai, J. M. (2021). A report on the History of the Acheulean Industry of Mai Idon Toro in the Central-Region of Nigeria. *Culture and History*, 1(1), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.30560/ch.v1n1p29>
- Agai, M. J. (2017). *Samuel Johnson on the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of Kwa-Zulu.
- Brett, P., & Guyver, R. (2021). Postcolonial history education: Issues, tensions and opportunities. *Historical Encounters: A Journal of Historical Consciousness, Historical Cultures, and History Education*, 8(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.52289/hej8.210>
- Doortmont, M. R. (1991). Samuel Johnson (1846–1901): Missionary, diplomat, and historian. In *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa* (pp. 169-181). Africa World Press.
- Dwarko, D. A. (2007). History-the ailing subject: The need for revival in the 21st century. In D. E. K. Amenumey (Ed.), *Challenges of education in Ghana in the 21st Century* (pp. 167–178). Woeli Publishing Services.
- Fisher, T. (2004). *History in education: An ongoing debate*. History Today. Retrieved November 20, 2024, from <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/history-education-ongoing-debate>
- Ibukun, W. O., & Aboluwole, A. (2010). Nigeria's national policy on education and university curriculum in history: Implication for nation building. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 1(2), 9–16.
- Je'adayibe, G. D., & Kudu, A., (2012). *Sliding towards Armageddon: Revisiting ethno-religious crises in Nigeria*. Nairaland. Retrieved November 21, 2024, from <https://www.nairaland.com/998865/sliding-towards-armageddon-revisiting-ethno-religious>
- Jos-North. (N. d.). Jos North Local Government area. Retrieved December 10, 2024, from <https://www.plateaustate.gov.ng/government/lgas/jos-north>
- Lawal, I. (2019). *Reintroduction of history and matters arising*. The Guardian. Retrieved April 20, 2019, <https://guardian.ng/features/re-introduction-of-history-and-matters-arising/>
- Nwoke, J. (2021). Downward trend in the teaching of history in Nigerian schools, 1950–2016. *Journal of Linguistics, Language and Culture*, 8(1), 108–132.
- Obasanjo, O. (2010). 'Education and National Development,' A lecture Presented at the 2012, January 26 p. 3. Graduation Ceremony of University of Nigeria.
- Omoyibo, K. U., & Agbonzeke, L. (2010). Obasanjo's leadership and national development (1999–2007): A critical appraisal. In W. Terhemba & N. S. Talla (Eds.), *Governance and economic development in the fourth Republic of the Nigerian State* (p. 284). Aboki Publishers.
- SA News Government Za. (2018, May 18). *Report recommends SA to make History compulsory in 2023*. s. Africa. Retrieved November 21, 2024, from <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/report-recommends-sa-make-history-compulsory-2023>
- Unya, U. K. (2019). History teaching in Nigerian institutions: Challenges and the way forward. *Kaduna Journal of Humanities*, 3(1), 1–11.

Received: 14 November 2025

Revised: 22 December 2025

Accepted: 01 February 2025