



History education in Nigeria: Past, present and future

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ABSTRACT

Before and after the introduction of western education to Nigeria by Christian missionaries, the teaching and learning of history was given pride of place, although the contents of school history privileged the Bible and English history by celebrating the importance of the arrival of the colonial powers with their religion. This position, indeed this narrative, was challenged and contested by Nigerian nationalists even before 1960. Therefore, the need to overhaul the curriculum content arose after independence in October 1960 which led to the organisation of the 1969 Curriculum Conference. Part of the outcome of the conference was the emergence of the first Indigenous education policy in 1977. However, in 1982 History was delisted from the basic school curriculum and retained only as an elective subject in the Senior Secondary school. The outcry from stakeholders since then (over thirty years) recently reached a crescendo and has yielded a positive change, as History was reintroduced into the school curriculum in the 2018/2019 academic session. This paper, therefore, addresses the following questions, with recommendations on how the study of History might be promoted at all levels of education in Nigeria:

- What was the position of history education in the past?
- Why was it delisted from the basic school curriculum?
- What were the consequences of the delisting?
- How did it find its way back into the basic school curriculum?
- After reintroduction, what next?

KEYWORDS

History education, Curriculum, National education policy, Vernacular and Indigenous histories, Social Studies, Collective memory, History wars

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Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is a vast and diverse country, a federation of 36 states with a Federal Capital Territory. It has a population of over 140 million according to the 2006 National Census (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007, p.2), but the United Nations cites an estimated figure of 201 million by July 2019. Nigeria is made up of nearly 250 cultural and linguistic groups, but "three major tribal groups certainly dominated the country's three original regions: the Yorubas in the West, the Ibos in the East and the Hausa-Fulani in the North" (Smith with Sanger, 1981, p.77). Figure 1 below shows the major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

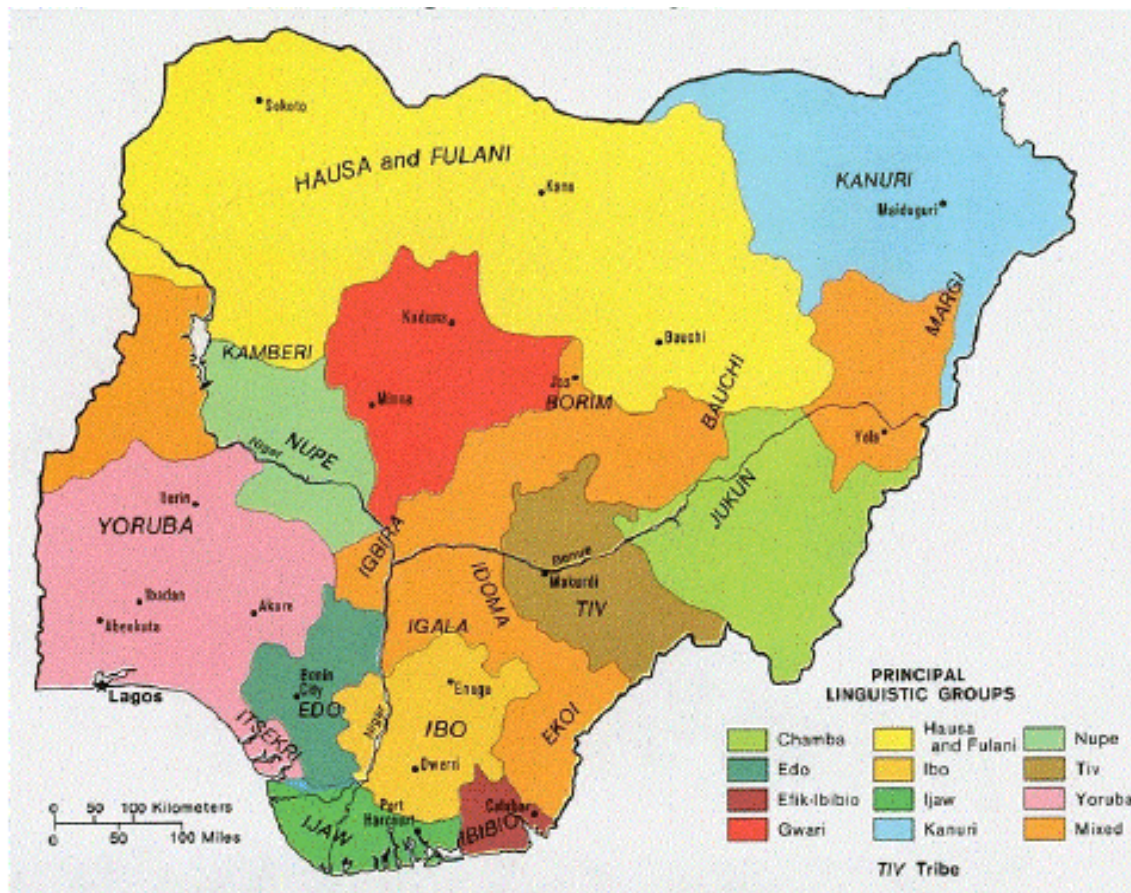


Figure 1: Nigeria map showing the ethnic group constituents (Bakare, 2015, p. 1)

The two main religions are Christianity (largely in the South) and Islam (in the North), which are based on different cultures. These diverse cultures and religions have in turn influenced the content of education and history in Nigeria. The process of curriculum formulation and development in recent times has attempted to involve all minority groups and religions, although inevitably there has been some contestation and disagreement, with some groups (such as Hausa-Fulani) having a more powerful voice than others. Clearly, some groups have been more influential than others and some minority groups are likely to have felt excluded at different times (e.g. in the Eastern region of Nigeria after the Biafran War). In addition, traditional animistic

religious faith and practice exercise a pervading influence with some of the population (Taiwo, 1980). The British, through a combination of wars, treaties, trade agreements, and territorial mergers occupied most of Nigeria (divided into the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria) by the beginning of the twentieth century, with the two protectorates being amalgamated in 1914.

Constitutional/governmental changes followed in the decades after the amalgamation of the two protectorates. Under the last two Governors of Nigeria, Sir Arthur Richards (1943-1948) and John Stuart Macpherson (1948-1954), after the end of the Second World War, there were constitutional reviews in 1946 and 1952. These both accommodated and anticipated a nationalist push for independence. The Richard Constitution divided the country into three regions: North, East and West, and established Houses of Assembly in the three regions. The Macpherson Constitution of 1952 transformed Nigeria into a federation of three regions, with a federal territory at Lagos (the national capital). Legal autonomy for regional education was created in stages as a result of these reforms. Self-government was granted to the Eastern and Western regions in 1957, to the Northern region in 1959, and finally political independence to the Federation of Nigeria on October 1, 1960. Following a transition period as a Dominion, and after another constitutional change, it became a Republic in 1963. After independence, there was a clamour for both the educational system and the curriculum to be overhauled. Unfortunately, the high hopes raised by political independence were not to be realised as a consequence of the political instability that set in with a succession of military coups d'état (with only one four-year interregnum of civil rule, from 1979 to 1983) that characterised the first three decades of national sovereignty. The situation is set out in Table 1 below.

S/N	NAME	YEARS	TYPE OF RULE
1	Chief Benjamin Nnamdi Azikwe	1st Oct 1963 - 16th Jan 1966	Civil
2	Major General Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi Ironsi	17th Jan 1966 - 29th July 1966	Military
3	General Yakubu 'Jack' Dan-Yumma Gowon	1st Aug 1966 - 29th July 1975	Military
	The Nigerian Civil War (the Biafran War) was fought during this period from 6 July 1967 - 15 January 1970	Note: Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu wanted to lead a breakaway state in Biafra, but the attempt failed	
4	General Murtala Rufai Ramat Muhammed	30th July 1975 - 13th Feb 1976	Military
5	Chief Olusegun Mathew Okikiola Aremu Obasanjo	13th Feb - 30th Sept 1979	Military
6	Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari	1st Oct 1979 - 31st Dec 1983	Civil
7	Major General Muhammadu Buhari	31st Dec 1983 - 27th Aug 1985	Military
8	General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida	27th Aug 1985 - 26th Aug 1993	Military
9	Ernest Adegunle Oladeinde Shonekan	26th Aug 1993 - 17th Nov 1993	Civil
10	General Sani Abacha	17th Nov 1993 - 8th June 1998	Military
	It is worth noting that Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations from 11 November 1995 to 29 May 1999. A Nigerian, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, was Secretary-General of the Commonwealth from 1 July 1990 - 31 March 2000		
11	General Abdulsalami Abubakar	9th June 1998 - 29th May 1999	Military
12	Chief Olusegun Mathew Okikiola Aremu Obasanjo	29th May 1999 - 29th May 2007	Civil
13	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	29th May 2007 - 5th May 2010	Civil
14	Goodluck Ebele Azikwe Jonathan	5th May 2010 - 29th May 2015	Civil
15	Major General Muhammadu Buhari	25th May 2015 -	Civil

Table 1 A list of Heads of State in Nigeria since full Independence
(Edited by the authors from various sources,
including The Office to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation [The Presidency], n.d.)

There has clearly been a link between the fate of school history and political developments in Nigeria. The first of the military coups was in January 1966 led by Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi and a counter-coup in July of the same year (see Table 1 above). The hostilities that followed led to a civil war (the Nigerian or Biafran Civil War) that broke out in May 1967 and lasted until January 1970 and claimed millions of lives. Significant educational developments included the organisation of a 1969 curriculum conference towards the end of this war. The trauma of this conflict cannot be underestimated as there were between 500,000 and 2 million civilian deaths from starvation, in addition to the 100,000 military deaths. Nevertheless, a curriculum conference was suggested and held in 1969 organised by the Nigeria Educational Research Development Council (NERDC). The conference was a culmination of expressions of general disaffection with the existing education system which was regarded as having become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations, and goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2011). Also, there had been an outcry by educators, parents, government functionaries, laymen, scholars, and the press, against the ills of the educational system.

Following the 1969 Curriculum Conference an associated report was published in 1972, and this would be the first Indigenous (decolonised) education policy. The implementation of the report was unfortunately truncated because General Yakubu Gowon was deposed in 1975 through another coup led by General Murtala Mohammed, who was assassinated in an abortive coup in February 1976. He, in turn, was succeeded by Lt-General Olusegun Obasanjo. Eventually, The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1977 adopted a 6-3-3-4 system of education (6 years of study for Primary, 3 for Junior Secondary, 3 for Senior Secondary, and 4 for Higher education). Despite the prevailing context of political instability, the document was revised in 1981, becoming operational from 1982 as a National Policy on Education (NPE). However, as soon as this had happened the status of History was compromised as it became an elective subject.

As part of the new educational policies, History was merged with related Social Studies subjects at the Primary and Junior Secondary school levels. However, there was widespread political pressure and lobbying by stakeholders over the next four decades for the return of History as a separate school subject, and as a result of this, in 2017 History was restored. This paper explores how a Nigerian 'history war' highlighted the significance of History's role in the development of Nigeria as a nation state and analyses links to related issues of nationalism, patriotism and identity and the cultural background of a tribal society with diverse ethnicities, religious beliefs and practices and values. The importance of social, political and indeed educational cohesion was reinforced by the traumatic memory of the tearing apart of the country during the Biafran War of 1967-1970.

Statement of the problem

The merger of History with other subjects at the Primary and Junior secondary school levels in 1982 led to under-achievement in the teaching and learning of History, as Social Studies emerged. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME), (2017a, p. vi) observed that "Learners went through schools without having an adequate understanding of the history of their own country: how it evolved through time and space; and the nature, character and dynamics of intergroup relations, among others." This was similar to Whelan's (2018, p.1) reflection on the cessation of history teaching in Ireland, that Irish people:

... are confronted with the prospect of an Ireland in which a great number of pupils leave school with next to no knowledge of the history of their nation and the wider world, and without the faintest impression that history is worthy of study in one's own time.

This gap gave birth to generations of young people who could not understand the socio-political and economic realities of the country within the context of Nigerian historical evolution. It is important to note that "there can be no smooth today without recourse to yesterday. To be specific, as a nation, we should note that our *yesterday (history) is our archives, speaker for today and*

prophet of our future” (Akanbi, 2018, p. 28). How could children learn from a history that they did not know? In the editorial comment of the Leadership Newspaper of July 1st, 2012 it was observed that “Today, our children grow up without understanding the various components of their country and how those components evolved. They are unable to appreciate the various cultures in their country because they have been denied formal access to information about their past” (para. 1, 2). For Omolewa (2016, p. 6):

The question that may be asked is how did this significant change happen? How could history be so conveniently expunged? Were the historians, including the history teachers at all levels of the educational system, the amateur and professional historians, so careless that they did not follow the events that were unfolding at the time and were they sleeping or simply caught unawares? What was the role of the general public in these developments?

In line with the above questions, this paper will therefore focus its discussion on the following themes:

- The study of History as a subject in pre-and post-colonial Nigeria
- The politics of delisting history education from school curricula (post-independence Nigeria)
- What is the position of History now in Nigerian schools?
- Can the reintroduction of History into the school curriculum now catch up in filling the gap created since 1982?
- What significance do the values of History education have for Nigeria?

It is important to note that, between Independence in 1960 and 1999, when Nigeria rejoined the comity of democratic nations after a period of suspension from the Commonwealth (1995-1999, ironically when Chief Emeka Anyaoku, a Nigerian, was Secretary-General), the military had ruled the nation for thirty years. Whereas at Independence in 1960, Nigeria had three regions (later becoming four with the creation of the Mid West region in 1963). At the onset of military rule, however, Nigeria progressively moved from the regional structure to having 12 states created by General Yakubu Gowon before the Biafran civil war in 1967; 19 in 1976 by the late General Murtala Mohammed; 21 in 1987 to 30 in 1991, by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (President or Head of State 1985-1993); and finally, to 36 states (and a Federal Capital Territory) by 1996 through General Sanni Abacha. Each state is further divided into several local government jurisdictions, of which there are a total of 774 in the entire federation of Nigeria. Using ethnic groups, and/or common political history as the basis for effective allocation of resources, Sanni Abacha (President 1993-1998) further divided Nigeria into six geopolitical zones as represented in Figure 2 below.

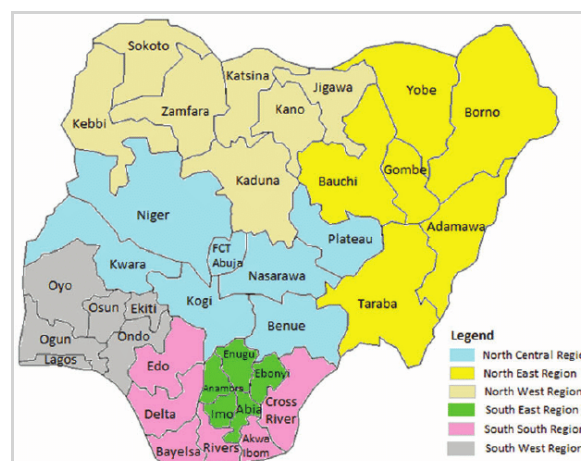


Figure 2: Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja
Gayawan, E., Arogundade, E. D., & Adebayo, S. B. (2014, p. 37).

It is important that citizens learn from the historical evolution of the Nigerian states, because it is laden with experiences and “life is lived forward, but understood backwards” (Kierkegaard, 1843, p. 306). How would the younger generation know about the beginning of Nigeria: its pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial histories, as well as its journey from protectorates to regions, and from regions to states? It is to be hoped that in a multicultural and multilingual society like Nigeria, exposing students to history education will bring mutual understanding and respect for individuals and their diverse cultures thereby strengthening Nigeria’s sense of unity in diversity. There are important local and regional stories to weave into a multi-dimensional national story. In a sense, a reform of history education can address within the classroom the wider problems in society: a recognition of ethnic diversity within and across the population; the role of women in history (and society); and encouragement for an approach to history that sees history as a discourse, an ongoing multi-faceted dialogue that allows for freedom of speech, different interpretations, and different narratives. It is possible that some narratives may be contradictory and difficult to reconcile, and it takes a skilful teacher to be able to manage such discussions. Indeed, with older school students it might be possible to introduce the notion of contested narratives, but this can clearly sometimes be politically sensitive.

The study of History as a subject in pre and postcolonial Nigeria

When the Christian missionaries introduced western education in Nigeria and schools were established, Omolewa (2016) submitted that there was a kind of continuity in that the traditional status of history as an important subject was retained, and the teaching of history was given adequate space in learning and teaching. However, the content of history teaching was transformed, with the Bible (despite its unsuitability) becoming an attractive source of history teaching in mission schools. The intervention of the colonial government in education through Education Ordinances also made provision for the study of history, beginning with an 1887 Ordinance, which changed the content of the history that was to be taught – and emphasised the teaching of English and European history. Across the indigenous pre-colonial Nigerian tribal societies there was a vernacular history that had a key role, but at that time this was replaced with the new biblical, and British (although mainly English), and European colonialist history. This focus prompted the early educated Indigenous Nigerian elite, and indeed some of the missionary community from the 1920s onwards, to challenge the absence of the study of African history in the school curriculum. The fact that “educated natives of Yoruba are well acquainted with the history of England and with the history of Rome and Greece but of the history of their own country they knew nothing whatsoever,” (Johnson, 1921, p. vii) displeased Reverend Samuel Johnson who later wrote *The History of the Yoruba* in 1921. Clearly, some missionary educators in the early twentieth century were concerned about the detrimental effect of colonial policies and were prepared to challenge the colonial governance.

The division of Nigeria in 1951 into three regional administrative units – West, East, and North, empowered each region to legislate and make laws on education. Thus, historical awareness became “an important intellectual force in the decolonisation struggles of the 1950s in Nigeria” (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2017a, p.vi). While the teachers were taught –and the students learnt– the biblical and Anglo-centric (or Eurocentric) history, they nevertheless developed an awareness of the power and role of Nigerian history. Noting the fact that “learning our history is very important for taking the right decisions in the future” (Odimayo, 2018, n. p.).

This, according to Ajayi (1985, p.1) was exemplified by Nigerian historian, Kenneth Dike, “who could not accept that Africans had no history beyond the activities of Europeans.” Dike would later establish the National Archives of Nigeria and was its Director 1954-1963. Acknowledgement of a distinctively Nigerian identity, and the rich diversity of tribal and ethnic groups, was what the nationalists were driving for, and they would pick up the power and role of vernacular/folk history as a driver for the independence movement. Dike (1951, 1956) promoted a sense of history as an essential ingredient of national life. With a background in folklore, he recorded an “intellectual breakthrough as to the meaning and place of history in African societies ... when he

insisted on a theme focusing on the activities of Africans and requiring the study of Oral Traditions” for his Ph.D. on trade and politics in the River Niger delta, 1830-1879 (Ajayi, 1985). Up to the time of Nigeria’s Independence on October 1, 1960, English history was still studied, but since then African and Nigerian history have been embedded in the history curriculum which was as a result of the agitation of nationalists (especially Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe). Therefore, since the middle of the twentieth century (that is after 1946 to the period of independence), secondary school students were able to tell stories of old Ghana, as well as the Mali, Songhai, Oyo, and Bornu Empires and the legacies they left for modern Nigeria. The contents of History textbooks reflected these topics as typified in Ajayi and Crowder (1974; *History of West Africa: Volume Two*) and Boahen (1976; *Topics in West African History*).

Postcolonial revision: The politics of delisting history education from school curricula

The independence that Nigeria gained from the [British] colonial masters in October 1960, alerted the people, especially nationalists, to the necessity of embarking on the processes of educational emancipation and an overhauling of the educational system. The Nigerian consensus throughout the 1960s was that for the process of independence to be firmly rooted there was a need for total decolonisation of the academic content, principles and practices of education at all levels. As has been seen, it took almost a decade after Independence for the conference of 1969 to be convened. This addressed, in particular, the inadequacy of the school curriculum to develop individual Nigerians and the nation at the rate and tempo to put the country on the world map in the sense of making provisions for an education system that would yield positive economic results for Nigeria (Adaralegbe, 1972). In this way the first Indigenous policy on education evolved: The National Policy on Education (NPE), introduced in 1977. However, history had a minimal role in the official curriculum, and neither its status nor the nature of its content would reflect the views of the nationalist movement from 1920-1960.

From the various iterations of the NPE including 1977, 1981, 1998 and 2004, History was only a strand (and latterly not even a named strand) of Social Studies. Specifically, from 1977 History was a part of the Primary curriculum under the heading of ‘Social norms and values and of the country through civics and social studies’ and was studied alongside Geography in Secondary education (FRN, 1977). From 1981, History was subsumed within Social Studies in the Junior Secondary curriculum (FRN, 1981). From 1998 and after 2004 and 2014 History was not ‘named up’ at all in Primary and Junior Secondary education, with the nomenclature delineated as ‘Social Studies & Citizenship Education’ (FRN, 1998, 2004, 2014). History was retained in the Senior Secondary school curriculum although only with the status of an ‘elective’ subject (not compulsory for all). Delisting of History, according to Katsina (n.d.), may not have been unconnected to the feeling that Nigerian leaders, military and civilians, were uncomfortable about the critical attitudes of some historians towards what they regarded as undesirable contemporary national policies.

By 2014, the Senior Secondary education curriculum was divided into four areas namely, “(1) Science & Mathematics (2) Technology (3) Humanities, and (4) Business Studies” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, p. 18). By this arrangement, History fell under humanities as one of the twelve electives. The effect of this organisational measure was that fewer students now studied History or were offered it. This action emanated from the erroneous belief that the 6-3-3-4 system adopted by Nigerian education was to be technological and vocational; therefore, history education was not seen as being relevant, ignoring its crucial role in shaping personal and communal identity, commitment, patriotism and citizenship and all that it entails.

But to Oloruntimehin (cited in Oyeranmi, 2007):

To advocate that studies in the Sciences and Technology should be pursued to the relative neglect [humiliation] of the Humanities and Social Sciences is to express appetite for the materialism which technology creates rapidly, but

without [what is] required for the organic growth and stability. Every one of us including the scientist and technologist has to be a citizen. Without the socializing influence of training in the Humanities (especially History), the aggregation that we represent as citizens cannot be properly called a nation. A nation that lacks clear self-identity and which is structurally incoherent cannot be strong whatever its wealth and the amount of gadgetry at its disposal. (1976, p. 10)

It was indeed an error because: “For even in the United States, the haven of innovators, pupils are not robbed of the opportunity to be engaged in a keen study of the history of America” (Omolewa, 1987, p.24). Omolewa noted the irony of the influence of American agencies working in Nigeria, arguing that:

The history of the liquidation of History as a subject in the junior schools began with the United States’ agencies ... What has followed has been the misfortune of the National Policy on Education which provides for the elimination of history at the Junior Secondary school and a cramming into the second-tier Senior Secondary of a history curriculum that ought to take six years to teach ... A further consequence is the tragedy that most students will now leave schools without a knowledge of history, and as the Historical Society of Nigeria put it on Wednesday 21 January, 1987, at a meeting with the Minister of Education, “Nigeria will soon become a country whose lettered citizens have no idea of their own History”. (pp. 23-24)

Interest in History by some government functionaries descended to a ridiculously low level in a particular state, with the consequence that History education was seriously endangered. Thus, in Osun State, in south-west Nigeria history teachers were compulsorily retired in the year 2000 and were told that they were not relevant to national development at all. As reported by Eno-Abasi (2016) in *The Guardian*, this action was contrary to what a renowned author, Professor Anezionwu Okoro, speaking in Enugu at the maiden meeting of the Board of Trustees of Coal City Literary Forum (2016), said:

I cannot imagine a country developing without studying history and this is something that should be urgently looked into ... reintroducing the subject in schools would contribute its quota towards reinventing the society, as well as arming the younger generation with salient information. The disappearance of History, which used to be a vibrant core school subject in the country still baffles many, especially considering the value of the subject to nation building, the development of an individual, his society or the larger community.

History as a subject, indeed, used to be vibrant after the colonial education administrators recognised the agitation for its inclusion in the school curriculum in the pre-and post-independence era before it was delisted in 1982. In the same report, Okoro’s view was further strengthened by the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Chief Emeka Anyaoku endorsing this view: “Without the knowledge of the past, there will be no fruitful projections for the future. The knowledge of the past is very vital to the development of the country, and we can only solve present societal problems when we know what was obtainable in the past” (cited in Eno-Abasi, 2016, n.p).

The State government seemed to forget that “every situation has its roots in the past, and the past survives in the present; the present is indeed the past undergoing modification” (Omolewa, 2016, p.2). Because history was delisted from the basic school curriculum, students at the senior secondary stage who were opting for History as an elective subject had no prerequisite knowledge to build upon or to motivate them to study it. This led to the “increasing unpopularity of history as a school subject among the timid or lazy or unadventurous students” (Kelle, 1986, cited in Omolewa, 1987, p.24). The consequence was that students’ enrolment to study history started dwindling both at the senior secondary and the post-secondary school levels.

When it was discovered that there was a drastic fall in the enrolment of secondary school students in History and that students were no longer interested in choosing History as a subject, Jekayinfa (1994) carried out research to find out factors associated with students' interest in History in Nigeria. Using an appropriate factor scale, a list of criteria emerged from a variety of previously published factor and attitude scales, which identified: (1) Worthwhileness of History in terms of its perceived benefits; (2) Understanding of History lessons; (3) Attitude of History teachers; (4) Inducement of high grades in History-related disciplines at lower levels (to attract more students to offer history); (5) Peer group influence; and (6) Parental influence. The factors were measured on a three-point ordinal scale ranging from agree, neutral, to disagree. On the six factors explored for their influences on interest in History, it was agreed by a majority of respondents that (1) Social benefits of History and (2) High grades in History-related subjects at the lower level were among the factors that attracted students to History.

However, other factors were responsible for the decline in the number of students choosing History. It may not be unconnected with the fact that some of the elective subjects introduced multiple-choice questions within examinations and history still presented an essay form of questions. Second, the Nigerian government's interest in building a science and technologically developed nation led to a higher education admission policy of the ratio 70: 30 for Science related courses and Humanities respectively. This policy emphasis discouraged students from having an interest in History as a subject. Such an admission policy contained in the national policy on education further served to marginalise the study of Humanities in general and History in particular.

Since the time History was delisted, there has been much clamour and many calls in newspapers, open debates, conferences and workshops for the re-introduction of the teaching of History as an independent subject at all levels of schooling. Two prominent Historical Associations: the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), and Historians of Education Development Society of Nigeria (HOEDSON), and other stakeholders including Ikime (1987), Omolewa, (1987, 2012, 2016), Esogbue (2008), Oluwatoki (2012), Adesina (2012); and the staff of the *Daily Post* (2015), expressed reservations about this development (the delisting of History), recording their belief in the need for the re-introduction of history in the school curriculum. For these stakeholders, adopting and sustaining democracy would only work when people were well-grounded in their history, especially their modern political history. These stakeholders, therefore, rejected Social Studies because they were of the opinion that, through Social Studies, students did not have the opportunity to engage fully with the realities of Nigeria's past and history chronologically.

Furthermore, Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth, and the fourth paragraph of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration by Heads of Government (1991), re-iterating and affirming the second principle set out in a previous Declaration by their predecessors in Singapore in 1971, could only be practicable through history education. Thus, both Declarations state that:

... we believe in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief, and in the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she lives.

This statement is particularly relevant to Nigeria as a nation. The Declarations make it imperative for citizens to have an in-depth knowledge of their history which Social Studies as then formulated did not provide in the Nigerian context. For example, the migration history of some of the tribes that make up Nigeria, in particular the Fulanis that are now dominant in the northern part of the nation, and the generally associated issues of insurgency and kidnapping, plus cross-border trading and interaction with other African nations are very important. Students would therefore need an analytical approach in history that respects diversity in the Nigerian content, learning about previous mistakes, heroic exploits, religious intolerance, and some of the other emerging issues identified above. It was therefore not out of place when the Minister of Education in Nigeria – Mallam Adamu Adamu – in the foreword to the new curriculum said, "I also congratulate the

Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) and other well-meaning Nigerians who persistently struggled for the re-introduction of History into the Basic Education level" (FME, 2017a: p.iv).

What is the position of History now in Nigerian schools?

Some historians have observed that almost all of the problems facing Nigeria as a country come from the neglect of history because a people not prepared to face its own history cannot manage to face its own future (Jekayinfa, 2014). Fafunwa (1974, p.13) stressed the role of history in educational reform and national development when he submitted that:

History is to a people what memory is to the individual. A people with no knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course. Only a thorough awareness of their heritage allows them to make their public decisions as they make their private ones. For possible educational reform, reflection on previous events and policies will assist considerably in planning any future course of action.

Tragically, Nigerians have suffered collective amnesia and would have continued with groping blindly into the future without guideposts of precedence to shape it, if history had not been reintroduced into the school curriculum. Therefore, to discontinue the demagogic attack and give room for total development, knowledge of historical events and interpretations is helpful (Koke & Saleniece, 2015). Though Furlong (2013, p.5) submitted that, "the challenges of educating the next generation of this world of hyper-complexity are huge," all hope is not lost in Nigeria. The starting point in the opinion of the authors is that the reintroduction of History in schools must eventually be made compulsory at all levels so that learners will appreciate where we are coming from, where we are, why we are where we are, and how to work towards responsible democratic citizenship and sustainable development to secure the future. Part of the curriculum content for JSS One: *Meaning of History; Sources of History; and Importance of History*, therefore, is a way of engaging students with the discipline of history as they develop an awareness of historical thinking. To begin to make the desired impact of remediating what has gone awry in Nigeria, the teaching of history must not be left in the hands of the teacher alone; the principle of 'each one teach one' must be adopted both at home and in the larger society. This implies that more than at other times, the government and people of Nigeria must be fully committed to the teaching and learning of history. If homes and schools are assertive and proactive in making history relevant to national development, the gap that has been created by not studying history for decades might be bridged.

The Federal Ministry of Education in 2016 developed its plan on *Education for Change: A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2016-2019)*, which contains several initiatives and activities to be executed, including the reintroduction of the teaching of History in primary and secondary schools. It is important because it recognises the necessity for Nigerians of all generations to learn and know the history of Nigeria's unity in diversity.

Consequently, the National Council on Education (NCE) at the 61st Ministerial Session, in September 2016, approved the disarticulation of History from the Social Studies curriculum and confirmed that History should now be taught as a separate subject at the Basic Education level (Thisday, 2017). The Federal Government fulfilled its promise by producing, through NERDC, a new history curriculum that was approved at the 62nd meeting of the NCE held from July 24 to 28, 2017 in Kano, beginning from the 2018/2019 academic session; and in this way, the return of History to schools became real (Editorial, *Leadership Newspaper*, 2018). This was seen as a demonstration of the government's keen commitment to the re-introduction of History at the Basic Education level. Omolewa, not without irony, commented that politics itself had reflected the cycle of history, in that "every situation has its roots in the past, and past survives in the present; the present is indeed the past undergoing modification" (2016, p.2).

The new curriculum came in three different documents namely: *History for Primary 1-3* (FME, 2017a), *History for Primary 4-6* (FME, 2017b), and *History for JSS1-3* (FME, 2017c). The content of the History curriculum launched for the Basic Education level is as presented in Table 2.

	Junior Primary One	Junior Primary Two	Junior Primary Three
Topics	1. Meaning of History/Family History 2. Peoples and Places in the Community 3. Heroes and Heroines in the Community 4. Traditional Rulers 5. Title Holders 6. The Local Government Chairperson	1. Indigenous People of the State. 2. Nigerian Peoples 3. Major Towns in the State 4. Heroes and Heroines in the State 5. History of the State 6. Major Traditional Rulers in the State	1. Nigerian Peoples 2. Some Early Heroes and Heroines in Nigeria 3. Towns in Nigeria
	Senior Primary Four	Senior Primary Five	Senior Primary Six
Topics	1. The four early Regions in Nigeria 2. States Creation in Nigeria 3. Colonial Administrative Headquarters 4. Federal Capitals 5. Heroes and Heroines in Nigeria I & II 6. Some Nigerian Peoples I, II, & III 7. Important Historical Features and States in Nigeria I & II	1. British Rule in Nigeria 2. Nationalists and Nationalism in Nigeria 3. Some Nationalists in Nigeria 4. Nigerian Independence 5. Traditional Religions in Nigeria 6. Islam and Christianity in Nigeria 7. Traditional Occupations in the Locality and in the State 8. Traditional Occupations of the people of Nigeria: the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo	1. Civil Rule in Nigeria 2. Military Rule in Nigeria 3. Oil Economy 4. The Growth of Industries in Nigeria
	Junior Secondary One	Junior Secondary Two	Junior Secondary Three
Topics	1. Meaning of History 2. Sources of History 3. Importance of History 4. Historical Sites in Nigeria 5. The Major Centralised States in Pre-Colonial Nigeria	1. Non-Centralised States in Pre-Colonial Nigeria 2. Inter-Relationships of some Centres of Civilization in Pre-Colonial Nigeria 3. Ghana Empire 4. Mali Empire 5. Songhai Empire	1. Origin and Organisation of Trans-Saharan Trade 2. Early European contacts with Nigeria 3. British Colonisation of Nigeria Territories 4. The Evolution of the Nigerian State 5. The Amalgamation of Nigeria 6. The Independence movement

Table 2: Basic Education Level History Curriculum
(Federal Ministry of Education, 2017)

Table 2 is the curriculum content for the re-introduced history alone for the basic education level. The re-introduction was launched on March 27, 2018, and this was widely reported in the media with headlines such as:

1. 'FG (Federal Government) reintroduces subject into school curriculum' – *Pulse* magazine (Bayo Wahab, 03/27/2018)
2. 'How sustainable is the reintroduction of history in secondary schools?' – *The Nation* (Cited in Adeyori, Fadahunsi, Chukwu, and Honawon, 02/19/2019)
3. 'Bring back our history' – *The Guardian* (Eno-Abasi, 05/19/2016)
4. 'Council on Education Endorses Separate Religious Studies, Revised Curriculum for 2018' (subtext: 'Reinstates study of History') – *This Day* (07/30/2017)
5. 'FG reintroduces history as an independent subject in school curriculum' – *The Cable* (Jamilah Nasi 02/16/2019)

It should be noted, however, that in the reintroduction of history education, the 'Big Six' historical thinking concepts identified and embraced by much of the international history education community, namely: historical significance, cause and consequence, historical perspective-taking, continuity and change, the use of primary source evidence, and the ethical dimension of history (as discussed in Wineburg, 2001, and Lévesque, 2009; but as particularly defined in the form as set out by Seixas and Morton, 2013) have not been fully embedded in the curriculum. The authors opine that as time goes on, stakeholders will accept most of them, or a suitable selection of the teaching and learning principles behind them, into the history education curriculum to make it more balanced.

Another important thing to note is that the new curriculum in Table 2 caters for history at the basic level of education, as History was never delisted from the curriculum of the Senior Secondary school. Students who were interested in studying History have access to the curriculum/syllabus provided by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the examining body that issues the final secondary school certificate. Also, in universities and other higher institutions where students study history, there are areas of specialisations like Nigerian history, West African history, African history, European history and World history with their differing curricular content.

Conclusion: Challenges and recommendations

"The messages from history are that the 'futures' to which transformative drivers are directed will be strongly influenced by the 'remembered' past" (Brennan, King & Lebeau, 2004, p. 37). Producing a successful generation in Nigeria without the knowledge of history would be practically impossible because there is always that inter-organic connection between the past, present and the future (Onyekpe, 2012). That historical knowledge helps to cast light on the problems of the society should be a truism in Nigeria, because we are a complex society with varying degrees of cultural practices, beliefs and affiliations; unless this history of our complexities is taught and known by people, especially the younger generation, violence may become part of our community life. The capacity to convey a society's mores and values also lie within the remit of history education. How are our children supposed to internalise the values of honesty, patriotism, cooperation, a consciousness of and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as integrity, tolerance and hard work which are celebrated in the history of our various peoples but which seem to be lacking in the Nigerian public service today?

It may be argued that nobody can change the past, but it is instructive to note that the knowledge of the past can inform decisions on how to conduct our affairs today in order not to make the same mistakes that had been made in times past. Santayana (1905, p. 12) wrote that "The past is a repository of lessons about what does and doesn't work in a given situation, and the society that is ignorant of these lessons will, unfortunately (and unnecessarily) repeat the mistakes of the past." Errors are being repeated because people have failed to learn from history. How can Nigerian children avoid the mistakes of the past, when they do not even know enough about what has happened in the past? Simply neglecting history could lead to serious social, political and economic problems. Jekayinfa (2014) used the expression 'the superhighway to damnation' to describe the outcome of failing to include history in schools.

Taking into consideration all the observations above, and with the reintroduced history, all hope is not lost as regards filling the gap created by the non-teaching of history since 1982. What is required is effective teaching and learning from now, including communication with parents and grandparents about the content-matter of the revised curriculum. History education adds value to any society which holds it in high esteem. Renewal of educational policies is inevitable in order to be in tune with global developments. Whatever system of education is adopted by any country should not exclude the study of history, and its removal from the school curriculum by any nation could spell doom for that nation. Nevertheless, the discourse on bringing back history education into Nigeria schools does not stop at its reintroduction.

A major challenge is how to train teachers who are well-grounded in the content to be taught and in the necessary understanding of the discipline of history and creative, inclusive ways to teach it. However, it is good to note that the colleges of education that are responsible for training teachers for the basic education level – primary to junior secondary – have taken proactive action by embedding most of the items in the new history curriculum into their syllabus since 2012 in anticipation of its reintroduction (FRN, 2012a & 2012b). Also, Nigerian universities never stopped training historians and teachers of history. Despite this, more efforts should be made to give effective initial training to history teachers in colleges and universities, and to offer retraining for mid-career teachers in history education, bearing in mind the diversity of Nigeria's cultural and ethnic groups so that what has been gained by bringing back history education into schools in Nigeria will not be 'hanging by a thread.' It is important to note that in some developed countries like the USA (Vinovskis, 2015) and Latvia (Koke & Saleniece, 2015), history as a subject is held in high esteem, and Marwick (n. d., p. 1) noted that "all developed countries have their National Archives ... This is in recognition of the simple fact that knowledge of the past is essential to society."

If many developed nations hold history in high esteem, Nigeria should not do otherwise. It is, therefore, recommended that incentives should be given to students who wish to study history education to become teachers of history. It may be in the form of a fully paid scholarship or fee reduction. History must be a compulsory subject at all levels of education in Nigeria, because a knowledge of the history of the jurisdiction where any citizen lives, enriched by the principles of historical thinking, will enable that person to function better as an active citizen. The implication, therefore, is that you cannot contribute to any form of development within a state unless you know its history. Teachers need to introduce their students to 'doing' history as a kind of democratic exercise where evidence is weighed and discussed/debated. Also, in a multicultural society where many different ethnic groups may share a classroom, it might be seen as desirable to have an 'identity' element in the teaching and learning of history, where all groups are respected and included. For example, the cultural, economic and social history of different ethnic groups must be taught and learned together by students and not separately. This may present some practical difficulties, but the journey of engagement by Nigerian history educators is at least underway.

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Endnotes

¹ Assisted by Clyde Sanger, Canadian Arnold Smith CH, who served as the first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, 1965-1975, wrote *Stitches in Time* as a memoir. In this there is a whole chapter dedicated to the role of the newly-formed Commonwealth Secretariat as a peace-broker in the Civil War: 'War in Nigeria, The Tangled Path to Peace Talks', pp. 76-105. Kenneth Dike features in this narrative as he was a supporter of a separate state for Biafra.

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