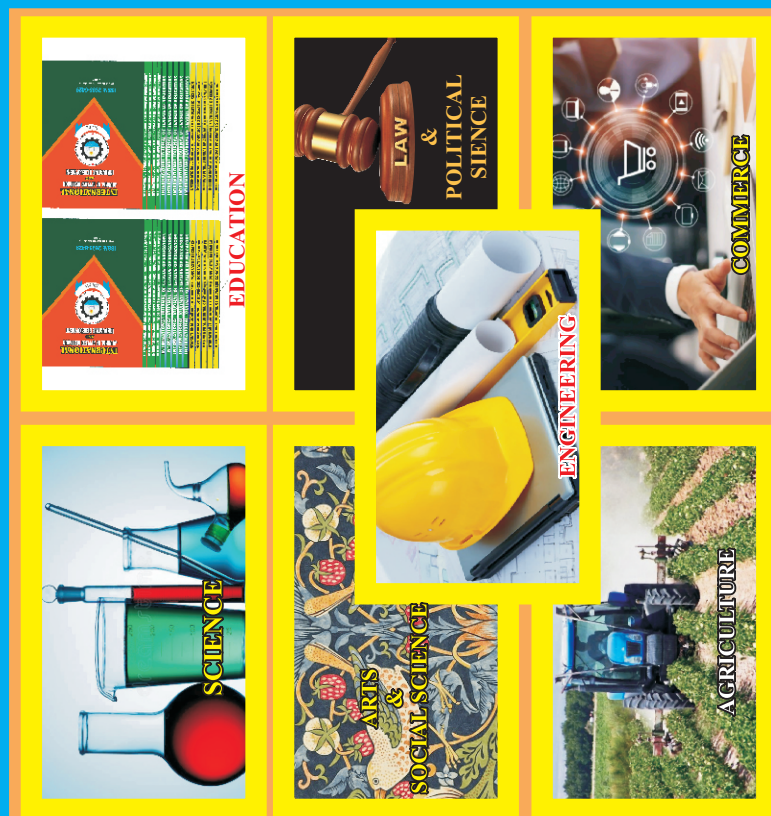




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FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN SOME SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This comprehensive exploration delves into the multifaceted challenges militating against the effective implementation of the English language curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nigeria. The study identifies and analyzes key factors hindering the success of English language education, spanning socioeconomic disparities, inadequate teacher training, curricular rigidity, assessment practices, linguistic diversity, infrastructure deficiency, socio-cultural influences, and more. Each section delves into specific challenges, providing scholarly insights and proposing evidence-based strategies for improvement. Drawing on a range of reputable sources, including reports, academic articles, and educational studies, this examination aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing English language education in the Nigerian context. The ultimate goal is to inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders, fostering collaborative efforts to address these challenges and pave the way for a more effective and inclusive English language curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords; Education, Curriculum, English Language, English Language Curriculum, Environment, Instructional material, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

The English language plays a crucial role in education, serving as the medium of instruction for most subjects in secondary schools across Nigeria. It is the official language of government, business, and the media, and it is essential for communication and participation in the globalized world. Despite its importance, the effective implementation of the English language curriculum remains a challenge in many Nigerian secondary schools.

Schools are established primarily for teaching and learning. School is an educational institution where people of different ages acquire education.

Examples of some institutions are pre-primary schools, primary schools, secondary schools (Mkpa, 2013). They provide a large variety of learning environments and learning spaces. School types range from public to private schools. Secondary schools in Nigeria irrespective of their types are expected to function in accordance with the attainment of the national education curriculum. As such, students are expected to pass their final examination as a proof of academic performance. In actualizing educational achievement of students, the Federal Ministry of Education in the National Policy on Education (2013) articulated what the curriculum of the various levels of education

should be in Nigeria. This includes the English Language curriculum for senior secondary schools.

Onwuka (2014) posited that curriculum is a total experience with which the school deals with, in educating the young people. Also, Mkpa (2013) sees curriculum as a vehicle through which the school strives towards the achievement of educational goals; be it those of the national, local government or even the community schools. The content of the English Language for example, at all levels of education consists of the four language skills which include reading, writing, speaking and listening. These skills consist of vocabulary and comprehension, summary, grammar, oral English, lexis and structure, essay and letter writing. It is based on this content that different schemes and topics for different classes are developed. Baldeh (2014) and Otagburuagu (2012) stated that language is a vehicle of communication.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the huge amount of money invested in education, implementation and achievement of the educational curriculum is still a major challenge, as lack of qualified and non-specialist teachers in English Language contribute to poor achievement of educational outcomes and goals in schools. Curriculum is a veritable vehicle through which education is attained. The secondary school curriculum as presently implemented is far from achieving the goals of secondary education. Teacher quality has to do with the professional qualification of teachers. The teacher must possess the teaching qualifications to enhance his instructional delivery process. A major setback in effective curriculum implementation is the problem of unqualified teachers, especially specialist teachers in English Language subjects. Note that junior secondary school level, due to shortage of teacher, the requirement of two Nigerian languages is no longer strictly observed.

Hence, most of the teachers in the secondary schools are not qualified to teach English Language introduced in the curriculum. Learning environment has been identified as one

of the major problems in curriculum implementation in senior secondary schools in Nigeria. Nigeria secondary schools have poor learning environment as such performance is very poor. However, a conducive learning environment must be created for the realization of the objectives of education in secondary schools. Good learning environment promotes quality education. Such environment goes beyond good classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostels, and teachers' attendance to workshops and conferences. It includes adequate social environment policies and practices, which prohibit students and teachers' harassment, examination malpractice, cultism and its associated violence. Education in Nigeria is associated with inadequate funding from the Federal, State and Local governments. The state of the secondary schools lack of workshop, conference etc prove the fact that the secondary schools in terms of facilities, classrooms, and equipment are inadequately funded far below the UNESCO estimation of 26% budgetary allocation to education which affects the curriculum implementation in Nigeria secondary schools. Teachers are identified as agents in the curriculum implementation process. Again, lack of adequate instructional materials and ineffective teaching method are factors responsible for poor implementation of English Language in some senior secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. This study therefore attempts to investigate how English language curriculum is being implemented among the various secondary schools.

Literature Review

The English language plays a pivotal role in education, serving as the medium of instruction for most subjects in secondary schools across Nigeria. Despite its importance, the effective implementation of the English language curriculum remains a challenge in many Nigerian secondary schools. This literature review explores the factors that militate against the effective implementation of the English language curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nigeria.

Overview of Curriculum

Curriculum is one of the concepts that are mostly used when issues concerning the school are discussed. This is as a result of the importance of curriculum in the school system and the society at large (Jeremiah and Alamina, 2017). Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study. The putting of the curriculum into practice requires an implementation agent. The teacher is identified as one of the agents in the curriculum implementation process. Implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, skills, knowledge, ideas, values and attitude that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in the society. The teacher, the learner, teaching and learning materials, the teaching environment, as well as the school management all constitute major players at the implementation stage. This is why curriculum implementation is seen as the daily activities of school management and classroom teacher in the pursuit of the achievement of the objectives of the school curriculum.

Obeta (2014) explained that curriculum involves all the process taken to ensure that as individual learner is passing through the school, the school is also passing through the learner. Professionally speaking, Tanner and Tanner (1975), as cited by Okoro (2015) saw curriculum as planned and guided learning experience and intended learning outcome, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school, for the learners' continuous and willful growth in personal social competence. Curriculum also involves all the experiences a student garners in school under the tutelage of a teacher. It is the total learning activities or educative experiences which an educational institution offers, through its education programmes designed to meet specific objectives. Amuzo (2017) in his study on the relationship between availability of expert teachers and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Nigeria found that quality and quantity of teachers significantly affect the implementation of curriculum in Nigeria schools; especially, at the secondary school level.

Nwiyi and Uriah (2017) in their study also discovered that teachers in secondary schools are inadequate and unqualified in most cases and as such, implementation of the curriculum becomes difficult as some did not go through teachers' training institutions. They observed that most teachers came into the teaching profession as the last resort due to lack of job, and cannot render or offer quality services; hence implementation of the curriculum is hampered. Offorma (2015) opined that the vocational and technical subjects are not effectively implemented as most of the subjects are not offered due to lack of teachers and workshops for practical work, and further noted that where there are teachers, the delivery is usually theorized because of lack of competence on the part of the teachers. English Language has been one of the core subjects in Nigeria secondary school curriculum.

Kedcity (2010) unraveled that the aim of English Language curriculum is to (i) broaden and deepen the language competences of students through basic education, (ii) develop the students' interest and confidence in the studying of English Language and also gain mastery of the subject matter; (iii) expand the students' knowledge on the understanding of various cultures in which English Language is anchored; (iv) developing and preparing students for advance studies, others skills for combating the changing knowledge based on technology, entrepreneurship, etc.

Similarly, there are some rationales for learning the English Language; one of which is English Language being a Language of global communication. English Language has become a veritable tool for information and knowledge assessment worldwide. It also helps individuals in developing right values and attitudes, establishes and maintains relationships with people, increases their understanding of different cultures, as well as widens their world views. Akogwu (2018) further opined that English Language is a Language of international business, trade and professional communication. It plays an important role in fostering learners abilities needed for life-long learning, creativity, problem-solving, innovation, as well as adjusting to the frequent /unpredictable changes and

demands a society gives. In addition, English Language creates a world for leisure and entertainment for learners. The mastery of English Language thus becomes very important to learners in Nigeria particularly Rivers State as it brings about new possibilities in intellectual development, social development, cultural understanding, educational attainment, advancement in career; and individual personal fulfillment. Secondary school prepares students for higher education (Oputa and Obiekwe, 2015). It brings connection between primary and higher education levels; designed for a period of six years (i.e. Junior Secondary 1 to Senior Secondary School 3) and attempts moulding students into great young men and women. Secondary school type could be urban or rural, public or private, boarding or day, as well as mixed or single. Urban secondary schools are located mainly in cities and towns while the rural secondary schools are located mainly in villages near the student parents.

Public schools in Nigeria have the Federal, State, and Local Governments as their proprietors while the private schools have individuals, organizations or associations as their owners and sponsors. Boarding school typifies a school where students are provided with accommodation to live in school hostel within the school environment during school term. Boarding schools could be full-boarding or the mixture of both boarders and day students that attend the institution by day and return to their different homes after school hours (Ahmed, Oliver and Danmole, 2017). Day school is that school where students attend studies and return to their homes after school hours without any form of hostel accommodation. Both boarding and day schools may be owned either privately or publicly. Single schools are prepared for a particular sex; that is, male only or female only, while mixed schools are designed for both sexes. It is expected however, that they comply with the recommended English language curriculum for uniformity and academic excellence of students. The study thus attempts to investigate the factors militating against the effective implementation of English Language Curriculum in some selected secondary schools: The types are urban,

rural, public, private, boys only, girls only and mixed.

Factors Affecting the Effective Implementation of English language Curriculum in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental tool for individual and societal development, and the mastery of English language skills plays a pivotal role in this process. In Nigeria, as in many other countries, the English language holds a unique status as the medium of instruction, a crucial subject in the curriculum, and a means of communication in various spheres of life. However, despite the recognition of its importance, the effective implementation of the English language curriculum in some selected secondary schools in Nigeria faces numerous challenges. This introduction explores the multifaceted factors that militate against the successful execution of the English language curriculum, ranging from systemic issues to teacher-related challenges and infrastructural constraints.

1. **Socioeconomic Disparities:** Nigeria, with its diverse socioeconomic landscape, presents a significant challenge to the effective implementation of the English language curriculum. Many secondary schools, particularly those in rural areas, grapple with insufficient resources, including textbooks, teaching aids, and qualified teachers. According to a report by the World Bank (2019), the disparity in resource allocation contributes to an uneven educational landscape, hindering the quality of English language instruction in these schools.
2. **Inadequate Teacher Training:** The success of any curriculum implementation hinges on the competence of educators delivering it. In the Nigerian context, the shortage of adequately trained English language teachers is a critical issue. A study conducted by Adegaju (2018) revealed that a substantial number of English language teachers in secondary schools lack the necessary pedagogical skills and

training required to effectively impart language skills to students. This deficiency in teacher preparation directly impacts the quality of instruction and hampers the overall success of the curriculum.

3. **Curricular Rigidity:** The English language curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools often faces criticism for its rigidity and lack of adaptability to the evolving needs of students and society. A study by Oladipo (2020) argued that the curriculum's outdated content and teaching methods hinder the development of essential language skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving. This rigidity poses a challenge to educators striving to engage students and foster a dynamic learning environment.
4. **Assessment Practices:** The assessment methods employed in evaluating students' proficiency in English also contribute to the challenges faced in curriculum implementation. Traditional examination-oriented assessments, with a primary focus on rote memorization, may not effectively gauge students' practical language skills. Ogunleye (2017) noted that an overemphasis on written examinations stifles creativity and impedes a holistic understanding of the English language. This misalignment between assessment practices and curriculum goals undermines the intended outcomes of language education.
5. **Language Policy and Multilingualism:** Nigeria is linguistically diverse, with over 500 languages spoken across the country. The coexistence of multiple languages presents a unique challenge in the effective implementation of the English language curriculum. The language policy, which advocates for the use of English as the medium of

instruction, can create a linguistic dissonance for students whose first language is not English. A study by Adebayo (2016) revealed that students often struggle with the transition from their native languages to English, impacting their overall language proficiency and comprehension.

6. **Infrastructure Deficiency:** Another factor impeding the effective implementation of the English language curriculum in selected secondary schools is the lack of adequate infrastructure. Poorly equipped classrooms, insufficient libraries, and limited access to technology hinder the application of modern teaching methods. According to a UNESCO report (2018), inadequate infrastructure exacerbates the challenges faced by teachers, making it difficult to create an interactive and technology-driven learning environment essential for language development.
7. **Socio-cultural Factors:** The socio-cultural context within which education occurs also plays a role in shaping the success of the English language curriculum. Cultural attitudes towards education, societal expectations, and gender roles can influence students' motivation and participation in language learning. A study by Ibrahim (2019) found that prevailing societal norms in some regions of Nigeria discourage certain groups, particularly girls, from pursuing education, limiting their access to English language instruction and impeding the achievement of curriculum objectives.
8. **Limited Access to Technology:** The digital divide is a significant obstacle to effective English language instruction in some Nigerian secondary schools. Access to technology, such as computers and the internet, is unevenly distributed, with urban schools having better access than their rural counterparts. Adequate

integration of technology into language teaching is crucial for developing students' digital literacy and enhancing their language skills. However, a study by Abiodun (2021) highlights that many schools lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to leverage technology for language education, exacerbating the gap in language proficiency.

9. **Parental Involvement and Support:**

The role of parents in shaping students' attitudes and performance in English language studies cannot be overstated. However, some parents in Nigeria may face challenges in supporting their children's education due to factors such as low literacy levels, economic constraints, or a lack of awareness about the importance of English language skills. A study by Okafor (2018) found that students with limited parental support often struggle academically in English language courses, emphasizing the need for increased community engagement and awareness programs to bridge this gap.

10. **Inadequate Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Effective implementation of any curriculum requires continuous monitoring and evaluation to assess its impact and identify areas for improvement. However, the lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation system in some Nigerian secondary schools contributes to the persistence of challenges in English language education. According to a report by the Ministry of Education (2022), the absence of regular assessments and feedback mechanisms hinders the timely identification of problems and the implementation of targeted interventions.

11. **Security Concerns:** In certain regions of Nigeria, persistent security challenges have a direct impact on the educational system. Instances of school closures due

to insecurity disrupt the continuity of English language instruction, leading to learning gaps and hindering the overall curriculum implementation. The insecurity not only affects the physical safety of students and teachers but also creates an environment of fear and uncertainty, undermining the conducive atmosphere required for effective language learning (UNICEF, 2021).

12. **Lack of Motivation Among Students:**

Student motivation is a crucial factor in the success of any educational program. In some secondary schools in Nigeria, a lack of motivation among students poses a challenge to the effective implementation of the English language curriculum. Factors such as a perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum to their future aspirations, uninspiring teaching methods, and competing priorities outside of school contribute to low motivation levels. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that considers both curriculum content and pedagogical strategies (Umar, 2020).

13. **Budgetary Constraints:**

The allocation of financial resources to the education sector significantly influences the quality of curriculum implementation. Unfortunately, budgetary constraints often limit the ability of schools to address critical needs such as teacher training, infrastructure development, and the provision of up-to-date instructional materials. A study by Nwagbo (2019) emphasizes the importance of increased government investment in education to overcome these challenges and ensure a conducive environment for effective English language instruction.

14. **Overcrowded Classrooms:**

Overcrowded classrooms are a common sight in many Nigerian secondary schools, particularly in urban areas. Large class sizes make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized

attention to students and implement interactive teaching methods that enhance language skills. Research by Afolayan (2018) indicates that reducing class sizes and employing student-centered approaches could significantly improve the quality of English language education in overcrowded classrooms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the challenges facing the effective implementation of the English language curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nigeria are diverse and interconnected. From limited access to technology and inadequate monitoring to security concerns and overcrowded classrooms, these factors collectively impede the development of proficient language skills among students. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that involves policymakers, educators, parents, and the broader community. The subsequent sections of this research will delve deeper into each of these challenges, examining their nuanced implications and proposing evidence-based strategies to foster a more conducive environment for English language education in Nigerian secondary schools.

Recommendations

1. Provide comprehensive and ongoing teacher training in ESL methodology. This could include workshops, seminars, and online courses to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach English to second language learners.
2. Motivate teachers by improving their working conditions and providing incentives. This could include increasing salaries, reducing workload, and offering opportunities for professional development and recognition.
3. Establish a supportive school environment that values and empowers teachers. This could involve providing teachers with regular feedback, opportunities for collaboration, and access to resources and support.
4. Reduce class sizes to allow for more individualized attention. This could involve hiring more teachers, utilizing technology to supplement instruction, or adopting alternative teaching methods.
5. Implement effective language support strategies to address language barriers. This could include providing English language learners with access to bilingual dictionaries, translation services, and specialized language instruction.
6. Increase student motivation by making English language learning more relevant and engaging. This could involve incorporating real-world examples, using technology in the classroom, and providing opportunities for student-centered activities.

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