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Pedagogical Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Some Content Areas of the Reintroduced History Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone

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ABSTRACT

Background: In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on history education in Nigeria's basic education curriculum, driven by the recognition of its role in fostering national identity, civic responsibility, and critical thinking among young learners. However, the reintroduction of history as a standalone subject has presented several pedagogical challenges for teachers, particularly in terms of content delivery and resource availability. **Objective:** This study aims to identify the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers in delivering the reintroduced basic education history curriculum in the Awka Education Zone, Nigeria. **Method:** A descriptive research design was used, involving 53 history teachers from 53 public secondary schools. Since the population was manageable, no sampling was conducted. 50 completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), and internal consistency was measured using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a reliability score of 0.91. **Result:** Teachers faced difficulties in teaching differences among pre-colonial Nigerian civilizations, the evolution of the Nigerian state, and the centralization of power and authority. **Conclusion:** Addressing these teaching challenges requires enhanced support and resources for history educators. **Contribution:** The study highlights the need for government funding, financial support, and budget allocation to provide materials for student assessment and improve history education quality

KEYWORDS

Pedagogical challenges, Teachers, content areas, Basic education history curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of any educational program is to guarantee that the system's products are equipped with the necessary skills, scientific knowledge, and attitude to enable students to tackle the difficulties of the workplace. For a nation to be capable of bringing about behavioral changes in individuals and experiencing quick progress, it must protect its history, value, and education in order to develop kids into sound and successful citizens (Fujii, 2019). History has been an important part of the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria since the British introduced

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Western education. To various historians, the term "history" denotes different things. History, according to [Fafunwa \(1974\)](#), is to people what memory is to a person. People who have no memory of their history are victims of collective amnesia, stumbling blindly into the future with no precedent to guide them. This implies that those who have little understanding of the past are prone to historic myopia since their future is unknown. Similarly, according to [Jekayinfa \(2010\)](#), history is the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of past events in order to identify generalizations that aid in understanding the present and, to a limited extent, forecasting the future.

Implementing the reintroduced basic school history curriculum in the Awka Education Zone is seen as a fun process that requires instructors and students to work together to create a positive learning environment. In order to ensure effective history curriculum implementation, there are requests to raise engagement levels. The word curriculum comes from the Latin word *currus*, which meaning "racing course" or "race track" where people ran to achieve a goal. Curriculum is a strong instrument that schools utilize to carry out a country's educational goals. Curriculum, according to [Esu & Emah \(2014\)](#), comprises of information, skills, values, activities, and many other things that students acquire in various school topics. Curriculum may also be defined as a document, plan, or blueprint for an instructional guide that is used in teaching and learning to help students modify their behavior in good and desired ways ([Offorma, 2014](#)). The educational goals, the content or fact to be learned, the learning experiences, the outcomes of learning encounters, and the learning environment are all covered by the curriculum. Implementing the history curriculum includes putting the officially specified courses of study into effect. An implementation agent is needed to put the curriculum into effect. In the curriculum implementation process, the teacher is recognized as an actor. The learner gets the planned or intended experiences, abilities, information, ideas, and attitude that will enable the learner to perform effectively in society throughout implementation ([Hassan, Groot & Volante, 2022](#)). The teacher, the learner, teaching materials, and the teaching environment, the school management all constitute major players at the implementation stage.

Teachers must grow themselves in pedagogy, technology, and material in order to be successful in their careers nowadays. Teachers can seek growth in their fields of information and communication technologies in order to incorporate current techniques and applications for teaching methods into their lessons and keep themselves up to date. As a result, the level of teaching among teachers enhances the learning process's quality. Recent history teaching and learning research supports instructional techniques that involve students in the process of "doing history," such as gaining historical knowledge via the use of primary materials, doing historical inquiry, and encouraging students to think historically ([Fokin et al. 2017](#)). Chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research, historical issues analysis, and historical decision-making are all examples of historical thinking, according to the National Standards of History. This method entails educating students to assess historical facts, consider viewpoint and context, and go beyond the written word to examine the author's aim, motive, plan, and purpose. Instructors must comprehend the "knowing how" of history in order to teach students how to "do history" in this fashion; in other words, teachers must have a thorough understanding of what history is and how historical research is performed.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Due to poor/inadequate skills of some History teachers, inadequate instructional materials for teaching the subject, and as a result, emphasis is shifted to subjects like Geography, Government, Social Studies, and Civic Education in secondary schools, History as a subject is relegated or completely ignored by students in some schools. The utilization of original source materials, historical empathy exercises, the development of critical thinking abilities, and performing historical inquiry and research are all research-based instructional techniques that support the development of historical thinking ([French & Rawn, 2016](#)). Several elements, including the structure of the methods course and field experiences, the connection between the student teacher and the directing instructor, and the degree to which new concepts align with and reinforce pre-existing views, appear to impact starting teachers' opinions. Teachers may have problems in understanding the different learning challenges amongst students. One other educational issues facing teachers today is the lack of funding required to procure relevant instructional resources that are relevant for history curriculum implementation.

Lesson planning and history teaching in junior secondary schools provide significant obstacles for history teachers. Teachers express anxiety and apprehension while dealing with the issue since teaching history poses significant problems. Teachers' lack of confidence when teaching topics outside their area of expertise shows up in a variety of ways, including when creating lesson plans, selecting or devising activities and analogies to aid students' learning, answering students' questions, linking and applying various concepts and principles to everyday life situations, and generating students' interest and passion for History ([Brownell, 2017](#)). First and foremost, these teachers must comprehend the structure and nature of the discipline, as well as gain new topic information, referred

to as subject matter knowledge. Second, they must translate topic knowledge into appropriate activities, analogies, demonstrations, or simulations and adjust them to the various students' skills in order to help them learn, a process known as pedagogical content knowledge, as defined by [Shulman \(1986, 1987\)](#).

1.2 Objectives of the study

Thus, this study sought to explore the various pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers in some content areas of the reintroduced basic education history curriculum in Awka Education zone. Specifically the study is designed to investigate the: (1) Identify teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school history topics; (2) Suggesting the possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges in some junior secondary school history topics.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: (1) What are the teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school history topics; (2) What are the possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers in some junior secondary school history topics.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study was carried out in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. The Education zone is made up of five local governments which includes Anaocha, Awka North, Awka South, Dunukofia and Njikoka Local Government Areas. The main occupation of the people of is trading and farming, therefore they depend mainly on agriculture and commerce for their daily livelihoodA

2.2 Research Object

The population of this study comprised of fifty three (53) junior secondary school history teachers in the fifty three (53) public secondary schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State (PPSSC Anambra State, 2022). No sampling was done because of the manageable size of the study population. Hence fifty three (53) secondary school history teachers constituted the sample size for the study.

2.3 Data Collection

Instrument used for the study was self structured questionnaire. The instrument was made up of two sections. Section A contains the demographic data of respondents while section B contains the questionnaire based on research questions with the response. Format adopted was four point scale of strongly agree (SA = 4 points), Agree (A=3 points), Disagree (D=2 points) and strongly disagree (SD=1 point). The overall theme of the question was on pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers in some content areas of the reintroduced basic education history curriculum in Awka Education zone. The questionnaire was first validated for clarity, suitability, and relevance to the research questions by two lecturers from Measurement and Evaluation and one from history department all from Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, two copies of the questionnaire along with the purpose of study and research question were given to these experts. They were specifically requested to carry out the content validation of the instrument by evaluating the quality of the items in terms of clarity, appropriateness of language, and adequacy of the items. Their comments and contributions were included before the final copy of the instrument was produced.

2.4 Data Analysis

Then the reliability of the instrument was established using ten (10) teachers from Onitsha Education zone. The scores of data collected were correlated using Cronbach Alpha Estimation technique and it gave rise to 0.91. Fifty three (53) copies of the questionnaire were thereafter administered to the respondents in the selected schools using four trained research assistants. Effort was made to enable respondents understand the questionnaire items and give adequate response to them without assistance or external interference from one another and the questions were correctly filled and collected back. A total of fifty three (53) questionnaires were administered, but only fifty (50) was filled correctly and collected back by the researcher. The data was analyzed using mean statistics and any item with a mean score of 3.00 and above was regarded as agreed, while any item with a mean less than 3.00 was regarded as disagreed.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Research Question 1: What are the teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school I history topics?

Table 1. Mean rating and standard deviation on the teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school history topics

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	ΣX	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1	Teachers have challenges in discussing sources of history	22	16	7	5	50	155	3.10	0.98	Accepted
2	Teachers have challenges in examining the importance of history	19	15	7	9	50	144	2.88	1.11	Accepted
3	Teachers have challenges in teaching historical sites in Nigeria (NOK, ILE IFE, BENIN, IGBO-UKWU)	8	2	19	21	50	97	1.94	1.05	Rejected
4	Teachers have challenges in examining the major centralised states in pre-colonial Nigeria	18	12	9	11	50	137	2.74	1.16	Accepted
5	Teachers have challenges in exploring centralisation of power and authority	21	22	3	4	50	160	3.20	0.87	Accepted
6	Teachers have challenges in examining the composition and organization of non-centralised states in pre-colonial Nigeria	12	6	15	17	50	113	2.26	1.62	Rejected
7	Teachers have challenges in examining inter-relationships between people from different centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria	24	11	9	6	50	153	3.06	1.06	Accepted
8	Teachers have challenges in examining geographical environments (Ghana Empire, Mali Empire and Songhai Empire)	22	16	7	5	50	155	3.10	0.98	Accepted
9	Teachers have challenges in teaching differences that existed between different centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria	24	15	6	5	50	158	3.16	0.98	Accepted
10	Teachers have challenges in teaching areas of interaction among people of centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria	20	18	8	4	50	154	3.08	0.93	Accepted
11	Teachers have challenges in discussing the origin and organisation of Trans-Saharan trade	3	17	4	26	50	97	1.94	1.05	Rejected
12	Teachers have challenges in connecting early European contacts with Nigeria	14	11	12	13	50	126	2.52	1.15	Accepted

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	ΣX	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
13	Teachers have challenges in teaching British colonisation of Nigeria territories	5	12	10	23	50	99	1.98	1.05	Rejected
14	Teachers have challenges in teaching the evolution of the Nigerian state	22	15	4	9	50	150	3.00	1.11	Accepted
15	Teachers have challenges in teaching the amalgamation of Nigeria	7	3	16	24	50	93	1.86	1.04	Rejected

Table 1 above showed teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school I history topics. It is observed that teachers have challenges in exploring centralisation of power and authority (3.20). The respondents disagreed that teachers have challenges in teaching historical sites in Nigeria (NOK, ILE IFE, BENIN, IGBO-UKWU) (1.94). It is obvious that teachers have challenges in discussing sources of history (3.10). Teachers have challenges in examining the importance of history (2.88). Teachers have challenges in teaching differences that existed between different centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria (3.16). However, teachers have challenges in examining geographical environments (Ghana Empire, Mali Empire and Songhai Empire (3.10).

Meanwhile, teachers have challenges in teaching areas of interaction among people of centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria (3.08). Again, it was rejected that teachers have challenges in examining the composition and organization of non-centralised states in pre-colonial Nigeria (2.26). The result in table 1 showed that teachers have challenges in teaching the evolution of the Nigerian state (3.00). However, teachers have challenges in connecting early European contacts with Nigeria (2.52). The respondents disagreed that teachers have challenges in teaching the amalgamation of Nigeria (1.86).

On the whole, items 1, 2, 4 and 5 yield a mean scores of 3.10, 2.88, 2.74 and 3.20 corresponding to standard deviations of 0.98, 1.11, 1.16 and 0.87 were accepted, while item 3 with mean score of 1.94 and standard deviations of 1.05 was rejected respectively. Furthermore, items 7, 8, 9 and 10 with mean scores of 3.06, 3.10, 3.16 and 3.08 corresponding to standard deviations of 1.06, 0.98, 0.98 and 0.93 were accepted respectively, while item 6 with mean score of 2.26 corresponding to standard deviation of 1.62 was rejected. Also, items 12, and 14 yields mean scores of 3.00 and 2.52 corresponding to standard deviation of 1.15 and 1.11 were accepted respectively, while item 11, 13 and 15 was rejected with mean score of 1.94, 1.98 and 1.86 and standard deviation of 1.05, 1.05 and 1.04.

Research Question 2: What are the possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges in some junior secondary school history topics?

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation on possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges in some junior secondary school history topics.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	ΣX	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
16	Adequate provision of teaching and learning resources are ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges	24	6	9	11	50	143	2.86	1.23	Accepted
17	Teachers should be given enough time to prepare, plan, update course content presentations and documents, correcting older material, and adapting subjects to a new cohort of students	15	6	18	11	50	125	2.50	1.14	Accepted
18	Proper professional and in-service training are ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges	21	17	7	5	50	154	3.08	0.97	Accepted
19	Government should provide funds, proper allocation of financial support and budget for the purchase of materials for evaluating students	23	21	2	4	50	163	3.26	0.86	Accepted

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	ΣX	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
20	Implementation of student-centred teaching is a way to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges	22	21	4	3	50	162	3.24	0.84	Accepted

Table 4 above showed possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges in some junior secondary school history topics. However, government should provide funds, proper allocation of financial support and budget for the purchase of materials for evaluating students (3.26). It is obvious that implementation of student-centred teaching is a way to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges (3.24). Again, proper professional and in-service training are ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges (3.08). On the whole, items 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 yield a mean scores of 2.86, 2.50, 3.08, 3.26 and 3.24 corresponding to standard deviations of 1.23, 1.14, 0.97, 0.86 and 0.84 were accepted respectively.

3.2. Discussion

Research question 1 sought to find out the teachers' pedagogical challenges in teaching junior secondary school history topics. Based on the findings, it was observed that teachers have challenges in exploring centralization of power and authority; teachers have challenges in discussing sources of history; teachers have challenges in examining the importance of history; teachers have challenges in examining the major centralised states in pre-colonial Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with [Galway et al. \(2013\)](#), who assessed the impact of centralization on local school district governance. Their data suggest that the significance of the school district apparatus has diminished as provincial governments have enacted an aggressive centralization agenda. The study found that teachers have challenges in discussing sources of history, this finding is collaborated by [Falola & Heaton \(2008\)](#) who observed a complex interweaving of major themes in Nigeria's history. Today Nigeria is marked by the emergence in various epochs of civilisations, kingdoms, states and empires, as well as a caliphate and colonial rule, before the founding of the Nigeria Nation-State in 1914 and its subsequent independence in 1960.

The findings revealed that teachers have challenges in teaching differences that existed between different centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria. Meanwhile, teachers also have challenges in examining geographical environments (Ghana Empire, Mali Empire and Songhai Empire). Regarding teacher challenges, a less recent investigation by [Artvinli, \(2010\)](#) demonstrated that there are numerous challenges in the way of history teachers for providing a better geographical environments. The respondent disagreed that teachers have challenges in examining the composition and organization of non-centralised states in pre-colonial Nigeria but they identified challenges in examining inter-relationships between people from different centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria. This finding is related to the reports by [Egbe & Okoi \(2018\)](#) who observed that inter-group boundary relations between pre-colonial Nigerian peoples was basically moderated by incessant interactions ranging from economic, social, cultural and political. Additionally, teachers have challenges in teaching areas of interaction among people of centres of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria. This problem is prevalent in the views of [Fokin et al. \(2017\)](#) who attributed it to universalism of human civilization, which is based on the diversity and cooperation of cultures. This diversity is considered as a source for development, providing it with mutual enrichment.

Based on the findings, it was observed that teachers have challenges in teaching the evolution of the Nigerian state; teachers have challenges in connecting early European contacts with Nigeria. To explain this phenomenon, a study [Brownell \(2017\)](#) observed that teachers do not teach evolution because it is complicated; the conflict between acceptance and disapproval of evolution has led to obstacles in its teaching and learning. Other difficulties includes both teachers' and students' alternative perceptions and teachers' gaps in evolution knowledge, add to the difficulties in teaching and learning evolution. In addition, teachers have challenges in connecting early European contacts with Nigeria. An earlier study by [Northrup \(2011\)](#) has attributed this difficulty to the fact that the first two centuries of contacts in the African Atlantic under three interconnected are somewhat overlapping headings.

Research question 2 dealt with possible ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges in some junior secondary school history topics. The findings revealed that government should provide funds, proper allocation of financial support and budget for the purchase of materials for evaluating students. This view has previously been promulgated by [Ayeni \(2013\)](#) who upheld that all forms of educational planning involve some expenditure analysis and that the trends of the entire education system can be projected through funding. Therefore, funding in education can be attributed to the amount of money being allotted to the educational sector by the government towards the sustainability and maintenance of the sector in attaining and achieving its goals and objectives ([Hassan et al., 2022](#)).

It was established that teachers should be given enough time to prepare, plan, update course content presentations and documents, correcting older material, and adapting subjects to a new cohort of students. In line with this finding, Fujii (2019) provided a visible the process of lesson planning and the role and function of the lesson plan including focus on task design and the flow of the research lesson. Also, the respondents advocated for adequate provision of teaching and learning resources as ways to overcome teachers' pedagogical challenges.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The finding of this study is to examine the pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers. The results of this study will be useful and helpful especially to the history teachers, students, policy makers and researchers, bearing in mind that this study focuses on the pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers in some content areas of the reintroduced basic education history curriculum. The findings will also highlight the need for government and schools administrators to provide funds for purchase of instructional materials which may enhance the promotion of effective implementation of history curriculum in schools.

The results of the study will be useful to teachers because it will help to enlighten them on the importance of effective instructional delivery in implementation of history curriculum. In essence, overcoming instructional difficulties will save their preparation time and efforts, thus clarifies complex learning concepts. It will also help the teachers to realize the problems students have in learning history and how to solve the problems. The finding of the study will broaden students' knowledge; steer up the interest in learning ecological concepts, genetics, evolution and conservation of natural resources. It will be of benefit to the students and teachers as the findings will help facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skill acquisition thereby enhancing great achievement by student in history.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- (1) Teachers should be encouraged to attend various courses, seminars, symposiums and meetings for personal and professional development
- (2) School administrators should take measures to increase the interest and motivation of their students for teachers to use student-centred active learning methods and techniques.
- (3) The schools administrators should cultivate the idea of planning ahead before the financial resource allocation from government at the centre are released.
- (4) The administrators should look inward for other sources of funding their various schools
- (5) The school administrators should build a better relationship between their schools and the host communities of the schools.
- (6) Government should make funds available for the provision of the relevant instructional materials and other teaching equipments.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has successfully examined the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers in certain content areas of the reintroduced basic education history curriculum in the Awka Education Zone. The findings indicate that teachers struggle with explaining the centralization of power and authority, a key concept in the curriculum. Additionally, the study revealed that teachers face difficulties teaching the differences between various centers of civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria. These challenges may stem from limited resources, inadequate teaching materials, or a lack of in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Another major challenge identified is the examination of geographical environments, particularly those of the Ghana Empire, Mali Empire, and Songhai Empire. Teaching historical geography often requires maps, illustrations, and other visual aids, which may not always be available or effectively utilized by teachers.

Furthermore, teachers encounter difficulties explaining the Nigerian state's evolution, including its historical development from past to present. They also struggle to connect early European interactions with Nigeria, crucial for understanding colonial history and its impact on Nigerian society. Based on these findings, to overcome these pedagogical challenges, the government should provide adequate funding and proper budget allocation to support the procurement of teaching materials and evaluation tools for students. Additionally, professional development programs and in-service training for teachers are essential to enhance their ability to deliver history lessons effectively. Implementing policies that support a more comprehensive approach to history education will help

address the difficulties teachers face, improve students' understanding, and strengthen the overall effectiveness of the reintroduced history curriculum in junior secondary schools within the Awka Education Zone.

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Author Contribution Statement

I, as the author of the study entitled "Pedagogical Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Some Content Areas of the Reintroduced History Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Awka Education Zone," hereby declare that this work is the result of my research and makes a significant academic contribution to the field of education, particularly in the study of pedagogical challenges in teaching history in junior secondary schools.

Conflict Of Interest Statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethical Approval Statement

The author declares that this study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles and has received ethical approval from the author's institution, including respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, as outlined in the applicable research ethics guidelines.

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