

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF REINTRODUCTION OF HISTORY AS A MAJOR SUBJECT IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDUCATION DISTRICT II, LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the challenges and prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State. Three research questions guided this study. The study employed survey research design. The sample size for this study was 108 History teachers in the 54 Junior Secondary Schools in the chosen education district. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The study found among others that the challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools include inadequate African history textbooks, lack of qualified History teachers, inadequate instructional materials, and limited instructional time; and the prospects of reintroduction of History include nurturing critical thinking skills, fostering cultural appreciation and understanding, empowering students for informed citizenship, enriching students' understanding of societal development, and preserving cultural heritage and identity. The study concluded that despite the challenges facing reintroduction of History, it is capable of fostering critical thinking skills, patriotism and national unity among the youths. The paper recommended among others that Lagos State Ministry of Education should launch awareness campaigns targeted at parents, students and the entire community to emphasise the importance and relevance of History as a subject in JSS; and government should allocate sufficient resources for procurement of instructional materials to support the teaching and learning of History.

Keywords: Challenges, History, Junior Secondary Schools, Prospects, Lagos State.

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual, social, and cultural development of individuals and societies. One integral aspect of education is the study of history, which provides insights into the past, cultivates critical thinking, and fosters a sense of identity and understanding of human progress. History can be viewed from three perspectives namely: it connotes the entire human past as it actually happened, it connotes man's attempt to describe and interpret the significant things about past and lastly, it connotes an academic discipline (Osokoya, 2016).

The origin of history can be traced back to ancient civilisations such as the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Greeks. These cultures kept records of important events, rulers, and achievements on various media, including clay tablets and papyrus scrolls (Adick, 2017). History serves as bedrock on which a society stands to build its future upon. Africa cannot do

without history as it is part and parcel of African culture. History is beyond story-telling and collection of past activities. It is about facts based on the unbiased judgment of an historian on the activities of the past in relation to the present and its effects and consequences on the future (Osokoya, 2016). It is based on the available evidence with empirical analysis and interpretation of data collected in the field which will help to preserve the past events that is valuable to the present members of the society to know how to avoid past mistakes, build on past achievements and serve as a pointer for the future.

In recent years, the educational landscape has undergone transformative changes driven by technological advancements, shifting pedagogical approaches, and evolving societal priorities. These changes have led to a diminished emphasis on subjects like History, which can be perceived as less utilitarian in a rapidly changing world. In Lagos State, a hub of cultural diversity and historical significance, the relegation of History as a subject to a lesser status in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) is of great concern. The repercussions of this shift extend beyond the classroom, potentially leading to a generation that lacks a deep understanding of their cultural heritage, social contexts, and the lessons history imparts (Freeman, 2018). Curriculum changes occur due to a variety of reasons, which might include educational reforms with changes in educational philosophies or goals. This could lead to shifts in curriculum content. If policymakers prioritise other subjects or skills over History, it could result in the removal or reduced emphasis on History in the curriculum. In recent time, educational systems have been placing greater emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in response to perceived economic and technological needs and this might result in reduced attention to humanities subjects like History. This implies that the reasons behind the decline in History as a major subject include changes in government policies.

History as an academic discipline is vital to understanding human society, cultural identity, and national development. Therefore, the re-introduction of history as a major subject in JSS in Lagos State holds profound significance within the context of education and cultural preservation. Historically, history has been a cornerstone of education, offering students insights into the past, fostering critical thinking, and shaping their understanding of societal development. It also plays a key role in shaping learners' awareness of past events, political evolution, and socio-economic transformation.

The decision to re-introduce history as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) is not without its challenges. Challenges such as poor infrastructure, lack of training, and inadequate supervision have limited the success of History reintroduction (Adamu, 2021). Due to large number of students in most of the JSS, teachers often face work overload and insufficient time allocation for effective delivery of History instructions. The teaching and learning of History in schools have not been encouraging due to factors such as lack of qualified teachers, inadequate incentives for available teachers, and inadequate instructional materials. Supporting this claim, Okonkwo (2021) asserted that many Lagos schools lack adequate materials due to poor funding and neglect of the subject (History). Similarly, Ibrahim and Adeoye (2022) argued that in Lagos State, inadequate government funding and limited awareness campaigns have compounded the problem associated with teaching and learning of History. These challenges posed a greater threat to the prospects of History as an academic discipline.

Despite the challenges facing reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS, History education presents strong prospects for fostering patriotism, national unity, and critical thinking skills. The globalisation of information and the digital age offer new opportunities for dynamic and interactive History education. Leveraging multimedia, primary sources, and interactive platforms, history can be made relevant and captivating for students, fostering a deeper understanding of their own culture and the interconnectedness of the world. This may be why scholars like Olayinka (2023) emphasised that ICT integration, regular training workshops, and adequate resource provision can revitalise History as a subject. In addition, curriculum reform that incorporates local historical narratives can improve students' engagement. This is an indication that the prospects of re-introducing History as a major subject at the JSS level are promising.

The reintroduction of History as a prominent subject in the basic education curriculum by the Federal Government in 2019 marked a significant step toward restoring national consciousness and moral values among youths (Okonkwo, 2021; Federal Ministry of Education, 2019). Despite this policy reform, there remain notable challenges regarding its effective implementation in Lagos State schools (Adeoye & Adebajo, 2022). It is against this background that this paper investigated the challenges and prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State.

Statement of the Problem

The reintroduction of History into the Nigerian basic education curriculum is a welcome development, but its implementation faces numerous obstacles. Many schools in Lagos State seem to lack trained History teachers, adequate teaching aids, and up-to-date textbooks. Teachers who currently handle the subject are often graduates of related fields such as Social Studies or Political Science rather than History education. In addition, students' low interest and the absence of adequate professional development for teachers have raised concerns about the sustainability of the reintroduced subject (Abubakar & Lawal, 2020). Despite these challenges, the reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS, has tendency to enhance students' critical thinking skills and foster patriotism. However, the available literature shows that little or no empirical study exists on the challenges and prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State. This is the gap filled by this paper. Hence, this study investigated the challenges and prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this paper was to investigate the challenges and prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State. Specifically, this study sought to:

- i. identify the major factors that led to the decline of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Education District II, Lagos State;
- ii. examine the challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in JSS in Education District II, Lagos State; and
- iii. explore the prospects of re-introduction of history as a major subject in JSS in Education District II, Lagos State.

Research Questions

These questions guided this study:

1. What are the major factors that led to the decline of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Education District II, Lagos State?
2. What are the challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in JSS in Education District II, Lagos State?
3. What are the prospects of re-introduction of history as a major subject in JSS in Education District II, Lagos State?

Methods

This study was conducted in Education District II, Lagos State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The population for the study was one hundred and eight (108) History teachers in the fifty-four (54) Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State. The consensus sampling technique was used for the study as the whole 108 History teachers were sampled in the study. This was due to few numbers of History teachers in the sampled Education District. Questionnaire was used for collection of data from the respondents. The questionnaire contained fifteen (15) items structured on a 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was subjected to face, content and construct validity. Also, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method; and reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

Out of the one hundred and eight (108) copies of the questionnaire administered, only one hundred and two (102) copies were completed and returned by the sampled History teachers. This represents 94.4% rate of returns. Hence, 102 was used for data analysis in this section.

Research Question 1: What are the major factors that led to the decline of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State?

Table 1: Factors that led to the decline of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1	Increased emphasis on STEM subjects has led to a decreased priority for History in JSS curricula.	42 41.2%	58 56.9%	2 1.9%	0 0%	102 100%	3.39	0.53	Agreed
2	The pressure to perform well on standardised examinations has led schools to prioritise subjects perceived as more exam-oriented than History.	30 29.4%	42 41.2%	25 24.5%	5 4.9%	102 100%	2.95	0.86	Agreed

3	Evolving educational frameworks marginalise History, leading to reduced class time and resources allocated to the subject.	48 47.1%	54 52.9%	0 0%	0 0%	102 100%	3.47	0.50	Agreed	88 100%
4	Some students view history as less directly applicable to their future careers.	25 24.0%	58 56.9%	14 13.7%	5 4.9%	102 100%	3.01	0.76	Agreed	
5	A shortage of qualified History teachers contributes to its decline as a major subject.	50 49.0%	52 51.0%	0 0%	0 0%	102 100%	3.49	0.50	Agreed	
Grand mean							3.26	0.63	Agreed	

Keys: SA- Strongly Agreed ($x \leq 4$), A- Agreed($x \leq 3$), D- Disagreed ($x \leq 2$), SD- Strongly Disagreed ($x \leq 1$)

In Table 1, analysis of the mean of each of the items shows that most of the respondents agreed with all the five items. Also, the grand mean of 3.26 with a standard deviation of 0.63 indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items 1 to 5. Based on these results, the main factors that led to the decline of History as a major subject in junior secondary schools included increased emphasis on STEM subjects, the pressure to perform well on standardised examinations, evolving educational frameworks which led to reduced class time and resources allocated to History, perception of students of history as less directly applicable to their future careers, and shortage of qualified History teachers.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State?

Table 2: Challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Tot al	Mea n	Std. Deviat ion	Remark s
6	Inadequate African history textbooks affects reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior secondary schools (JSS).	30 29.4%	72 70.6%	0 0%	0 0%	102 100%	3.29	0.46	Agreed
7	Lack of qualified teachers affects reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS.	52 51.0%	50 49.0%	0 0%	0 0%	102 100%	3.51	0.50	Strongl y Agreed

8	The reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS is affected by inadequate instructional materials.	48 47.1 %	54 52.9 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.47	0.50	Agreed	
9	Abstract nature of the subject-matter of History affects its reintroduction as a major subject in JSS.	25 24.5 %	67 65.7 %	10 9.8 %	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.14	0.57	Agreed	
10	The reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS is hindered by limited instructional time.	37 36.3 %	65 63.7 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.36	0.48	Agreed	
Grand mean							3.35	0.50	Agreed	88 100%

Keys: SA- Strongly Agreed ($x \leq 4$), A- Agreed($x \leq 3$), D- Disagreed ($x \leq 2$), SD- Strongly Disagreed ($x \leq 1$)

In Table 2, analysis of the mean of each of the items shows that most of the respondents agreed with all the five items. Also, the grand mean of 3.35 with a standard deviation of 0.50 indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items 6 to 10. Based on these results, the challenges facing reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools include inadequate African History textbooks, lack of qualified History teachers, inadequate instructional materials, abstract nature of the subject-matter of History and limited instructional time.

Research Question 3: What are the prospects of re-introduction of history as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State?

Table 3: Prospects of re-introduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
11	Reinstating history as a major subject nurtures critical thinking skills in students.	58 56.9 %	44 43.1 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.57	0.50	Strongly Agreed
12	Learning about historical events will foster cultural appreciation and understanding among the students.	46 45.1 %	56 54.9 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.45	0.50	Agreed
13	Exploring historical narratives empowers students for informed citizenship.	48 47.1 %	54 52.9 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.47	0.50	Agreed
14	Reinstating history enriches students' understanding of societal developments.	42 41.2 %	52 51.0 %	5 4.9 %	3 2.9 %	102 100 %	3.30	0.70	Agreed
15	Cultural heritage and identity can be preserved	44 43.1 %	58 56.9 %	0 0% 	0 0% 	102 100 %	3.43	0.50	Agreed

through reintroduction of
History.

Grand mean	3.44	0.54	Agreed	88 100 %
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Keys: SA-Strongly Agreed ($x \leq 4$), A-Agreed ($x \leq 3$), D-Disagreed ($x \leq 2$), SD-Strongly Disagreed ($x \leq 1$)

Table 3 presents the analysis of the responses of respondents regarding the prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools. In Table 3, analysis of the mean of each of the items shows that most of the respondents agreed with all the five items. Also, the grand mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.54 indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items 11 to 15. Based on these results, reinstating history as a major subject in junior secondary schools will assist in nurturing critical thinking skills, fostering cultural appreciation and understanding, empowering students for informed citizenship, enriching students' understanding of societal developments, and preserving cultural heritage and identity.

Discussion of Findings

This paper found that the factors that led to the decline of History as a subject in JSS included increased emphasis on STEM subjects, the pressure to perform well on standardised examinations, evolving educational frameworks which led to reduced class time and resources allocated to History the subject, perception of students of History as less directly applicable to their future careers, and shortage of qualified History teachers. This finding is in line with that of Berkowitz (2018) who reported that the emphasis on STEM subjects has led to the marginalisation of the humanities of which history is one. This supported the opinion of the respondents that STEM education has led to a reallocation of resources and instructional time often to the detriment of subjects like History. Similarly, Adebayo (2021) asserted that effective History instruction requires teachers with strong academic backgrounds in History education; but many schools face a shortage of such professionals. Also, Ibrahim and Adeoye (2022) reported that inadequate government funding and limited awareness campaigns have compounded the problem of declining of History education in JSS. This may be why most students perceived History not to be that relevant to their future careers.

This study revealed that the challenges facing re-introduction of History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools in Education District II, Lagos State include inadequate African History textbooks, lack of qualified History teachers, inadequate instructional materials, abstract nature of the subject-matter of History and limited instructional time. Supporting the finding of this study, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (2020) noted that only a small percentage of teachers specialised in History. This corroborates the problem of inadequate qualified History teachers found in this present study. Also, Okonkwo (2021) reported that many Lagos schools lack adequate materials due to poor funding and neglect of the subject. Similarly, Adeoye and Adebajo (2022) reported that notable challenges regarding effective implementation of History curriculum in Lagos State schools include inadequate instructional materials, shortage of qualified teachers, poor funding, and low students' interest.

This paper revealed that reintroduction of History in JSS will help in nurturing critical thinking skills, fostering cultural appreciation and understanding; empowering students for informed citizenship; enriching students' understanding of societal developments, and preserving cultural heritage and identity. Supporting this finding, Sheffield (2019) claimed that history education equips students with critical literacy skills enabling them to assess the credibility and bias of historical sources. Likewise, Okonkwo (2021) asserted that reintroduction of History in Junior Secondary Schools is a significant step toward restoring national consciousness and moral values among youths. This means that reinstating History as a major subject in Junior Secondary Schools will reinstate national consciousness among the youths and enhance acquisition of moral values among the students. Equally, Olayinka (2023) argued that the prospects of reintroduction of History include fostering critical thinking skills and patriotism.

Conclusion

The benefits of re-introducing History as a major subject far outweigh the challenges. The reintroduction of History at a the JSS level, represents a vital effort to restore Nigeria's moral and cultural heritage. However, challenges such as inadequate teachers, poor funding, and insufficient resources hinder its success. Despite these challenges, the prospects of reintroduction of History include fostering critical thinking skills, patriotism and national unity. Consequently, addressing these challenges is crucial for achieving the goals of History education in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. Lagos State Ministry of Education should launch awareness campaigns targeted at parents, students and the entire community in order to emphasise the importance and relevance of History as a subject in JSS.
2. The government should allocate sufficient resources for procurement of textbooks, visual and audio-visual aids and other instructional materials to support the teaching and learning of History. Also, the government should provide a regular and targeted professional development opportunities such as trainings, seminars, and symposiums for History teachers and educators. These will help to solve the challenges associated with the reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS.
3. Lagos State Ministry of Education should collaborate with research councils like the NERDC for continued research and data collection to monitor the impact of re-introducing History as a major subject in order to improve the history education programme. This will help in achieving and improving the prospects of reintroduction of History as a major subject in JSS.

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