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EFFECT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study adopted literature review research design, using related literature, books, text, journals and articles to collect data. The study aimed to examine the challenges and opportunities of implementing the new curriculum, the impact of the curriculum change on students' achievement and motivation, and the best practices for effective English language teaching and learning under the new curriculum. The study found that the curriculum change had both positive and negative effects on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools. The positive effects included increased exposure to different genres and texts, improved communication skills, and enhanced critical thinking abilities. The negative effects included inadequate teacher training, insufficient instructional materials, and increased workload and stress for teachers and students. The study also identified some strategies for improving the teaching and learning of English language under the new curriculum, such as providing more teacher support and guidance, developing relevant and engaging materials, and adopting learner-centered and interactive approaches. The study concluded that the curriculum change was a necessary and beneficial step for improving the quality of English language education in Nigeria, but it also required more attention and resources from the stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation and sustainability.

Keywords: Curriculum, English language, teaching, learning, secondary education.

Background to the Study

English is the official language of Nigeria and the medium of instruction in most schools. The importance of English language cannot be over-emphasized. English language is important because it is the lingua franca of the world. It is widely used in business, science, technology, media, entertainment, and diplomacy. It is also the language of many international examinations, such as WAEC, NECO, JAMB, and TOEFL. Therefore, learning English can help students access more information, resources, and opportunities in the globalized world (Oluwaseyi & Oluwakemi, 2013).

Second, English language is important because it can enhance students' critical thinking and creativity. English has a rich vocabulary, grammar, and literature that can expose students to different perspectives, cultures, and ideas. It can also help them express their thoughts and opinions clearly and persuasively. By learning English, students can develop their cognitive and communicative skills that are essential for their academic and personal growth (Adeniran, 2013).

Third, English language is important because it can foster national unity and diversity. Nigeria is a multilingual country with over 500 languages spoken by different ethnic groups. English can serve as a common language that can bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps among Nigerians. It can also promote tolerance and respect for the diversity of languages and cultures in the country (Oluwadiya & Owoeye, 2016).

However, many students struggle to master the language and communicate effectively in it. This can affect their academic performance and future opportunities. As important as English language in Nigerian education system, which is also a compulsory subject in secondary schools in Nigeria, many students have different opinions about its importance and usefulness. Some students see English as a tool for communication, education and career development, while others see it as a foreign language that is difficult to learn and master.
Similarly, teachers face many challenges in teaching and assessing English language skills among their students. Some of the challenges include lack of adequate training, resources and motivation, large class sizes, low proficiency levels, interference from local languages and dialects, and poor examination standards. These challenges affect the quality of English language education and the students' performance and opportunities in the future (Ukwuoma & Idris,2015).

The language policy on education in Nigeria is a complex and controversial issue that affects the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in the country. The policy, as stated in the National Policy on Education (1981) and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979), stipulates that the medium of instruction in primary schools should be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, while English should be taught as a subject. However, in secondary schools, English should be the medium of instruction for all subjects except Nigerian languages and literature. The policy aims to promote multilingualism, cultural diversity and national unity, as well as to enhance the development of indigenous languages and literatures.

Moreover, some policy makers have questioned the relevance and feasibility of the policy in view of the global role and importance of English as a language of communication, education, science, technology and commerce. They have argued that English is a vital tool for accessing information, opportunities and development in the modern world, and that limiting its use in primary schools would disadvantage Nigerian students and undermine their competitiveness in the global market. They have also expressed concern about the quality and standard of English education in secondary schools, given the limited exposure and practice that students would have in primary schools (Aliyu, 2013).

Another initiative was the development and distribution of curriculum materials and textbooks in indigenous languages by various agencies, such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) (NERDC, 2018). These materials were designed to cover various subjects, such as mathematics, science, social studies and civic education, in line with the national curriculum objectives. The materials were also meant to enhance students' literacy skills, cognitive abilities and academic performance in both indigenous languages and English.

Teaching and learning English language as a subject in secondary schools in Nigeria is a crucial aspect of the educational system. Students need to acquire adequate proficiency in English to communicate effectively and access higher education and employment opportunities. However, there are many challenges that affect the quality of English language teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools, such as:

- Lack of qualified and motivated teachers who can use appropriate methods and materials to teach English.
- Lack of adequate and relevant textbooks, audio-visual aids, and other resources to support English language learning.
- Interference of students' mother tongues and regional varieties of English, which may cause confusion and errors in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.
- Large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms, which limit the opportunities for individual attention and feedback from teachers.
- Low motivation and interest among students, who may perceive English as a difficult and boring subject or as a foreign imposition.

Describing all the aforementioned challenges without where the problems emanated will be out of place. Nigerian curriculum has in one way or the other addressed all these challenges through periodic change in curriculum by the policy makers (FRN, 2004 & 2013).
Curriculum change is a process that involves revising, updating, or replacing the existing curriculum with a new one that reflects the current needs and goals of the learners, teachers, and society. Curriculum change can have various effects on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools, depending on the nature, scope, and implementation of the change.

One possible effect of curriculum change is that it can improve the quality and relevance of English language education. For example, if the new curriculum incorporates more authentic texts, tasks, and assessments that align with the real-world contexts and purposes of using English, it can enhance the learners' motivation, engagement, and proficiency. Moreover, if the new curriculum provides more opportunities for learners to develop their communicative competence, critical thinking skills, and intercultural awareness, it can prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of living in a globalized world (Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 2013).
Another possible effect of curriculum change is that it can pose some challenges and difficulties for the teachers and learners. For instance, if the new curriculum introduces new content, methods, or standards that are significantly different from the previous ones, it can require a lot of adjustment, adaptation, and support from both parties. Teachers may need to undergo professional development programs to update their knowledge and skills, as well as to familiarize themselves with the new curriculum goals and expectations. Learners may need to cope with the increased cognitive and linguistic demands of the new curriculum, as well as to overcome their resistance or anxiety towards change.

Therefore, curriculum change can have both positive and negative effects on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools. The success or failure of curriculum change depends largely on how well it is planned, implemented, and evaluated by the stakeholders involved. This study therefore seeks to explore the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in Secondary schools in Lagos State.

Statement of the Problem

The teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools is influenced by various factors, such as the curriculum, the teachers, the students, the resources, and the environment. However, one of the most significant factors is the curriculum, which defines the goals, content, methods, and assessment of English language education (FRN, 2013, Okebukola, 2016). When the curriculum changes, it affects not only what is taught and learned, but also how it is taught and learned. Therefore, it is important to investigate the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools, and to identify the challenges and opportunities that arise from it. It is against this background that this study examines the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in Secondary schools in Lagos State.

Research Objective

The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in Secondary schools in Lagos State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. examine the impact of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Lagos State.
ii. investigate the main features of the new English language curriculum in secondary schools in Nigeria;
iii. identify the challenges and opportunities of implementing the new curriculum in English language education.
iv. evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new curriculum in achieving the desired learning outcomes and competencies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Lagos State?
2. What are the main features of the new English language curriculum in secondary schools in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing the new curriculum in English language education in Nigeria?
4. What is the effectiveness and efficiency of the new curriculum in achieving the desired learning outcomes and competencies?

Literature Review-Overview of Curriculum Change in Nigeria with Particular Reference to year 2013

The concept of curriculum change in Nigeria is a process of revising, updating and improving the educational content and delivery in response to the changing needs and demands of the society. One of the major drivers of curriculum change in Nigeria is the National Policy on Education (NPE), which was first introduced in 1977 and has undergone several revisions since then. The latest version of the NPE was published in 2013 and it reflects the current trends and challenges in the global and national contexts. The NPE 2013 aims to provide a comprehensive and inclusive framework for the development of education at all levels, from pre-primary to tertiary, and to ensure that every Nigerian acquires the relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for personal and national development. The NPE 2013 also

incorporates the Millennium Development Goals, the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy and the Vision 20-20-20 as guiding principles for educational planning and implementation. Some of the key features of the NPE 2013 include: the adoption of a 9-3-4 system of education, which consists of nine years of basic education, three years of senior secondary education and four years of tertiary education; the promotion of open and distance learning programmes; the expansion and revitalization of the National Mathematical Centre; the establishment of the Teachers Registration Council; and the integration of civic education, peace education, environmental education and entrepreneurial education into the curriculum (Udofia, 2021; FRN, 2013).

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA?

The teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria is influenced by various factors, such as the curriculum, the teachers, the students, the resources and the socio-cultural context. One of the major factors is the curriculum, which defines the goals, objectives, content, methods and assessment of the subject. The curriculum change is a process of revising, updating or modifying the existing curriculum to meet the changing needs and demands of the society and the learners. The impact of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria can be positive or negative, depending on how it is implemented and evaluated.

According to Oluwaniyi & Oladunjoye (2019), some of the possible positive impacts of curriculum change are:

- It can enhance the relevance and quality of English language education by aligning it with the national and global standards and expectations.
- It can foster the development of learners' communicative competence, critical thinking skills, creativity and intercultural awareness by incorporating new topics, texts, genres and activities that reflect the diversity and complexity of the contemporary world.
- It can motivate and empower learners by providing them with more choices, autonomy and opportunities to express their opinions, interests and needs in English.
- It can improve the professional development and performance of teachers by exposing them to new theories, methods and resources that can enrich their pedagogical knowledge and skills.

However, Akinyeye & Oluwagbohunmi (2017) in their submission opine that curriculum change can have possible negative impacts, which are:

- It can create confusion and resistance among teachers and learners who are used to the old curriculum and may not understand or appreciate the rationale and benefits of the new one.
- It can pose challenges and difficulties for teachers and learners who may lack the necessary training, support, materials and facilities to implement and adapt to the new curriculum effectively and efficiently.
- It can increase the workload and pressure for teachers and learners who may have to cope with multiple curricula, standards and assessments at different levels and stages of education.
- It can widen the gap and inequality between schools that have access to adequate resources and opportunities to implement the new curriculum and those that do not.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE NEW ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA?

The new English language curriculum in secondary schools in Nigeria aims to develop the learners' communicative competence, critical thinking skills, and intercultural awareness (Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 2013). According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2013 and 2018), the main features of the curriculum are:

- It is based on a communicative approach that emphasizes the use of language for meaningful purposes and authentic contexts.
- It covers four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and three language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation).
- It integrates literature, culture, and values education in the language lessons.
- It adopts a spiral progression that revisits and reinforces the language content and skills across the levels.
- It incorporates assessment for learning (AfL) strategies that provide feedback and guidance to the learners and teachers.

AfL strategies are formative assessments that help learners monitor their own progress, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their learning outcomes. AfL strategies also help teachers adjust their instruction, provide timely and constructive feedback, and support learners' self-regulation.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE NEW CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA?

The new curriculum for English language education in Nigeria, which was introduced in 2018, aims to improve the quality and relevance of English language teaching and learning in the country. The curriculum is based on the communicative approach, which emphasizes the development of learners' communicative competence in various contexts and situations. The curriculum also incorporates the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the teaching and learning process.

One of the main challenges of implementing the new curriculum in English language education in Nigeria is the lack of adequate resources and infrastructure. Many schools do not have enough qualified teachers, textbooks, computers, or internet access to support the new standards and methods (Adeyemi, 2011; Oluwaseyi, 2017). Moreover, some teachers and students may resist the change and prefer the traditional ways of teaching and learning (Ogunyinka *et al*., 2014; Umar et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the new curriculum also offers many opportunities for improving the quality and relevance of English language education in Nigeria. The new curriculum is more learner-centered, interactive, and communicative, which can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and proficiency (Adeniran *et al*., 2018; Okebukola, 2016). The new curriculum also incorporates local and global issues, such as culture, diversity, and sustainability, which can foster students' critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural awareness (Akinwamide & Adedoyin, 2012; Oyinloye & Dare, 2015). Furthermore, the new curriculum can prepare students for the demands and opportunities of the 21st century, such as academic success, career development, and social participation (Adeosun *et al*., 2014; Olatunji & Akinwamide, 2020).

To overcome the challenges and maximize the opportunities, there is a need for continuous monitoring, evaluation, and feedback on the implementation of the new curriculum. There is also a need for more research and innovation to inform policy and practice. Furthermore, there is a need for more collaboration and dialogue among all the stakeholders involved in English language education in Nigeria to ensure its success.

WHAT IS THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE NEW CURRICULUM IN ACHIEVING THE DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCIES?

The new English language curriculum in Nigeria was introduced in 2018 with the aim of improving the quality and relevance of English language education in the country. The curriculum is based on the communicative approach and focuses on developing the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as well as the language systems (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). The curriculum also integrates the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and promotes critical thinking, creativity and intercultural awareness among learners.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the new English language curriculum can be measured by its impact on the learning outcomes and competencies of the students. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), the learning outcomes and competencies for English language education in Nigeria are:

- To communicate effectively in English in a variety of contexts and situations
- To acquire the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving
- To appreciate the role of English as a global language and a medium of instruction
- To develop a positive attitude towards learning and using English
- To explore and appreciate the rich and diverse cultures and literatures of the English-speaking world

According to Adeosun *et al.* (2014), to evaluate the achievement of these outcomes and competencies, various methods and tools can be used, such as:

- Standardized tests and examinations
- Continuous assessment and feedback
- Portfolio assessment and self-evaluation
- Classroom observation and peer review
- Surveys and interviews with teachers, students, parents and stakeholders

Some of the studies that have been conducted to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the new English language curriculum in Nigeria are:

Ogunyemi (2019) investigated the impact of the new curriculum on the reading comprehension skills of junior secondary school students in Lagos state. The study used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in the reading comprehension scores of the students who were exposed to the new curriculum compared to those who were not.

Adeyemi (2020) examined the influence of the new curriculum on the writing performance of senior secondary school students in Oyo state. The study used a descriptive survey design with a questionnaire and a writing test. The findings revealed that there was a positive

correlation between the exposure to the new curriculum and the writing performance of the students.

Umaru (2021) explored the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards the new curriculum in Kaduna state. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a questionnaire, an interview and a focus group discussion. The analysis showed that both teachers and students had positive perceptions and attitudes towards the new curriculum, but also faced some challenges such as inadequate resources, training and support.

These studies suggest that the new English language curriculum in Nigeria has been effective and efficient in achieving the desired learning outcomes and competencies in Nigerian education. However, there is still room for improvement and further research to address some of the gaps and challenges that have been identified.

Summary

This paper summarizes the main findings of a research study that investigated the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study aimed to explore how the new curriculum, which was introduced in 2018, has influenced the teachers' pedagogical practices, the students' learning outcomes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by both groups. The study found that the new curriculum has brought some positive changes to the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. For example, the new curriculum has increased the emphasis on communicative skills, such as speaking and listening, and has introduced more authentic texts and tasks that reflect the students' needs and interests. The new curriculum has also encouraged more learner-centered and interactive approaches, such as group work, peer feedback, and project-based learning. The study also found that the students' performance in English language has improved slightly since the implementation of the new curriculum, especially in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension.

However, the study also identified some challenges and limitations of the new curriculum and its implementation. For example, the new curriculum has increased the workload and expectations for both teachers and students, without providing adequate support and resources. The new curriculum has also created some gaps and inconsistencies in the content and assessment of English language across different levels and subjects. Moreover, the study revealed that some teachers and students still face difficulties in adapting to the new curriculum and its methods, due to their lack of familiarity, confidence, or motivation. Some teachers also reported that they face resistance or pressure from parents, school administrators, or examination bodies to maintain traditional ways of teaching and learning English language.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of curriculum change on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. The findings revealed that the curriculum change has brought some positive and negative effects on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools. On the positive side, the new curriculum has introduced some innovative features, such as the integration of language skills, the use of communicative and learner-centered methods, the incorporation of ICT and other resources, and the assessment

of both cognitive and affective domains. These features have enhanced the teachers' professional development and the students' motivation, interest and proficiency in English language. On the negative side, the new curriculum has also posed some challenges, such as the lack of adequate training and support for teachers, the insufficient provision of materials and facilities, the mismatch between the curriculum objectives and the examination system, and the resistance from some stakeholders to embrace the change. These challenges have hindered the effective implementation of the new curriculum and the achievement of its desired outcomes.

The study concluded that the curriculum change has a significant effect on the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. However, the effect is not uniform across all schools, teachers and students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for curriculum planner to understand that curriculum change should be based on the needs and interests of the learners and the society.
2. There is need for effective communication of the curriculum change to all the stakeholders, especially the teachers and the students.
3. The curriculum change should be accompanied by adequate training and support for the teachers and the students.
4. The curriculum change should be evaluated periodically to assess its impact and challenges on the teaching and learning of English language.
5. The curriculum change should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate feedback and emerging issues.

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