

Teacher Curriculum-awareness and Students' Achievement in English Oracy Skills in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated English language teacher curriculum awareness at senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. The descriptive design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all Senior Secondary English Language teachers and students in senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. Simple random sampling was used to select six local government areas in Ibadan. Three public secondary schools were randomly selected from each local government area making a total of 18 schools, while purposive random sampling method was used to select three English language teachers and 50 students from each school making a total of 54 teachers and 900 students. The instruments used were: Teacher Curriculum Awareness Questionnaire ($r=0.93$) and Teachers Oral interview Guide for teachers on curriculum awareness ($r=0.87$). Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the quantitative data generated from the questionnaire, while qualitative data from oral interview were content-analysed. Results revealed that 63.37% of the teachers (mean=2.67) are aware of the English Language curriculum on oracy skill and their awareness is high. It is recommended that curriculum planners and designers should endeavor to make the copies of the English language curriculum available because it is one thing to plan and design the curriculum it is another thing for the curriculum to be readily available for the teachers.

Keywords: Curriculum awareness, English language, Curriculum implementation

Introduction

English language is taught in Nigerian schools so that students can be well-versed in it. Success in this language is the key to getting admitted into higher institutions of learning as it is the standard language of teaching from the upper primary classes to the university and securing gainful employment later in life. Oracy skill is not receiving adequate attention. That is why today, most graduates are not able to express themselves correctly in the English language. The way that oracy skill can be developed is to find out whether the curriculum captures it and if it is actually being taught as stipulated in the curriculum. Oladosu (2014) argued that through teacher-student dialogue and communication, students construct knowledge and this knowledge is later internalised.

When it was found that the students were not performing well as demonstrated in the WASSCE and NECO SSCE results and general poor use of the subject, curriculum in English language was revised to accommodate what is called “grammar induced mechanism” Ikegulu (1990) with focused attention on grammar. This is the reason the current curriculum is structured into five components namely: Vocabulary development, Grammatical structure, Oral English, that is English oracy skills; (Spoken English and Listening Comprehension), Reading comprehension that is English literacy skills; (reading

comprehension, summary and writing for effective communication) and essay writing. The English language oracy skills encompasses the listening and speaking skills whose objectives are to ensure that the students speak the language intelligibly and communicate effectively, in English language. Speaking and listening skills are the major skills needed in English oracy, this is recognised in view of the role they play in day to day human communication. However, reports have shown that students are deficient in English oracy skills (Fakeye 2017).

English language curriculum has a product focus vis-à-vis to produce students that have the written and spoken mastery of the subject. It calls for the implementer that is, the teachers to be conversant with the objectives, contents, teachers' teaching as well as students' learning activities and the methods of evaluation for each aspect and topic of the subject. English language Curriculum is delivered when selection of content, implementation and evaluation processes enable the learners to acquire necessary skills needed in mastering the rudiments of spoken and written English. This is evident in the findings of Akanbi, (2014) which shows that the class two Senior Secondary students (SSII) committed errors of inconsistency in tenses, semantic and syntactic in spoken and written English which affected their competence in both written and spoken English. The

poor performance in the subject calls to question what teachers do to the curriculum content, their qualification, teaching experience, teaching materials, learning materials and textbooks.

Curriculum, like many other concepts in the field of education, has no known fixed universally accepted definition. There are perhaps as many concepts as there are scholars in the field. The curriculum according to Henson (2015) is the basic instrument with which schools actualise their goals. Kolawole (2016) asserts that a curriculum is a pivot on which everything that takes place in the school revolves because it gives shape and direction to education. But public secondary schools in Nigeria continue to pass out school leavers who can barely write simple grammatically correct English sentences. Therefore any concept that will be taught in schools must find accommodation in the curriculum and teachers need to be aware of it.

For the English language curriculum to be implemented successfully, it requires that the English language teachers are aware of its content, aware of its objectives and be knowledgeable on what the curriculum requires them to teach and how to assess the students. This is because if the curriculum is taught the way it is supposed to be taught, some of the problems being encountered in the teaching, learning and mastery of English language will not be there. Different from the traditional reform, the new curriculum reform in current Nigeria requires teachers' active participation and involvement. So teachers' curricular awareness is very important, because if teachers are not aware of what they are expected to teach, it may be difficult to teach it effectively. Joseph, Daku and Michael (2015) asserted that teachers have the best opportunity to be the role models of their students because after their parents, the teachers are greatly involved in the learning and socialisation of the students. This is because if the curriculum is taught the way it is supposed to be taught, some of the problems we encounter in the teaching, learning and mastery of English language will not be there. Different from the traditional reform, the new curriculum reform in current Nigeria requires teachers' active participation and involvement of teachers. So teachers' curricular awareness is very important.

Curriculum awareness relates to the recognition of curriculum issues and values as well

as the implications they have in relation to English oracy and literacy by the teachers of English language. It is best produced and developed by teacher's personal exploration and discovery of students' academic needs. Teachers' curriculum awareness and participation is vital to the goal of achieving better results in English language. Issues of curriculum either in the implicit or the explicit are inextricably linked to current thinking and action on educational system around the world (Ajeyalemi, 2005).

There is a deviation from the previous English language curriculum in the area of skills of Oracy. In the past, the listening comprehension aspect is treated fleetingly and is held responsible for failure in English language in our schools. For example, products are unable to listen efficiently to lectures, speeches, and so on. They rely heavily on teacher's notes, suggesting that the time used for teaching may have been wasted. Consequently, the listening skill to be taught has been extended significantly to include: listening to grasp main points or ideas in: speech, conversation, lecture, poem, recorded material, radio/TV broadcast, short debates etc. It also includes: listening to identify the speaker's mood, tone and purpose, Listening to identify details through signaling words like – because, as a result, for example, in other words, and so on, listening for summary – note taking, listening to follow directions, listening to tell the meaning of words in context and listening to identify a speaker's style.

Kolawole (2016) asserts that a curriculum is a pivot in which everything that takes place in the school revolves because it gives shape and direction to education. But public secondary schools in Nigeria continue to pass out school leavers who can barely write simple grammatically correct English sentences. Therefore any concept that will be taught in schools must find accommodation in the curriculum. For the English language curriculum to be implemented successfully, it requires that the English language teachers be aware of its content, aware of its objectives and knowledgeable on what the curriculum requires them to teach and how to assess the students. Joseph, Daku and Michael (2015) asserted that teachers have the best opportunity to be the role models of their students because after their parents, the teachers are greatly involved in the learning and socialisation of the

students. This is because if the curriculum is taught the way it is supposed to be taught, some of the problems we encounter in the teaching, learning and mastery of English language will not be there. Different from the traditional reform, the new curriculum reform in current Nigeria requires teachers' active participation and involvement of teachers. So teachers' curricular awareness is very important.

Curriculum awareness refers to teacher's sensitivity to, criticism of and reflection on their important role in curriculum decision and development. Several factors have also been identified as being responsible for poor English language teachers' awareness of English language curriculum. These include: Poor quality and quantity of English language teachers which is one of the major factors affecting the proper implementation of English language. (Oduntan and Kolawole, 2013) observed that, teacher recruitment into public secondary schools in Nigeria is generally fraught with inadequacies, nepotism, tribalism, bribery and corruption. Lack of feedback mechanism is another important factor affecting the implementation of English language curriculum due to teacher's unfamiliarity with the English language curriculum. Such teachers will not be aware of the English language curriculum.

In an earlier survey conducted by this researcher in 2014 and a subsequent telephone interview with an Assistant Director of Education of the Oyo State Ministry of Education on the 5th October 2016, it was revealed that the Ministry of Education did not supply the senior secondary schools with the English language curriculum. This is why this researcher believes that in most schools, the senior secondary school English language teachers do not have the English language curriculum and are thus unaware of its content. In other words, they are not conversant with the objectives, content, teaching/learning processes and assessment processes of the curriculum of the subject they teach. Instead, they rely on the syllabus and available textbooks to guide them in what they teach in English language. Pratt (1994) said teachers are called upon to implement the curricular they were never part of. If teachers were not part of it at the conception stage, and the only time they get to know about it is during implementation, they will never buy into it or be committed to implementing it. You cannot give what

you do not have. Curriculum awareness refers to teacher's sensitivity to, criticism of and reflection on their important role in curriculum decision and implementation. Several factors have also been identified as being responsible for poor English language teachers' awareness of English language curriculum. These include: poor quality and quantity of English language teachers which is one of the major factors affecting the proper implementation of English language. Oduntan and Kolawole (2013) observed that, teacher recruitment into public secondary schools in Nigeria is generally fraught with inadequacies, nepotism, tribalism, bribery and corruption.

Statement of the Problem

One of the objectives of English language teaching is to enable students to use it orally and write it correctly because the thought processes we use for speech and writing are not the same. The oracy aspect is not being emphasised as much as ability to read and write in English language. This has led to a gap in the objective of including English in the curriculum which is; students' inability to speak, read and write in English language correctly and fluently during and after the secondary school education. A number of factors are responsible for that such as insufficient practice among others. Since it is important to ensure that students do not just come to read and write, but also to be able to use English language orally, it is important to pay attention to oracy skill. In paying attention to it, content awareness by teachers through the curriculum is a factor that can promote that. Previous studies have largely focused on teaching strategies for improving the performance of students with less emphasis on teacher curriculum awareness. Studies have strongly linked teachers' curriculum awareness to students' performance in various subjects such as, Social Studies, Physics, Chemistry, Christian Religious Studies and English Literature among others. However, this construct has not been sufficiently examined. This study, therefore, investigated English language teacher curriculum awareness at senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Research Question

The study provided answer to one research question
1. What is the level of teachers' awareness of the English language curriculum?

Scope of the Study

This study investigated English language teachers' curriculum awareness in English oracy skill. It covered 18 senior secondary schools students randomly selected from senior secondary schools in Ibadan. The components of oracy skill in this study are pronunciation, stress, intonation, phonetics, and fluency.

Significance of the Study

Findings from the study revealed that teacher curriculum awareness in English oracy skills was high. The study will be beneficial to curriculum planners and designers as it will provide empirical information to them on the level of awareness of English language teachers of the curriculum they implement. Findings from the study also revealed the areas of professional need of English language teacher such as in ensuring that teachers are acquainted with the English language curriculum they are expected to implement in terms of objective content, the content, teaching/learning processes, and evaluation procedure. Teachers would underscore the need to pay close attention to the content of the curriculum in order to ensure that nothing is left out.

Methodology

The descriptive design was adopted for the study. This was because there was no manipulation of variables since all the variable already exists. The population of the study comprised all Senior Secondary English Language teachers and students in senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Two sampling techniques; Multistage random

sampling procedure and purposive sampling technique were used in this study. In the first stage, simple random sampling was used to select six local government areas from the eleven local government areas in Ibadan-land. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was also used to select three public schools from each local government area making 18 schools. In the third stage, purposive random sampling method was used to select three English language teachers and 50 students from each school making a total of 54 teachers and 900 students. The criteria for the selection of schools, teachers and students included the following:

- (i) The school must be public and mixed to ensure uniformity of syllabus and texts.
- (ii) They must have three graduate English language teachers.
- (iii) They must be willing to participate in the study.

The instruments used were: Teacher Curriculum Awareness Questionnaire ($r=0.93$) and Teachers Oral interview Guide for teachers on curriculum awareness ($r=0.87$). Data collection lasted ten weeks. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the quantitative data generated from the questionnaire, while qualitative data from oral interview were content-analysed.

Results

Research question 1: What is the level of teachers' awareness of the English language curriculum on Oracy skill?

Qualitative Data analysis

In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data generated. The result is presented in table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Level of teachers' awareness of the English language curriculum.

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	S. D
1	I am aware of the content objectives of the NERDC curriculum for English language	5 9.3%	7 13.0%	28 51.9%	14 25.9%	2.94	.88
2	I am aware of the NERDC SSS curriculum of English language	8 14.8%	4 7.4%	28 51.9%	14 25.9%	2.89	.96
3	I am aware of the performance objectives of the NERDC curriculum for English language	6 11.1%	6 11.1%	30 55.6%	12 22.2%	2.89	.88
4	I am aware that the use of local materials in teaching and learning of English language in the NERDC SSS curriculum for English literacy is encouraged	5 9.3%	9 16.7%	27 50.0%	13 24.1%	2.89	.88
5	I am aware that NERDC curriculum for English language provides for the teaching of literacy skills	6 11.1%	6 11.1%	32 59.3%	10 18.5%	2.85	.86
6	Appropriate prescribed teaching strategies are used to implement the curriculum	4 7.4%	7 13.0%	36 66.7%	7 13.0%	2.85	.74
7	I am aware that the NERDC curriculum for English language provides for learners' English	6 11.1%	8 14.8%	29 53.7%	11 20.4%	2.83	.88
8	I am aware that the NERDC curriculum for English language provides for evaluation guides	5 9.3%	10 18.5%	30 55.6%	9 16.7%	2.80	.83
9	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language shows English literacy skills and its inter-relationship with other subjects	8 14.8%	7 13.0%	28 51.9%	11 20.4%	2.78	.98
10	I am aware that NERDC curriculum for English language provides for the teaching of oracy skills	9 16.7%	8 14.8%	26 48.1%	11 20.4%	2.72	.98
11	I am aware that the NERDC curriculum for English language makes suggestion on learning materials for teaching oracy skills	9 16.7%	10 18.5%	22 40.7%	13 24.1%	2.72	1.0 2
12	I am aware that the NERDC curriculum for English language makes suggestion on learning materials for teaching literacy skills	7 13.0%	8 14.8%	33 61.1%	6 11.1%	2.70	.84
13	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language uses the thematic approach to select its content	10 18.5%	11 20.4%	19 35.2%	14 25.9%	2.69	1.0 6
14	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language shows English oracy skills and its inter-relationship with other subjects	6 11.1%	15 27.8%	24 44.4%	9 16.7%	2.67	.89
15	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language omitted topics enhancing English oracy skills in its content	9 16.7%	16 29.6%	21 38.9%	8 14.8%	2.52	.95
16	I am aware that the use of local materials in teaching and learning of English language in the NERDC SSS curriculum for English oracy is discouraged	11 20.4%	14 25.9%	19 35.2%	10 18.5%	2.52	1.0 2
17	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language is rigid	12 22.2%	14 25.9%	17 31.5%	11 20.4%	2.50	1.0 6
18	I am aware that the use of local materials in teaching and learning of English language in the NERDC SSS curriculum for English oracy is encouraged	10 18.5%	14 25.9%	24 44.4%	6 11.1%	2.48	.93
19	I am aware that the use of local materials in teaching and learning of English language in the NERDC SSS curriculum for English literacy is discouraged	10 18.5%	17 31.5%	18 33.3%	9 16.7%	2.48	.99
20	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language omitted topics enhancing literacy skills in its content	12 22.2%	15 27.8%	17 31.5%	10 18.5%	2.46	1.0 4
21	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language does not encourage teachers to enrich the contents with the relevant materials their immediate environment	13 24.1%	15 27.8%	15 27.8%	11 20.4%	2.44	1.0 8
22	I am aware that the NERDC curriculum for English language does not provide for teachers' activities	12 22.2%	14 25.9%	21 38.9%	7 13.0%	2.43	.98
23	I am aware that the NERDC SSS curriculum for English language does not encourage teachers to enrich with relevant information from their immediate environment	15 27.8%	11 20.4%	20 37.0%	8 14.8%	2.39	1.0 5
Grand Mean =2.67, 63.37%							

Table 4.1 reveals that 63.37% of the teachers (mean=2.67) are aware of the English Language curriculum on oracy skill and their awareness is high..

Content analysis of teachers' oral interview

The interview with the teachers revealed that their awareness of changes of current English language curriculum was high despite the fact that the teachers were not provided with copies of the current curriculum.

Discussion of Findings

Teacher Curriculum Awareness in oracy skill

The findings revealed a high level of teacher curriculum-awareness as revealed in table 4.1. This might be attributed to the fact that many of the teachers who participated in the study have a working knowledge of the curriculum. This finding agrees with that of Amugo (1997), who claimed that when teachers have a working knowledge of the curriculum they implement, their awareness of the curriculum tends to be high. However, the finding is at variance with that of Babalola (2002) who found that teachers' awareness of curriculum is below average.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study: The curriculum planners and designers should endeavor to make the copies of the English language curriculum available because it is one thing to plan and design the curriculum it is another thing for the curriculum to be readily available for the teachers.

The curriculum planners and designers must also find a way of organising conferences, seminars and workshops where teachers can be acquainted with the content of the curriculum they are implementing as well as other critical variables that are germane to the implementation of the English language curriculum in the classroom.

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