

THE EFFECT OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE NEW ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

Hon. Usman Idris Gwarjiko, Ph.D.

Full Time Commissioner, Niger State Secondary Education Board, Minna, Niger State, NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of professional qualification on teachers' perception of English language curriculum. A survey method and a questionnaire designed and patterned on Likeert's five point scale were used. To establish the content validity of the questionnaire, sample copies were given to ten randomly selected experienced English teachers for critical examination and their positive observations were used. The reliability of the questionnaire was established on the analyses of result of its administration twice on ten randomly selected experienced secondary school English language teachers using the Pearson product – moment correlation co-efficient statistical technique. The calculated value of r was 0.843. This r value is above the reliability coefficient acceptable level. The population in this study was two hundred and fifty English Language teachers out of which sixty were selected through simple balloting and stratified random sampling techniques. The sixty English teachers used as respondents were visited in their schools by the researcher. The data was analysed using the frequency counts, simple percentile and mean statistical techniques to answer the research questions and the t-test statistical technique was used in testing the paired null hypotheses. The results revealed that both professional and non-professional teachers did not differ significantly in their perception of the curriculum objectives and content items and they perceived these aspects of the curriculum favourably. On the contrary, the groups differed significantly in their perception of the recommended instructional materials, modes of evaluation and the instructional personnel required for the implementation of the curriculum and they perceived these aspects of the curriculum unfavourably. It was concluded that professional and non-professional English teachers did not differ significantly in their perception of SSS English Language curriculum objectives and content items while they differ significantly in their perception of the instructional materials, the modes of evaluation and instructional personnel.

Keywords: New Curriculum, English language, perception, professional and non-professional teachers, and Senior Secondary School (SSS).

INTRODUCTION

It is worthwhile to reiterate on the role and functions of English language in Nigeria as those which warrant concern when students' performance in it is poor. English language is used as the medium of instruction and in learning other subjects in all Nigerian educational institutions. Equally too, no student is qualified for admission into the Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions without scoring a credit pass in it among others, in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). Thus, the much-desired high level of students' proficiency and reduction in their high rate of failure in it can only be enhanced if our English curriculum is viable. A curriculum is viable if it is dynamic, realistic, implementable and coverable within the time stipulated for it. This status of the new senior secondary school (SSS) English language curriculum can be achieved by subjecting it to

continuous evaluation. One way we can do this is to seek for the opinion of the English teachers about it since they do its implementation at the grassroots level. Sadly, they also form only 28.13% of the participants that designed it (FMEST, 1985). This meager SSS English teachers' representation at the planning level supports the observations that the Federal Government over relies on experts with minimal, and at times no, teachers' input (Gillet, 1981).

This inadequate involvement of classroom teachers might be due to lack of recognition of the fact that teachers retain the ultimate power to ensure or defeat the successful implementation of curriculum change (Coombs, 1977). If their participation was so low, then would the curriculum be acceptable to them? Hence, objective of this study was to investigate the impact of teachers' professional qualification on their perception of English language curriculum objectives, content items, instructional materials/aids, modes of evaluation and the adequacy of the instructional personnel to implement the curriculum successfully.

Research Questions

In the course of this study, the researcher sought answers to the following questions:

What is the impact of teachers' professional qualification on their perception of:

- 1) objectives of the new SSS English curriculum?
- 2) content items of the new SSS English curriculum?
- 3) instructional materials recommended in the new SSS English curriculum?
- 4) modes of evaluation of the new SSS English curriculum and
- 5) the adequacy of instructional personnel to successfully implement the new SSS English curriculum?

Research Hypotheses

The research formulated the following null hypotheses to guide this study:

There would be no significant difference between the professional and non-professional English language teachers' perception of:

- 1) objectives of the new SSS English curriculum.
- 2) content items of the new SSS English curriculum.
- 3) instructional materials recommended in the new SSS English curriculum.
- 4) modes of evaluation of the new SSS English curriculum and
- 5) the adequacy of instructional personnel to successfully implement the of the new SSS English curriculum.

The aspects of the SSS English language curriculum covered by this study are objectives, content items, the adequacy of the instructional materials, modes of evaluation and the adequacy of instructional personnel to implement it.

Since this is an evaluative study, it is hoped that the findings of it will be useful to the planners and developers of new SSS English language curriculum in assessing the extent of their success and or otherwise of the work they have done. Secondly, it is hoped that the curriculum specialists and Ministry of Education officials will find this work useful when innovating this curriculum and when planning any other English language curriculum.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Curriculum experts have defined curriculum evaluation in different ways. Cooley and Lohnes (1976) defined evaluation as “a process which relevant data are collected and transformed into information for decision-making”. Bloom, Hasting & Madaus (1971) defined curriculum evaluation as a process of agreeing upon programme standards, determining whether a discrepancy exists between aspects of the programme and standards and using discrepancy information to identify the weakness of the programme. Johnstone (1978) quoting Stufflebeam is of the opinion that “evaluation is the process of gathering useful information for judging decision alternatives, getting the information, analyzing it and drawing a final conclusion”. In all these definitions, it is clear that evaluation is considered as a process which involves collecting information which serves as feedback to be used for further decision-making.

This study adopted Stufflebeam’s C.I.P.P. model which has four phases or stages of evaluation according to Popham (1975). These are context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation and product evaluation. The six aspects of curriculum (objectives, content, methods, materials, evaluation and personnel) are encapsulated in the C.I.P.P. model. Some empirical studies on this subject matter revealed some interesting findings. Ameyeu (1988) has done an evaluation of the JSS English curriculum. He used interview questions in data collection. He used frequency counts and simple percentile statistical techniques in analyzing this part of his data. His study revealed the following findings:

- (a) though the curriculum goals were found to be related to the 6-3-3-4 Educational system, they were neither adequate nor desirable;
- (b) the curriculum contents were comprehensive, relevant and suitable to learners’ needs;
- (c) the organisational pattern of the items required overhauling;
- (d) English teachers felt that they were not adequately equipped in communicative and linguistic competence to help the learners achieve the goals of JSS curriculum;
- (e) The supply and the improvisation of teaching and learning materials were deplorable conditions in school;
- (f) The JSS leaving certificate, which they felt should be conducted by the states’ Ministry of Education, was strongly accepted to be used as end-of-course examination;
- (g) English teachers felt that the award of JSS certificate to the graduants of the JSS English curriculum is appropriate and
- (h) English teachers agreed that the curriculum can equip the graduants of the JSS English curriculum to cope with advanced work in English and other subjects at the JSS level.

Yasemin (2008) investigated teachers’ impact of teacher understandings and training upon their implementation of curriculum innovation in teaching English to young learners in Turkish state schools. The results showed that teachers’ prior training had an impact on the extent of their implementation of the curriculum initiative. The study therefore, recommends provision of continuous teacher training and teacher development opportunities, particularly during the critical first few years of the innovation process to promote the implementation of curriculum innovation in Turkish primary education. Equally too, Salem (2013) studied teachers’ perception of the English language curriculum in Libyan public schools; and the results revealed that teachers’ lack of training has impacted on their perception of curriculum implementation.

Adin-Surkis (2014) investigated teachers’ evaluation of the new curriculum in English and reported that Teachers did not perceive the textbooks as lacking the potential to meet up with

challenges of new English language curriculum. Ghazala K., and Raja N. (2013) studied the Perception of Teachers regarding the Effect of Curriculum and Examination System on Pakistani College Students' English Language Performance. One of the major findings revealed that college teachers did not perceive the curriculum to be useful for English language learning and teaching in Pakistani colleges because it has failed to address practical problems and difficulties faced by the teachers in the implementation of the curriculum at the college level. The study has recommended teachers' involvement in curriculum development because that will create ownership in them, and they will be encouraged to play active role in teaching the new English curriculum.

Theresa (2015) investigated factors affecting English curriculum as perceived by high school English teachers of the Division of Quirino, Philipines. The results revealed that there were no significant differences on the perceptions of the English teachers on the factors affecting English instruction in the Grade 7 K to 12 Education Curriculum based on educational attainment or qualification. Donmez (2010) investigated the perception of English language teachers and students on the eighth grade English language curriculum. The results indicated that teachers' rating of the curriculum content items was low irrespective of differences in their professional qualification level.

Okobia (2011) investigated social studies teachers' perception of the Junior Secondary School Social Studies Curriculum in Edo State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that Social Studies teachers have positive perception of Junior Secondary School Social Studies Curriculum and that their level of qualification did not influence their perception. Adeneye O, Adeleye, Samuel & Alfred O. (2012) studied teachers' perception of the new nine-year basic education mathematics curriculum in Nigeria. The results indicated that primary and Junior Secondary Mathematics teachers had high perception of the new nine-year basic education mathematics curriculum-an aspect of UBE programme reform. Yanik (2007) investigated the perception of English language teachers and students in respect of public primary schools' English language curriculum. The results indicated that teachers' rating of the curriculum content items was not favourable and this result was irrespective of professional qualification variable of the teachers.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is a survey method and the instrument used is a questionnaire designed and patterned on Likeert's five point scale. The instrument was scored as Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 for positive questions and scored Strongly Agree (SA) = 1, Agree (A) = 2, Disagree (D) = 3, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 4, for negative statements and responses. To establish the content validity of the questionnaire, sample copies were given to ten randomly selected experienced English teachers for critical examination and their positive observations were used. The reliability of the questionnaire was established on the analyses of result of its administration twice on ten randomly selected experienced secondary school English language teachers using the Pearson product – moment correlation co-efficient statistical technique. The calculated value of r was 0.843. This r value is above the reliability coefficient acceptable level.

The population in this study was two hundred and fifty English Language teachers out of which sixty were selected through simple balloting and stratified random sampling techniques; and used for the study. The sixty English teachers used as respondents were

visited in their schools by the researcher and they responded to the questionnaire there and then. Some few copies of the questionnaire had to be left with H.O.D. language for administration and returned later to such schools for collection personally by the researcher. The data was analysed using the frequency counts, simple percentile and mean statistical techniques to answer the research questions and the t-test statistical technique was used in testing the paired null hypotheses

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results in table 1 below show the mean (x) and t- test scores for professional and non-professional English teachers' responses on their perception of the new SSS English language curriculum objectives, content items, instructional materials, modes of evaluation and instructional personnel. The results show that professional and non-professional English teachers got mean scores of 17.88 and 19.00 respectively for their responses on their rating of the new SSS English language curriculum objectives. The calculated t- test value of 0.854 indicated that the difference in the mean scores of the two groups of English teachers was not significant at .05 level alpha and the null hypothesis 1 was, thus, accepted. The two groups of Teachers rated the curriculum objectives favourably. This finding was not in agreement with revelations of Ameyeu (1988); Okobia (2011); Theresa (2015) & Adeneye et. al, (2012) that teachers' previous professional training impacted on their perception and implementation objectives of the English language curriculum which they rated as inadequate and undesirable. Ghazala et. al. (2013) also reported that Parkistan English teachers also rated the English language curriculum as a total failure because they found it unrealistic, and also at per with the expectations of the teachers. This is in consonance with the findings of Ameyeu (1988); Okobia (2011); Theresa (2015) & Adeneye et. al, (2012) who revealed that teachers generally perceived the curriculum content to be appropriate and rated favourably high.

The results in table 1 below indicate that 21.09 and 20.5 were the mean scores for professional and non-professional English teachers respectively, for their responses on their perception of the SSS English language curriculum content items. Though the professional English teachers got a higher mean score, the calculated t- test value of 0.401 showed that the difference (in their mean scores) was not significant and the null hypothesis 2 was therefore accepted. Results indicated that both professional and non-professional teachers' perception of the curriculum content items was favourable. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Ameyeu (1988), Okobia (2011); Theresa (2015) & Adeneye et. al, (2012) who revealed that teachers generally perceived the curriculum content to be appropriate and rated favourably high; but contrary to Yasemin (2008), who reported that teachers' previous professional training impacted on their perception and implementation competence of English language curriculum.

Table 1: Means (x) and t-Test Scores for Professional and Non-Professional English Teachers' Responses on their Perception of the New SSS English Language Curriculum.

Curriculum Aspect	Professional English Teachers Mean (x), n = 56	Non-Professional English Teachers Mean (x), n = 4	Calculated t	Table t
Objectives	17.88	19.00	0.854	2.00
Contents	21.09	20.50	0.401	2.00
Instructional Materials	20.01	23.75	2.253	2.00

The results in table 1 above show that professional English teachers got a mean score of 20.01 and non-professional English teachers had a mean score of 23.75 for their perception of the adequacy of the instructional materials recommended for use in the new SSS English language curriculum. The fact that the calculated t-test value (2.253) is greater than the table value (2.00) means that the difference in the mean scores of the two groups was significant and the null hypothesis 3 was rejected. The two groups were unanimous in their rating of the curriculum instructional materials, as though relevant, but unavailable and not provided. Though the results revealed that the two groups of teachers' perception of the curriculum were favourable, the professional English teachers have lower mean scores in their perception of objectives and instructional materials. This is an indication that the professional English teachers were more objective and critically realistic in their perception of the new curriculum. This is in consonance with the findings of Adin-Surki (2014) who reported that teachers perceived recommended textbooks of the curriculum as incapable of meeting up with the challenges of the curriculum and Ameyeu who revealed that the instructional materials were neither provided nor available. This is contrary to the research reports by Okobia (2011); Theresa (2015) & Adeneye et. al. (2012) who reported that teachers perceived this aspect of the curriculum favourably irrespective of their professional differences. On the other hand, the non-professional English teachers have a higher mean score. Since hypothesis 3 was rejected and indicated a higher mean score for the non-professional teachers, it means that they were less prepared to critically and realistically evaluate the curriculum. Hence, they should undergo a reorientation for grooming in the art and skills of teaching to make them professional teachers.

The results in table 1 above show that professional English teachers group got a mean score of 23.64 while non-professional English teachers group got a mean score of 26.25 for their responses on their opinions about modes of evaluating the new SSS English language curriculum. The calculated t- test value of the 2.01 showed that the difference in the means of the groups was significant; and since the calculated t- value is greater than the table value (2.00) the null hypothesis 4 was consequently rejected. Though the English language teachers found the modes of evaluating the curriculum to be relevant, interest-arousing and sustaining, they are neither provided nor available. Teachers accepted they improvised many of such materials. This finding is in consonance with that of Ameyeu (1988) and Yesemin (2008) but contrary to that of Ghezala et. al. (2013) who reported that the college teachers found no aspect of the curriculum useful. The situation where the recommended materials are not provided and not available for procurement is dangerous and constitute serious impediment to curriculum implementation by teachers.

English teachers supported the use of the recommended modes of evaluation through continuous assessment. Though they also found the instrument to be valid, reliable, objective and standardized, they observed that it may be expensive to reproduce; and teachers may be bias in conducting it. Teachers did not however, favour the system that West African Examination Council (WAEC) alone should be the final examining body of the students' learning outcome of this curriculum. This finding is in consonance with that of Ameyeu (1988); Okobia (2011); Theresa (2015) & Adeneye et. al. (2012) who reported that teachers perceived this aspect of the curriculum favourably irrespective of their professional differences but contrary to that of Ghazala et. al. (2013); Yanik (2007) and Donmez (2010) who rated curriculum low. The rejection of the null hypothesis 4 however, has indicated that the professional teachers' perception of the curriculum was significantly different from that of non-professional English teachers. Non-professional English teachers should be encouraged to attend postgraduate certificate courses in Education. Doing this will ensure

that they become professionalized in teaching resulting in making them better prepared for curriculum implementation. Refusal to professionalise themselves could lead to being flushed out. Equally too, these aspects of the curriculum should be looked at so that the observed lapses can be improved upon.

Table 2: Means and (x) and t-Test Scores for Professional and Non-Professional English Teachers' Responses on Modes of Evaluation and Instructional Personnel.

Aspect	Professional English Teachers Mean (x), n = 56	Non-Professional English Teachers Mean (x), n = 4	Calculated t	Table t
Evaluation	23.64	26.25	2.011	2.00
Personnel	9.48	10.25	0.626	2.00

The results in table 2 above show also that the professional English teachers had a mean score of 9.48, while the non-professional English teachers had a mean score of 10.25 for their responses on the adequacy of instructional personnel to successfully implement the new SSS English language curriculum. The calculated t- test value of 0.626 showed that the difference in the groups' mean scores was not significant because the calculated t-value is less than the table value (2.00). The null hypothesis 4 was therefore, accepted. Teachers unanimously opined that English teachers were inadequate in availability and in preparation in terms of training, to implement the curriculum and that is why non-specialist English teachers are still found in schools teaching English language. Hence, teachers also agreed that they required training in enhancing their effectiveness in implementing the new curriculum. To them, this can be done through seminars, workshops, refresher courses and in-service training. This finding is in agreement with those of Ameyeu (1988) and Yesemin (2008). It will be ideal to note that the curriculum implementation is endangered when the teachers felt they were inadequate preparation and in number to implement the curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that English as second language professional and non-professional teachers:

1. did not differ significantly in their perception of SSS English Language curriculum objectives and were generally favourable in perception of it.
2. did not differ significantly in their perception of SSS English Language curriculum content items. The two groups perceived it favourably except for the inadequacy of the allotted time for its coverage.
3. differ significantly in their perception of the instructional materials to be used in teaching SSS English Language curriculum. The two groups rated this aspect of the curriculum with mixed feelings because they found the instructional materials to be relevant, interest-arousing and sustaining but not neither provided nor available; and they resorted to improvising many of such materials
4. differ significantly in their perception of the modes of evaluation of the SSS English Language curriculum. The two groups perceived this aspect of the curriculum with mixed feelings because they supported the use of the recommended modes of evaluation through continuous assessment since they found it to be valid, reliable, objective and standardized but expensive to reproduce and may allow for favouritism by teachers in its conduct.
5. differ significantly in their perception of the instructional personnel to implement the curriculum and unanimously rated it unfavourably because of its inadequacy in terms

of teachers' availability and in preparation professionally and academically to implement it effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since professional and non-professional teachers differed significantly in their perception of the new senior secondary school English language curriculum aspects of instructional materials, modes of evaluation, and instructional personnel, teacher professionalism is worthwhile. Hence, there is the need to have more professional teachers to teach English in our senior secondary schools and non-professional ones should be trained so as to professionalise.
2. The curriculum content items should be trimmed in line with the availability of the time for its implementation.
3. State Ministries of Education need to provide the necessary instructional materials and teaching/learning aids for both English teachers and students to ensure effective implementation of the new English language curriculum. Workshops and seminars also should be organised to orientate teachers in how to make use of local resources/materials; and in how to improvise leading to the production of teaching aids not available and funds should be provided for the procurement of local raw materials to be used for the production of the aids through such improvisations.
4. Test banks should be established in our senior secondary schools and a number of standardised and validated tests should be made available in senior secondary schools for retrieval for use in continuous assessment. This will go a long way in ensuring fair and equal treatment of students with regard to the validity, reliability, objectivity and difficulty level of the tests. This is important since the designers of this curriculum did not provide or recommend sources for tools to be used by teachers in conducting continuous assessment; and workshops should also be organised for teachers to groom them on how undertake continuous assessment and how to keep the results cumulatively. They should also be orientated in language test construction and validation.
5. Mass recruitment of professional English teachers especially of University graduates, to teach the SSS curriculum; and the available ones should be encouraged to attend both in-service or on-the-job training on full-time or part-time bases and workshops to make them better qualified and prepared to teach the new English curriculum.

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Biographical Note: Dr. (Hon.) U. I. Gwarjiko is a professional teacher of English as a second language by training and practiced for 19 years. He joined politics during which he was not too far from the academics. He served as an elected parliamentarian (Hon. Member) in the Niger State House of Assembly, appointed and served in the capacities of Hon. Commissioner of Education, a pioneer Commissioner for Science and Technology in Niger State Executive Council, a Full Time Commissioner, Niger State Universal Basic Education Board and now a Full Time Commissioner, Niger State Secondary Education Board, Minna.