

Integrating Digital Oral History into NCE History Curriculum: A Framework for Tech-Mediated Pedagogy in Nigerian Colleges of Education

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ABSTRACT

History teaching in Nigerian colleges of education remains largely lecture-based and textbook-driven, giving pre-service teachers few opportunities to practise the skills of historical inquiry they will later be expected to teach. At the same time, much of Nigeria's past, particularly community, family and everyday history, survives mainly in the memories of elders and is being lost as older generations pass on. Oral history, long recognised in African historiography as a legitimate source, offers a bridge between these concerns, and affordable digital technologies such as smartphones, free editing software and online archives now make it practical to record, preserve and share oral testimonies. This conceptual paper proposes a framework for integrating digital oral history into the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) history curriculum. Anchored on constructivist learning theory, Kolb's experiential learning theory and the TPACK framework, the framework comprises three layers: curriculum alignment with existing NCE history courses; a six-phase pedagogical cycle of preparation, fieldwork, processing, interpretation, production and reflection; and enabling conditions, including staff capacity, ethical protocols, infrastructure and archival partnerships. The paper maps oral history activities to NCE courses, proposes an assessment rubric, and discusses challenges such as limited equipment, linguistic diversity, ethical risks and the reliability of memory. It argues that digital oral history can develop pre-service teachers' historical thinking, digital competence and community engagement while contributing to the preservation of Nigerian heritage. Recommendations are offered for curriculum review, staff development and institutional digital archives.

Keywords: oral history, history education, digital pedagogy, NCE curriculum, colleges of education, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

History gives a nation its memory. It helps citizens understand where they come from, how their societies have changed, and how to evaluate claims about the past and present. In Nigeria, history education has had a troubled recent past: the subject was removed from the basic education curriculum around 2009, with historical content folded into social studies, before being reintroduced as a distinct subject in later reforms. Its return has created renewed demand for well-prepared history teachers, most of whom are trained in colleges of education through the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE], 2012).

How those teachers are trained matters. History teaching at all levels in Nigeria is widely criticised as lecture-centred and focused on memorising dates, names and events. Pre-service teachers often study history as a body of facts to be learned rather than as a discipline of inquiry with its own methods of questioning sources, weighing evidence and constructing interpretations (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Wineburg, 2001). Teachers taught this way are likely to teach the same way, perpetuating disengagement among their pupils.

Nigeria has a rich tradition of oral sources. Much of the history of Nigerian communities, migrations, chieftaincy, trade, wars, colonial encounters, the civil war and post-independence life is held in the memories of elders, griots, chiefs and ordinary people. African historians have long argued for the legitimacy of oral sources: Dike (1956) pioneered their systematic use in Nigerian historiography, and Vansina (1985) set out rigorous methods for their critical evaluation. Yet as elders pass away, these memories are being lost, often unrecorded.

Digital technology has transformed what is possible. A smartphone can record high-quality audio and video; free software can edit, transcribe and caption recordings; and online platforms can store and share them. Digital oral history thus offers colleges of education a way to engage pre-service teachers in authentic historical inquiry, develop their digital competence and contribute to preserving local heritage, all at modest cost.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The NCE history curriculum includes historical methods and the history of Nigeria and its peoples, but delivery is predominantly theoretical. Pre-service teachers rarely conduct primary research, interact with community sources, or use digital tools in historical work. Meanwhile, oral sources that could enrich their learning and local historical knowledge are

disappearing. Although oral history projects exist elsewhere, there is no structured framework guiding Nigerian colleges of education on how to integrate digital oral history into the NCE history curriculum in a way that is pedagogically sound, ethically responsible and feasible with available resources.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to propose a framework for integrating digital oral history into the NCE history curriculum as a form of technology-mediated pedagogy. Specifically, the paper: (1) clarifies the concepts of oral history, digital oral history and tech-mediated pedagogy; (2) reviews the educational value of oral history and digital tools in history teaching; (3) presents the theoretical basis of the framework; (4) sets out the components and phases of the framework, its alignment with NCE courses, and an assessment approach; and (5) discusses challenges and enabling conditions for implementation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Oral History and Oral Tradition

Oral history is the collection and study of historical information through recorded interviews with people who have personal knowledge of past events (Ritchie, 2015). It differs from oral tradition, which refers to accounts passed down across generations, such as genealogies, praise poetry and foundation myths (Vansina, 1985). Both are important in Nigeria: oral history captures living memory of events such as the civil war or the oil boom, while oral tradition preserves accounts of community origins and pre-colonial history. Thompson (2000) argued that oral history democratises the past by recording the voices of ordinary people often absent from written records, and Portelli (1991) showed that oral sources reveal not only what happened but what events meant to those who lived them.

Digital Oral History

Digital oral history refers to the use of digital technologies at every stage of oral history work: recording interviews on digital devices, editing and transcribing them with software, attaching descriptive metadata, preserving them in digital archives, and presenting them through websites, podcasts, digital stories and interactive maps (Boyd & Larson, 2014). Digital methods greatly lower the cost of recording and widen access to collections, but they also raise new questions about consent, privacy and the long-term preservation of files.

Tech-Mediated Pedagogy

Tech-mediated pedagogy refers to teaching and learning approaches in which technology is integral to how learners engage with content, rather than an add-on. In history, this includes students using digital tools to locate, create, analyse and present historical sources. Robin (2008) showed that digital storytelling, the combination of narrative with images, audio and video, can deepen students' engagement, research skills and digital literacy.

Oral History as Pedagogy

Oral history projects place students in the role of historians. They must frame questions, prepare for interviews, listen critically, compare testimony with other sources, and interpret what they have gathered. These activities develop the historical thinking concepts that Seixas and Morton (2013) identify, including using primary source evidence, recognising continuity and change, analysing cause and consequence, and taking historical perspectives. Wineburg (2001) argued that historical thinking does not come naturally and must be taught through deliberate engagement with sources. Oral history also connects learners with their communities, valuing local knowledge and intergenerational dialogue. Frisch (1990) described oral history as an exercise in shared authority between interviewer and narrator, a principle that encourages respect for community voices.

Gap in the Literature

While the value of oral history in history education and of digital tools in teaching is well established internationally, there is little guidance on integrating digital oral history systematically into teacher education curricula in Nigeria. Existing discussions of history education in Nigeria focus largely on the subject's removal and reintroduction, curriculum content and teacher shortages, rather than on inquiry-based and technology-mediated methods. This paper responds to that gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivism. Constructivist theory holds that learners build knowledge actively through interaction with their environment and with others. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that learning is social and occurs through guided participation in cultural activity. In oral history, pre-service teachers construct historical knowledge by questioning narrators, negotiating meaning with peers and lecturers, and connecting testimony to wider historical contexts, rather than receiving interpretations ready-made.

Experiential Learning Theory. Kolb (1984) described learning as a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Conducting an interview is a concrete experience; reviewing and transcribing it prompts reflection; relating it to historiographical concepts builds abstract understanding; and planning a classroom lesson or a further interview is active experimentation. The framework's phases follow this cycle.

TPACK. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) holds that effective technology integration requires the joint application of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and technological knowledge. In this framework, historical content (Nigerian history and historical method), pedagogy (inquiry and project-based learning) and technology (recording, editing and archiving tools) are integrated in each phase, so that pre-service teachers learn not only to do digital oral history but to teach with it.

THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

The Digital Oral History Integration Framework (DOHIF) has three layers: (1) curriculum alignment, (2) a six-phase pedagogical cycle, and (3) enabling conditions. The first two are described here; enabling conditions are discussed with the challenges in the next section.

Layer 1: Curriculum Alignment

Digital oral history should be embedded in existing NCE history courses rather than added as a separate burden. Table 1 shows how it can be mapped to typical course areas in the NCE history programme.

Table 1

Mapping Digital Oral History Activities to NCE History Course Areas

NCE course area	Oral history activity	Learning outcome
Introduction to history and historical methods	Study of oral sources and their critical evaluation; mock interviews	Understand the nature, strengths and limits of oral evidence
History of Nigeria and its peoples (pre-colonial)	Recording oral traditions of community origins, migration and institutions	Relate local traditions to wider Nigerian history
Colonial and post-colonial Nigerian history	Interviews with elders on colonial rule, independence, the civil war and	Explore lived experience of major national events

	economic change	
Local and community history	Community-based oral history project on a market, school, church, mosque, craft or festival	Produce an original local history
Methods of teaching history	Designing lessons that use recorded testimonies; training pupils in simple interviewing	Plan oral-history-based lessons for basic and secondary schools
Research project	Oral history as a method for the final NCE research project	Conduct ethical, methodical primary research

Layer 2: The Six-Phase Pedagogical Cycle

1. Preparation. Students learn the principles and ethics of oral history, including informed consent, respect for narrators and cultural protocols for approaching elders and traditional rulers. They research the background to their topic in written sources, develop interview guides with open-ended questions, and practise recording with smartphones through mock interviews.

2. Fieldwork. Working in pairs or small groups, students identify narrators through community contacts, obtain consent (recorded or written), and conduct interviews in the narrator's preferred language, recording audio and, where appropriate, video and photographs of relevant objects or places.

3. Processing. Students transfer, back up and name files consistently; transcribe interviews, using free speech-to-text tools where they work and manual transcription where they do not; translate from indigenous languages into English where needed, keeping the original; and record metadata such as narrator, date, place, language and topics.

4. Interpretation. Students analyse testimonies critically: identifying themes, comparing accounts from different narrators, corroborating with written and material sources, and considering how memory, perspective and the interview context shape what is said (Portelli, 1991; Vansina, 1985). This phase develops historical thinking skills.

5. Production and dissemination. Students present their findings as digital products: edited audio clips, short documentary videos, digital stories (Robin, 2008), podcasts, illustrated reports or entries in an institutional digital archive. With narrators' consent,

selected products are shared with the community, for example at a presentation in the community or through the college's website.

6. Reflection and transfer. Students reflect, in journals or discussions, on what they learned about history, method, technology and themselves, and design a lesson for basic or secondary school pupils that uses their oral history materials, completing the cycle from learner to teacher.

Assessment

Assessment should reward both process and product. Table 2 proposes an assessment rubric. The weights are suggestions that institutions can adapt; the emphasis on historical interpretation ensures that the technology serves historical learning rather than becoming an end in itself.

Table 2

Proposed Assessment Rubric for Digital Oral History Projects

Criterion	Weight	Evidence
Preparation and research	15%	Background research notes; quality of interview guide
Ethics and consent	10%	Signed or recorded consent; respectful conduct; adherence to cultural protocols
Interview quality	15%	Clarity of recording; use of open and follow-up questions; active listening
Processing and documentation	15%	Accurate transcript and translation; complete metadata; organised files
Historical interpretation	25%	Critical analysis of testimony; corroboration with other sources; awareness of perspective and memory
Digital product	10%	Clarity, accuracy and effective use of media
Reflection and lesson design	10%	Depth of reflection; quality of an oral-history-based lesson plan

CHALLENGES AND ENABLING CONDITIONS

Limited equipment and infrastructure. Not all students own smartphones with adequate storage, and power and internet are unreliable. Enabling condition: departments should provide a small pool of shared devices, external microphones and storage, with solar charging, and should design workflows that operate offline until files are uploaded.

Staff capacity. Many history lecturers have not been trained in oral history methods or digital tools. Enabling condition: institutions should run staff development workshops, possibly with support from TETFund, and pair history lecturers with colleagues in educational technology and languages.

Ethics and data protection. Interviews may touch on painful memories, such as the civil war or communal conflicts, or on sensitive cultural and political matters. Recordings contain personal data. Enabling condition: colleges should adopt an oral history ethics protocol covering informed consent, the right to withdraw, sensitivity in difficult topics, restrictions on access where narrators request them, and secure storage consistent with the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023. Research ethics committees should review projects.

Cultural protocols. Access to certain knowledge, especially in traditional institutions, may be restricted by custom. Enabling condition: students should be trained to seek permission through appropriate community gatekeepers and to respect restrictions on recording or sharing.

Linguistic diversity. Narrators may speak languages that students or lecturers do not. Enabling condition: projects should be assigned with attention to students' languages, and collaboration with language departments can support transcription and translation.

Reliability of oral evidence. Memory can be selective, and accounts may be shaped by present interests. Enabling condition: the framework's interpretation phase explicitly teaches critical evaluation and corroboration, turning this challenge into a learning opportunity about the nature of historical evidence (Thompson, 2000; Vansina, 1985).

Preservation and access. Recordings stored on personal phones are easily lost. Enabling condition: each college should establish a digital oral history archive, in its library or history department, with clear metadata standards, backup procedures and partnerships with state archives, museums and the National Archives where possible.

Curriculum time and assessment. Oral history projects require more time than lectures. Enabling condition: integrating projects into existing courses and the final research project, as

Table 1 proposes, avoids overloading the timetable, and the NCCE can recognise such projects in future reviews of the minimum standards.

CONCLUSION

Digital oral history offers Nigerian colleges of education a practical and meaningful way to transform the teaching of history. By recording, processing, interpreting and sharing the testimonies of community members, pre-service teachers practise the methods of historians, develop critical historical thinking and digital competence, and learn to design inquiry-based lessons for their future pupils. At the same time, their work helps preserve memories that might otherwise be lost. The proposed Digital Oral History Integration Framework aligns these activities with existing NCE courses, structures them through a six-phase experiential cycle, and identifies the enabling conditions required for success. With modest investment in equipment, staff development, ethics protocols and archives, colleges of education can move history teaching from memorisation toward inquiry, and from the textbook toward the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The NCCE should incorporate digital oral history methods and projects into the NCE history minimum standards, particularly in historical methods, local history and teaching methods courses.
2. Colleges of education should provide shared recording equipment, storage and solar charging for history departments.
3. College managements, with TETFund support, should organise staff development workshops on oral history methods, ethics and digital tools for history lecturers.
4. Each college should adopt an oral history ethics protocol and establish a digital oral history archive with appropriate metadata, backup and access policies.
5. History departments should build partnerships with communities, traditional institutions, archives, museums and language departments to support oral history projects.
6. Researchers should pilot and evaluate the framework in selected colleges of education, examining its effects on pre-service teachers' historical thinking, digital competence and teaching practice.

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