

Oral History: A Tool for the Development of Radiography Practice in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To highlight the importance of oral history in the development of radiography profession in Nigeria.

Oral history has been extensively employed in qualitative research. It aims to shed light on the past, guide the present, through effective policy formulation and implementation, and enable the future to be anticipated based on previous experiences. There have been influences on radiography practice in Nigeria by other profession like radiology, nursing and physics. With technological changes noted in the past decade, substantial development in academics and clinical roles are expected to continue and even improve.

This paper explores the potential role of oral history as a tool for the development of radiography practice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Oral history, Radiography, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

The Oral History Association defines oral history as ... “a method of gathering historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life”. It went further to say that “it is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written words, and one of the most modern initiated with tape recorders in the 1940’s.”

Oral history has evolved from the traditional method of story telling in which information is passed from one generation to another and which relied heavily on memory to become a dialogue as: “... a self-conscious disciplined conversation between two people about some aspects of the past considered by them to be of historical significance and intentionally recorded for the future.”²

In radiography, knowledge of its professional development has in the past been dominated by documentary evidence provided by other disciplines – radiology, physics and sociology.^{3,4,5} In Nigeria, record of development, professional recognition, organisational and service change has been attributed to oral history.⁶ It is therefore evident that oral history can be used as a tool to supplement and clarify evidence of the written record or provide a record where no written record exists.”^{7,8}

This article explores the role of oral history as a tool for development of knowledge about Radiography in Nigeria.

Oral History as an adjunct in research activity

Historical research may be seen as a form of qualitative research. As a research method, oral history is a systematic procedure for understanding the past through the collection, organisation and critical appraisal of facts⁹. It aims to shed light on the past so that the present can be guided and the future anticipated^{10,11,12}. It is history that can most reasonably explain the origin, the nature and the function of various institutions and their interaction.¹³

Narratives of Radiographers’ experiences in different sub-specialties of radiography will serve as a tool for the generation of the much needed evidence for professional growth, practice development and improvement¹⁴. Theories arising from oral history research can be subjected to further investigation and analysis with the result being used for policy and decision making in radiography. Oral history as one of the qualitative research methods involves interviewing individuals in order to understand the meanings and interpretations individuals accord their relationships and subjective experiences.¹⁵ Oral history is also invaluable in the writing of biography of prominent people who played great roles in the development of the radiography profession.

To conduct an effective oral history interview, one must display good public relation skills and possess a sense of persuasion to encourage the respondent to be forthcoming. Another useful interview technique is that of focus group discussion (FGD).¹⁵ This enables the interviewer to elicit relevant data/information for selected target groups who may be constituted on the basis of their profession, position, experience, situation, gender and training. Association of Radiographers

of Nigeria (ARN) annual conference can provide a forum for this FGD. The purpose is to explore experiences of radiographers as part of the history of the profession.

Preliminary oral history questionnaire/question list:

We present below some of the questions or interview guide that might be used to gather an oral history for research purposes which can be preserved for the present and up coming professional colleagues.

- What is your full name?
- In which institution did you study radiography?
- Why did you choose radiography as a career?
- When did you graduate?
- What was it like to be a newly qualified radiographer?
- Where did you practice?
- Which additional qualifications did you acquire?
- Which of the radiography courses did you like best and which did you hate?
- Have you published papers or made presentations in conferences?
- Was there an issue or person you really hated as a radiographer?
- What would you consider to be the most important achievement that this profession has made in Nigeria?
- How is the profession now different from what it was like when you were in practice?
- What were your favourite things about the profession?
- How would you want to be remembered by your colleagues?
- Who was your favourite lecturer and why was he/she special?
- Who was your favourite professional colleague and why was he/she special?
- Were you given any special awards for your studies or school activities?
- What can you say about the present practice of radiography?
- Do you feel that the role of radiographers have changed somehow along the line?
- What impact did technology have on radiography in Nigeria?
- Do you think that the radiographer/radiologist relationship has changed over the years?
- What advice do you have for the present day radiographers?

Result text from oral history interviews can be analysed using computer software to obtain qualitative data.

Oral history and development of Radiography in Nigeria

It has been established that knowledge of the experiences of key figures and those engaged in the day-to-day activities of any profession has the potential to contribute to theory development in different professions.¹⁶ The voices of historical actors have been used in organisational studies as a means of understanding events that led to particular actions and policies. Racism which presupposes the superiority of one's own racial group over others was systematically combated in USA by the voices of key players (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr., etc.) opposed to such practice. The voices of such heroes were passed down the generations which eventually culminated in legislation against the practice.¹⁷ In Nigeria, record would definitely show the roles played by every radiographer towards professional actualisation and development which ordinarily would act as encouragement and motivation to others.

Many Radiographers in Nigeria have engaged in activities to see the profession through to its present stage either in the struggle to attain professional recognition, to encourage the establishment of degree and postgraduate programmes or to be involved in policies regarding role extensions in clinical practice. The voices of such heroes should be recorded as part of the history of Radiography in Nigeria. The oral history when properly harnessed in Nigeria will form the foundation upon which the profession will blossom. It avails the Radiographers Registration Board of Nigeria (RRBN) and Association of Radiographers of Nigeria (ARN) the opportunity of appraising the past, looking objectively at the present and formulating a policy for the future.

CONCLUSION

Oral history shares resemblance to other qualitative research methods and the gains obtained from it can be utilized in education, clinical practice and management.¹⁷ This pioneer article about oral history as a tool for development of radiography in Nigeria is suggesting the uniqueness and potential of oral history as a research method. The advice and remarks of our

forebears provide a means for understanding, reflecting and critically analysing issues relating to the radiography profession. Oral history either on its own or combined with other research methods has the potential to guide the profession into the future.^{18,19}

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