


Research

Exploring the significant problems confronting secondary schools history education: a baseline study

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Abstract

The purpose of this baseline study is to determine the significant problems confronting history education in secondary school. The researchers employed qualitative research methods and case study design. The techniques that were employed to acquire credible data were document analysis, interviews, and classroom observation. Six experienced history education teachers and eight top-ten students from Sebeta town public secondary school were interviewed, and academic achievement statistics of 174 students in history education were analyzed. In addition eight lesson observations were carried out to validate the information gleaned from the interviews and document analysis. The study's findings show that the primary challenges influencing history education in Sebeta town public secondary schools were teaching strategy, a lack of awareness about implementing participatory teaching methods, a lack of comprehensiveness of the contents of history education teaching materials, and the issue of the bulkiness and scope of history education texts being covered on time. The findings also indicate the significance of training history education teachers to use participatory teaching tactics, as well as the need for curriculum experts to better coordinate the range of history education content and teaching strategies. The findings of this study will help teachers, practitioners, scholars, policymakers, and educational professionals find solutions to significant problems in secondary school history education, as well as develop effective techniques for teaching history education in secondary schools that involve twenty-first century skills and abilities.

Keywords Academic achievement · Curriculum · Participatory teaching · Teaching strategies · Traditional teaching

1 Introduction

History education as an academic discipline has a long history in the world. In the nineteenth century a German historian Leopold von Ranke an indispensable contribution to modernizing history writing [1, p. 2, 2, p. 171]. Ranke (1795–1886) not only established history as a major discipline, but he also established the idea that all accurate history must be based on primary sources and rigorous methodology [1, p.13, 3]. As a result, he is regarded as the father of modern historiography [1, p. 2]. Since the nineteenth century, history education has developed as an independent discipline across the world.

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In terms of teaching strategies, evidence shows that teaching approaches play an important role in any subject of study in enhancing students' academic achievements [4, p. 601, 5]. Many research findings demonstrate that the approach employed to develop any operation significantly determines the end product [6, p. 7]. Several factors influence students' academic achievement; evidence suggests that teachers are the most essential ones in terms of students' education and achievements [7, pp. 2633–34]. According to the research findings conducted on student learning, the way teachers engage their pupils is crucial in the teaching and learning process [8, p. 39]. The approaches used by the teacher should be matched to the demands of the students [6, p.7]. Students' motivation and achievement are mostly dependent on the teachers' activities [9, p. 15]. Several researches have indicated that among the subjects offered in schools, students do not have much interest in history education [10, p. 45]. According to a study conducted on secondary schools, history education has been taught through lectures rather than participatory and student-centred strategies [11, p. 1]. According to Kiiro [11, pp. 1–2], effective implementation of participatory teaching and learning methodologies can increase students' interest in history education. Issar [10, p. 49] also emphasized the significance of learning history education, stating that learning history education should help students understand the complexities of human lives, the diversity and relationships between different groups, the changes and continuities and connect the past, present, and future events.

Scholars confirm that constructive learning approaches allow students to participate actively in the lessons [12, p. 35]. Since 1980, the theory of social constructivism has been advocated as an effective way of learning and teaching [12, pp. 35–36]. It is a theory developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), which holds that individuals are active participants in the creation of their knowledge [13, p.783]. Vygotsky's social constructivism focuses on pedagogies that encourage active learning, effective and meaningful learning, constructive learning, and learning by doing [13, p.783]. Current research in the field of history education supports the notion that participatory approaches to teaching the subject at the secondary school level are the preferred method for developing the skills required to handle the world's future historiographical needs [14, p. 81]. In several works of literature, interactive teaching approaches are vital in increasing student academic achievement. The purpose of this baseline study is to investigate the significant problems confronting history education in Sebeta government secondary schools.

2 Statement of the problem

History education is frequently a source of public debate, a source of unrest, and a site of struggle over what and how should be taught in schools in Ethiopia [15, p. 2]. National history is taught as a compulsory subject in different countries. Several countries believe that knowing the country's history is a requirement for all citizens [16, pp. 1–2]. In the case of history education teaching in Ethiopia, for the first time, a history syllabus was included in the education curriculum after 1943 [17, p.87]. However, no specific research on significant problems confronting history education in Ethiopian secondary schools has been conducted. Researchers who have studied the problem of education in Ethiopia have directly and indirectly addressed the issue of history education [18, pp.18–19].

According to research conducted by Resource and Guide [19, p. 8], teaching is important by incorporating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving, language proficiency, communication and collaborative skills, cognitive skills, adaptability skills and the ability to make decisions. Furthermore, student-centred teaching method fosters students' comprehension, deep learning, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication [20, p. 4]. Research conducted on history education has discovered a link between teaching approaches and students' attitudes towards history education [21, p. 3]. A scant study has been conducted on significant problems confronting history education in Ethiopian secondary schools and on approaches more appropriate for teaching history.

This motivated the researchers to conduct research on major problems confronting history education in Ethiopian secondary schools in Sebeta town. To fill this gap, the researchers used a variety of tools to analyze significant problems confront history education in Ethiopian secondary schools in general, and Sebeta town public Secondary School in particular.

Thus, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most significant problems facing history education at Sebeta town public secondary school?
2. What are the most common teaching strategies employed at Sebeta town government secondary school?
3. How is the student's academic achievement in history at Sebeta public secondary school?

3 Objectives of the study

1. To find out the most significant problems facing history education at Sebeta Town Government Secondary School.
2. To identify the most common teaching strategies employed at Sebeta town government secondary school.
3. To determine a student's academic achievement in history at Sebeta government secondary school.

4 Literature review

Any research project needs theory to provide direction and help on how things are implemented. Theoretical foundation aids in deciphering the way phenomena happen and the basis of specific actions [22, p. 75]. This research is founded on Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theory, which supports historical thinking. According to a social learning theory developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), individuals are active participants in the development of their knowledge [23, p. 395]. This social constructivism approach places a strong emphasis on pairs and small groups [24, pp.13–15]. According to this theory, students learn primarily through interactions with their classmates, instructors, and parents, whereas teachers are expected to facilitate dialogue in the classroom [25, p. 243]. According to Richard [26, p. 380], good teaching and learning are strongly reliant on interpersonal interaction and conversation, with the primary focus on the student's understanding of the topic.

Scholarly works reveal that there is very little study on the significant problems confronting history education. The existing scholarly works on teaching approach and students' learning, on the other hand, demonstrate that there are strong relationships between the effects of teaching strategies and students' achievement. Sugano and Mamolo [27, p. 827] conducted a study on the "Effects of Teaching Methodologies on Students' Attitude and Motivation," found that teaching methods had an enormous positive impact (Cohen's $d = 0.379$) on student attitude. The study also found that cooperative learning had a greater power than traditional teaching methods in improving students' positive attitudes, motivation and interest.

History teaching should not only be mastery of the basic content (substantive knowledge) but also enhance the acquisition of subject skills and competencies that will make students learn on their own and manage their own lives and carry it through the adversities of life in society [26, 28]. Luka [14, p. VII] discovered in his study, "The Impact of Teaching Methods on Attitudes of Secondary School Students Towards Learning of History in Malawi," that students in secondary schools have negative attitudes towards learning history. One of the reasons he highlighted is that student-centred techniques of teaching are not regularly used in the subject of history education (*Ibid*, [29]).

Moreover, Mazibuko [30, p. 142] revealed that teaching methods in history education greatly contributed to students' negative perceptions of the subject. He discovered that traditional methods of teaching history utilized by teachers contributed to students decreasing interest in the subject (*Ibid*). Besides, Zhu and Kaiser [31, p. 191] discovered that teaching methods influence students' motivation, attitudes towards school, willingness to do homework, and confidence in their learning.

In his study on effective teaching in history, Boadu [8, p. 39] discovered that effective teaching of history should bring the subject closer to students' lives, hearts, and minds. He argued that effective teaching cannot emerge from traditional history teaching, because the teacher lectures on the subject intensely, and students are forced to take and memorize notes.

Silver and Perini [32, p. 16] argued that teachers who use a variety of teaching techniques have well-behaved and motivated students, resulting in high student academic achievement.

Adding to this, according to [33, p. 74], the quality of teaching strategies influences student learning and contributes to a 15 to 20 times improvement in student achievement. These researches highlighted that effective teaching strategies played a crucial influence on student motivation, developing students' positive attitudes, and improving students' academic achievement more than traditional teacher-centred approaches. There has been no research undertaken in Ethiopian secondary schools to determine which methodologies could be better appropriate for teaching history. Using the designed study instruments, the researchers examine and determine the significant problems confronting history education in Sebeta government secondary schools.

5 Research methodology

The study was conducted using the constructivist paradigm view with the qualitative research approach. In this study, the researchers utilized a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach allows the researchers to conduct an in-depth investigation of the problem under study [34, pp. 177–179, 35, p. 12]. The qualitative research approach has different specific designs. These are Phenomenology, Ethnography, Narrative inquiry, Case study, Grounded theory and Historical research [36, p. 49]. In this study, the qualitative case study design was used. Case studies are ways to explain, describe, or explore phenomena. According to Hatch [37, p. 37], case studies are the type of qualitative work that investigates a contextualized contemporary phenomenon within specific boundaries. This study was carried out using document analysis, interviews, and classroom observation techniques.

The researchers received the accreditation letter from their institution and submitted it to the relevant authorities to confirm the legality of the research. The letter was then submitted to the Sebeta town's education office and Sebeta secondary schools to acquire authorization to collect primary data from sampled respondents. The data collection process was started after getting all relevant permits from the authorities. Before interviews with respondents, the researchers described the goal of the study to the participants to acquire their permission. The researchers told participants that the study's primary aim was to collect data for the research titled "The significant problems confronting history education in history education in Sebeta town public secondary schools, Ethiopia." After extensive verbal discussions with the respondents, interviews were conducted with those who expressed full interest in participating in the study.

5.1 Sampling procedure

This study employed a purposive sampling technique. In the first stage, the study site was chosen purposively, which is Sebeta town. In the following step, this baseline study was confined to two out of four government secondary schools in Sebeta town with similar standards, a higher number of students and staff than the others. The schools that were purposely selected for the study are those that have been in existence for a long time, have more experienced staff than others, and are expected to provide firsthand information. Purposive sampling was used to select knowledgeable research participants [38, pp. 512–513]. Because it allows the researcher to select the research participants who were believed informed sources of information, thoughtful, informative, articulate, and experienced with the problem under the study [35, p.142, 39, pp. 100–114]. The researchers selected individuals who have a good source of information about the issue under study (history education teachers and students [39, p. 100]. In the selected two secondary schools, there are six history education teachers, five males and one female. These teachers were purposefully included in the study. The researchers believed that the experienced teachers who were chosen were useful as a primary source of data because they were familiar with the subject's contents, as well as its problems. Eight top-ten grade ten students from the two schools also took part in the study directly. The researchers believed the top-ten students were able to explain the area of study more accurately than the others. Grade ten students were purposefully chosen for the study. The following are the grounds for choosing grade ten students: First history education in Ethiopia begins in grade nine. Students began studying history education grade nine onwards. Because it is assumed that grade ten students know more about history education contents than grade nine students. Second, it is assumed that grade ten comprises all types of students (higher achievers, moderate, and slow learners), as well as grade 10 students who will choose a major (social sciences and natural sciences) in their future grade eleven. As a result, the researchers opted to gather the finest information from grade ten students to establish their perspectives toward history.

Table 1 This table illustrates the characteristics of teacher respondents who participated in the study

Participants code	Participi pant school code	Gender		Age				Qualification				Working experience				
		M	F	21–30	31–40	41–50	> 51	Diploma	1st Degree	MA/MSc/Med	1 to 5 years	6–10 years	11–15 years	16–20 years	Above 20 years	
SSST1	SSS		*		*				*					*		
SSST2	SSS	*			*				*							*
SSST3	SSS	*			*					*						*
SSST4	SSS	*			*				*			*				
BSSST1	BSS	*			*				*					*		
BSSST2	BSS	*			*				*					*		

6 Results and discussions

6.1 What are the significant problems facing history education in Sebeta Town Government Secondary School?

6.1.1 Interviews analysis

For explanation, the abbreviation SSST stands for “Sebeta Secondary School Teacher”, similarly, BSSST stands for “Burka Sebeta Secondary School Teacher” and the numbers denote the order. As shown in Table 1, six history education teachers were interviewed for this study. Of the six teachers interviewed, five had more than 15 years of teaching experience. Five of these teachers hold a bachelor’s degree and one has an MA in history. Five of the teachers interviewed were male and one was female. During the interviews, the teachers revealed to the researchers that three of the six teachers had an MA in another academic discipline (Table 2).

For clarification, the abbreviation SSSS stands for, “Sebeta Secondary School Student”, BSSS, “Burka Sebeta Secondary School Student” and the numbers represent the order. Eight students’ four males and four females from both schools were chosen for the interview of this study.

An interview is one of the data collection instruments that were used to explore the significant problems confronting history education in government secondary schools. An interview allows the researchers to gather information that is directly related to the research objectives [40, p. 411]. It is typically conducted one-on-one with informants who have firsthand experience with the research topic [25, p. 144]. An interview was conducted with six experienced history education teachers, and eight secondary school students to gather adequate data about the topic under investigation.

The researchers began their interview with teachers by asking, “What are the significant problems facing history education in Sebeta town government secondary school?” The researchers interviewed teachers concerning the organization of the history education curriculum. Teacher SSST1’s response to this question is as follows: “I have been teaching history education for 18 years but I have never seen or read the curriculum of history education until today.” Furthermore, BSSST1 shared the same point of view saying: “So far, I have not read any history education syllabus or seen what it contains except students’ textbook. There is no available history education syllabus in secondary school for teachers.” Teacher SSST2 also made a similar note: “We do not have a history syllabus, and the teaching materials that we use to teach students are only students’ textbooks.”

All of the teachers interviewed stated that they did not have a history curriculum and had never utilized it. The researchers found that teachers do not see contents, structures, recommended teaching aids, and methodologies in the history education syllabus and teachers’ guide.

Teachers explained that the history education textbook is divided into three parts: world history, African history, and Ethiopian history. According to the teachers interviewed, the history of the Ethiopian peoples are not written inclusively in students’ textbooks, and Ethiopian history education does not adequately address the political, social, and economic history of the Ethiopian people (BSSST1, BSSST2, SSST1, SSSS2, SSST3). However, research work suggests that in multi-ethnic countries, all students should be able to learn about themselves and their culture from the books they learn from Hodkinson et al. [41, p. 3] stated that “all learners must be able to find themselves and their world represented in the books from which they learn.”

Table 2 This table illustrates the characteristics of the students who participated in this study

Participants Code	Participant school code	Gender		Age		Grade
		M	F	15–20	21–25	
SSSS1	SSS		*	*		10
SSSS2	SSS		*	*		10
SSSS3	SSS	*		*		10
SSSS4	SSS	*		*		10
SSSS5	BSS	*		*		10
BSSS1	BSS	*		*		10
BSSS2	BSS		*	*		10
BSSS3	BSS		*	*		10

In addition, teachers were asked as history education teaching materials in the same way as other Subjects. To this question, all of the teachers interviewed consistently said no. Teachers claim that “since our country’s political changes, textbooks for all disciplines have been updated three to four times, but history education has not been updated in the same way” (BSSST1, BSSST2, SSST1, SSSS2, SSST3, SSSST4). They demonstrated this to the researchers by referring to the textbook they were using. In this instance, a history grade 10 students’ textbook was published in 2002 GC/1994, reprinted in 2005/1997 and renewed in 2023 after 18 years. According to the teachers interviewed, there has been no detailed reform of history education in terms of adding or removing content, implementing new teaching strategies, or keeping up with the 21st-century world. One interviewed teacher said, “I have been teaching history for 18 years and have not observed any changes in history education contents since I started teaching history education.” (SSST1).

The researchers continued their interview with teachers by asking, is the content of the history education curriculum appropriate for the student’s abilities? This question is to gather evidence to understand that the content of the history curriculum is appropriate for the student’s abilities. Teachers and students were asked this question. When asked about the content of history education in grade ten, teachers made two comments:

1. Students who did not study history as a subject in elementary school (1st grade to grade eight) may find it more difficult when they begin studying history education as a subject in grade nine (SSST1 and SSST2).
2. They have been studying in their mother tongue in primary school (grades 1 to 8) and studying in English from grade 9 onwards will make it difficult for students to understand the contents (SSST1 and SSST2). The students interviewed strongly agree with the latter. According to the students, “the content of history is very difficult to understand, history is not like other subjects, it requires proper knowledge of English” (SSSS1, SSSS2, BSSSS1 and BSSS2).

Follow-up questions were also raised for teachers, to determine the teaching methods included in the history education curriculum. However, teachers were unable to respond to this question because they were not implementing the teaching practices outlined in the history education curriculum due to a lack of a history syllabus. A well-designed teaching strategy has a crucial role in improving students’ academic achievement [42, p. 51–64]. Therefore, teachers teach history using their own teaching and learning methods. When asked what teaching method they used, the teachers stated that they used the lecture teaching method (SSSS1, SSSS2, BSSSS1 and BSSS2). The reason they use lecture methods more than other teaching and learning methods is that the content of history lessons is extensive and the time allocated for history lessons is 80 min per week (SSSS1, SSSS2, BSSSS1 and BSSS2).

6.1.2 Classroom observation analysis

The researchers used lesson observations to obtain firsthand and ‘real’ facts and data about the significant problems confronting history education in Sebeta government secondary schools. This is because many people do not want to discuss all topics during an interview [43, p. 117]. The researchers employed the lesson observation checklist, which included activities such as the teacher’s teaching strategies, teacher and student activities throughout the session, teacher-student interaction during the lesson, student seating arrangements, and teaching aids used. Using this checklist, the researchers observed the teacher’s teaching practice during the lesson. The researchers observed four different classrooms. The primary aim of this observation was to strengthen the data obtained from teachers and students during an interview. The teachers in all of the classrooms first ask students what they learned in their last class. Aside from that, they only used to give notes and lectures to the students in every class.

Another point that the researchers visited in the classroom was the teachers’ and students’ activities during the lesson. The teachers gave notes, and lectures and many students were busy writing notes. When the teachers lecture the content some students do not pay attention and instead take notes. Some students do not take notes, do not listen and look elsewhere. As observed by the researchers, teacher-student interaction during the lesson is very weak. Based on the observation students’ seating arrangements were traditional in that three students’ seats occur on a wave which is not convenient for group discussion, group work and collaborative learning.

During classroom observation, there are no teaching aids used in all classrooms visited by the teachers to make the lessons practical.

Finally, based on the findings of the study through classroom observation, traditional methods of teaching and learning in history classrooms are still the dominant teaching strategies in the twenty-first century. Researchers who research teaching strategies confirm that participatory teaching is an effective way to improve students’ academic achievement. Madar and Baban [42, pp. 51–64] also discovered that participatory teaching is a good strategy to develop students’

skills and increase their academic achievements. They added that participatory teaching strategies put students at the centre of the teaching and learning process (p. 51). However, through interviews with teachers, students, and lesson observation, the researchers discovered that teachers are not employing student-centred approaches that are fitting for students' learning and achievement.

The responses of teachers and students are consistent with the literature on strategies for teaching. Researchers who conducted studies on teaching strategies found that the teacher-centred method is a traditional strategy that is not very effective in enhancing student achievement. The findings of this study also agree with Mohammed [44, p. 11] who conducted a study on, "strategies in the teaching of geography...", and stated that the lecture method of teaching has a negative effect on students' creativity, critical thinking, ability to produce new ideas, and academic achievement of students. Similarly, this study's findings also concur with Ezurike [45, pp. 1120–124] conducted a study on, "The Influence of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Teaching Methods on Academic Achievement of Students," which discovered that poor methods, mostly teacher-centred and conventional teaching methods used by teachers, are one of the major factors contributing to students' poor achievement.

Finally, it is better to conclude that teaching strategies can positively and negatively influence students' academic achievement. If teachers only employ the lecture approach without involving students in the lesson, it may result in low student academic achievement in contrast if teachers employ student-centred strategies students can understand the main point of the lesson and enhance the academic achievement of students.

6.2 How do teaching strategies influence students' academic achievement in Sebeta secondary schools?

To answer this question, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers and students, as well as document reviews and classroom observations. This issue was addressed by both teachers and students. Methods of teaching have a wide range of effects on the academic success of learners. When asked this question, they all had similar answers. According to teachers, good teaching strategies play a significant role in improving students' academic achievement. They state this as follows:

Using collaborative teaching practices can significantly improve students' academic achievement. Because collaborative instruction is a teaching technique in which students learn together by assisting one another. Higher achiever students support the low achiever learner in this instructional learning process. However, if teachers utilize traditional teaching methods without involving students in the teaching-learning process, students' academic achievement may suffer (BSSST1, SSST2, and SSST3).

However, for a variety of reasons, teachers do not use collaborative teaching strategies to improve the academic achievement of their students. Rather than focusing on improving the academic achievements of students' teachers are only concerned with completing their content. Furthermore, the student stated that teaching strategy can positively and negatively influence students' academic achievement. According to students:

...if teachers employ interactive teaching strategies during teaching lessons, students can understand the main point of the lesson and profit much from it. In contrast, if teachers exclusively employ the lecture approach without involving students in the lesson, it may result in low student achievement in the subject. Furthermore, students responded with two statements: excellent teaching strategies encourage students' interest in the subject and are also, critical for improving students' academic achievement (BSSSS1, BSSSS2, SSSS1, SSSS3, and SSSS6).

The teachers were interviewed about teaching methods they implement when teaching a history education lesson. The teachers were asked to mention teaching methods that they always use in teaching history. The majority of the teachers claimed to use lecture approaches when teaching history education lessons. Teachers noted: "huge class sizes and low time allotted to history subjects, making it difficult to apply participatory/student-centred methods (BSSST3, SSST, and SSST2). Furthermore, when asked about their teachers' teaching methods in history class, students stated that "teachers only use teacher-centred strategies (lecture, dictation, note-giving and reading notes on the blackboard)" (BSSSS3, SSSS1, SSSS2).

During the interview all interviewed teachers acknowledged the use of the lecture method in their teaching. The justifications provided for the use of the lecture method include saving time, the convenience of covering content on time and the nature of students. Teachers said, "A lecture method helps the teacher to cover a lot of content in a short period" (SSST1, SSST2, SSST3, SSST4, BSST1, and BSST2). The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Luka [14, p. 30] on the topic of "the impact of teaching methods on attitudes of secondary school

students towards learning of history in Malawi," which discovered that teachers use boring lecture methods to complete their courses rather than focusing on students' results.

History teachers' perceptions of the use of the participatory approach were very low. Based on the interview conducted with history education teachers they were not interested in using student-center teaching strategies (BSSST1, BSSST2, SSST1, SSST2, SSST3, and SSSST4). Teachers claimed that participatory teaching strategies were time-consuming and unsuitable for large-class settings (*Ibid*). Instead of using participatory teaching strategies teachers choose teacher-centred methods to cover a large portion within a given time.

The researchers interviewed history teachers at Sebeta secondary schools about the challenges that they confront when implementing the participatory approach. The interviewed teachers stated that the time allotted for history education did not correspond to the content (BSSST1, BSSST2, SSST1, SSST2, SSST3, and SSST4). They were unwilling to utilize student-centred teaching methodologies because they believed it would be time-consuming and difficult to cover the contents of the student's textbooks within the academic year. According to the teachers, the time allotted to history education every week was only two periods (80 min), although history education included more than 246 pages (*Ibid*). Students also stated that teachers frequently employ lecture methods when teaching history lessons. Both teachers and students agree that collaborative learning methods are more beneficial than traditional teaching methods in improving students' academic achievement (SSST1, SSST2, SSST3, SSST4, BSST1, and BSST2). Teachers claim that "due to the wide range of topics covered in history education, we use lecture methods of teaching rather than participatory approaches" (SSST1, SSST3, BSST1, and BSST2).

6.3 How is the student's academic achievement in history at Sebeta government secondary school? To answer this question, the researchers used document review

6.3.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is part of the qualitative data collection strategy that every researcher engages in throughout the research period. In this research researchers reviewed, history education students' textbooks, published articles and roasters of students (students' mark list). The history education achievement of 174 Sebeta government secondary school students scored in grade 9 in 2020/2021 was compared to look at their achievement in grade 10 in 2021/2022. As a result, one student achieved less than 50% out of 100%, 39 students' scores ranged from 50 to 60 out of 100%, 98 students scored from 61 to 70 out of 100%, 27 students scored between 71 and 80 out of 100%, 8 students scored between 81 and 90 out of 100%, and 1 student scored between 91 and 100, in grade nine. In grade 10, 11 students scored below 50, 103 students scored between 50 and 60, 45 students scored between 61 and 70, 9 students scored between 71 and 80, 4 students scored between 81 and 90, and 2 students scored between 91 and 100 out of 100%.

Based on this analysis, we can witness students' achievement in two ways. The first is that in grade 9, 138 out of 174 students scored less than 70% out of 100% and the results of students scoring from 70 to 100% declined significantly. The second point to mention is that student achievement in history education has been highly declining at the subsequent grade level. In Grade 10, the number of students scoring less than 50% grew, and 159 out of 174 students scored less than 70% in history education. This indicates students' achievement in history in grade 9 decreased in grade 10. This suggests that students' achievement in history education was inadequate. Following the analysis of student achievement, interviews were conducted with students and teachers to identify why students' achievement in history education was so low.

7 Conclusion and recommendations

Research shows that teaching strategies are a crucial aspect in successful learning because they enable learners to learn, create, and take a proactive attitude towards learning. The significant issues confronting history education have been identified were teaching strategy, a lack of awareness about implementing participatory teaching methods, a lack of comprehensiveness of the contents of history education teaching materials, and the issue of the bulkiness and scope of history education texts being covered on time and Lack of teachers' understanding of employing creative teaching strategies to improve students' academic progress. Despite this, the study found that teachers in Sebeta government secondary schools use the teacher-centered lecture approach rather than interactive or student-centered strategies, which are recommended for students' learning. Teachers were cognizant of student-center teaching and learning improved student achievement. Conversely, teachers are hesitant to adopt participatory teaching methodologies due

to the vastness of history textbooks and the lack of time provided to history education to cover bulky texts. As a result, they employ teaching approaches that they believe will allow them to complete the history education contents in the allocated time rather than focusing on enhancing students' academic achievement.

Furthermore, the study also found out that teachers are reluctant to use participatory student-centred learning methods because the two periods per week allocated (80 min) to teaching history education are not enough to cover a wide range of history education content. They believe participatory student-center teaching is ineffective in large classrooms and takes more time than the lecture method. Such thinking stems from a lack of understanding (imparting knowledge) on the use of innovative teaching strategies. The researchers examined the lecture teaching approach that students had learned as well as their results. Several students' achievement in history education shows below 70% out of 100% at Sebeta government secondary schools. The main reason for this low achievement is the teachers' teaching strategies (the use of teacher-centred approach) to teaching history education to complete a wide content within the allotted time. Teachers do not consider which strategies could improve students' achievement rather than focus on completing their content. This has also resulted in students' negative attitudes towards the subject.

The outcomes of this study can serve as the foundation for future research in academic and professional studies. This discovery is notable for the fact that teaching and learning approaches influence students' academic achievement in both directions. Accordingly, if teachers only employ the lecture approach without involving students in the lesson, it may result in low student academic achievement in contrast if teachers employ student-centred strategies students can understand the main point of the lesson and enhance the academic achievement of students.

Thus, for future studies intervention experimental research in history education is required to measure the extent to which participatory methods of instruction increase the academic achievement of students over teacher-centred strategies. More research, according to the researchers, should be conducted using participatory teaching methods in one classroom and lecture methods in others to determine to what extent participatory teaching methods improve the academic achievement of students when compared to teacher-centred strategies. Following the findings, researchers provided the following recommendations: national and regional education experts should collaborate closely in making history education content inclusive, as well as training history education teachers in the use of participatory teaching approaches. Curriculum experts should effectively organize the breadth of history education contents. To ensure that students learn successfully, the relevant authorities should rigorously monitor the state of the teaching and learning processes in general and history education in particular.

Author contributions Corresponding Author of the article: Fekede Sileshi Fufa. Abera Husen (PhD, Assistant Professor). Ketebo Abdiyo (PhD, Associate Professor). Authors' contribution statements 1. Initially, Fekede Sileshi convinced Abera Husen and Ketebo Abdiyo as the study should be conducted. 2. Then, Abera Husen devised the study's theory. 3. Fekede Sileshi and Ketebo Abdiyo verified the analytical methods of the study. 4. Abera Husen encouraged Fekede Sileshi to investigate the study. 5. Ketebo Abdiyo supervised the overall findings of this work.

Data availability The data of this study is the primary source, which is the roster of students' results and education policies. The student results/marks analyzed for this study are from two Sebeta town public secondary schools: Sebeta secondary school and Burka Sebeta secondary school and Ethiopian education policies. So, the data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request from anyone.

Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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