



TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE PRACTICAL FEASIBILITY OF OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the objectives of the newly developed curriculum for English language in Nigeria in terms of the opinions of students and teachers on the feasibility of such objectives. The study made use of questionnaire and interview to collect information from 150 respondents across rural and urban areas. The results showed that both students and teachers were of the opinion that the objectives are feasible and achievable. Appropriate recommendations were made.

Introduction

Teaching language is noted as one of difficult activities for teachers. It is therefore very necessary to device the right techniques and strategies are for effective delivery of language instruction especially in English. The popularity of English language is well acclaimed all over the world, therefore there is the need for teachers to teach and arouse students' interest in order for the objectives of the lesson to be achieved in the classroom. Usually due to the difficulties in learning, English language can make students lose their interest especially when there seems to be conflict between the students' perceived objectives of the language learning and the curricular objectives. Interest is one of the strongest motivations for learning English. Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting English language learning (Gardner, 1985). Parsons, Hinson and Brown (2001) define motivation as an important component or factor in the learning process. Learning and motivation have the same importance in order to achieve something. Learning makes it possible to gain new knowledge and skills and motivation pushes to go through the learning process

(Wimolmas, 2013). Ellis (1997) stated that as teachers, there is the need to explore more fully the factors that are involved in motivating students to perform tasks well because this is something that teachers have some control over. Such factors include the opinions of students and teachers about the practicality of the curricular objectives. Therefore, it is important to find out the underlying possible factors which affect students' interest in learning English(Wimolmas, 2013). This study was conducted to investigate the perception of teachers and students about the feasibility of English language curricular objectives. Hopefully from the study, information would be obtained as to the opinions of teachers and students about the acceptability of English language learning objectives.

Statement of the Problem

Objectives of language learning determine classroom learning activities. These activities are expected to be designed and implemented jointly by both the teacher and the learners. The teacher takes the lead in designing and executing the classroom learning experiences which invariably are conceived based on the opinion of the teachers about the learning experiences. An understanding of the

perception of the teachers about the English language learning objectives is necessary to assess the appropriateness of teachers’ activities in the classroom.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to examine the perception of the teachers on how achievable are the learning objectives of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. Specifically the study was to assess the opinion of teachers in rural and urban settings on the practical feasibility of the objectives of the secondary school new English language curriculum.

Research hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers in rural and urban settings on the practical feasibility of the objectives of the secondary school new English language curriculum.

Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in selected senior secondary schools in Ife-Ijesa community of Osun State, Southwestern Nigeria. The schools are Oluorogbo High School and Moremi High School in Ile-Ife and Ibodi Community High School, Ibodi. The study was limited to the teachers of the English language because of their training, experience and competence. The teachers are also expected to implement the new English language programme.

Methodology

This section discusses the research methodology, design sample selection instrument and statistical techniques used in analysing the data for the study. The subjects for the study consisted of 15 intact senior secondary Year I students drawn from four secondary schools in both urban Ile-Ife and rural Ibodi areas. The ages of the students ranged from 17 years and six months to 18 years and three months.

Two instruments were developed for the study; these are Teachers and students

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Responses of teachers in urban and rural settings on the practical feasibility of the objectives of the new document(N=25)

Subject	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Urban Teachers (Yes)	11	1.3	
Rural Teachers (Yes)	7	2. .8	11;.71

questionnaires. The teachers attitudinal questionnaire which contained 16 items grouped into four categories was designed to solicit teachers responses on (1) cultural relevance, (2) availability of instructional materials, (3) involvement of teachers (4) practicality of objectives in relation to the secondary school new English language curriculum. The students questionnaire contained 30 items dealing with students interest in the new English language curriculum and how they think the objectives of the new curriculum are in line with their interest.

Reliability indices of the items in the questionnaire of the Teachers and students were established to be 0.75 and 0.78 respectively using the Kinder Richardson Formula. The validity of the instruments was established by the assistance of four experienced English language teachers involved in the teaching of the senior secondary school new English language curriculum and a curriculum expert knowledgeable about the objectives of the study.

Originally, the Teacher's Questionnaire contained 25 items. But after the comments and suggestions of experts involved in the validation only 16 items finally survived the scrutiny of the experts. Also there were 36 items in the original version of the students' questionnaire but were reduced to 25 after the comments and suggestions of the experts involved in the validation process

The validated Teachers questionnaire was administered to 25 teachers in urban and 25 teachers in rural schools. The Students instrument was also administered to 150 students (75 in urban and 75 in rural schools). Administration of the instruments to the students was carried out in intact classroom settings. In both administrations, trained research assistants in the respective schools assisted in collecting the subjects responses.

Table 2: Responses of teachers in urban and rural settings on the practical feasibility of the objectives of the new document

Question	Urban Area				Rural Area				Total	
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	No
8	6	21*	19	76	9	36	16	61*	15	35
17	22	88	3	12	5	20	20	80	27	57

Presenting the analysis of the data on table 2 one needs to refer to the terminal objectives stated in the preamble of the curriculum document under investigation. These terminal objectives are:-

1. Provide students with a sound linguistic basis for further learning in tertiary and vocational institutions.
2. Equip school leavers with a satisfactory level of proficiency in English language usage in their places of work.
3. Emulate a love of reading as a pleasurable activity.
4. Promote the art of spoken English as a medium for national and international communication.
5. Enhance and develop further the various skills and competences already acquired at the Junior secondary school level.

For example, the second objective requires the student to speak satisfactorily in their places of work, it will be easier to achieve that objective by giving students topic which are part and parcel of the students' daily life so that learning becomes meaningful and concrete rather than abstract. According to the National Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools performance objective associated with dairy farming states:

Students should be able to talk and write effectively about activities connected with farming and food storage

And under class activities they are supposed to 'Describe some by-products of animal husbandry e.g. milk, cheese, pork, beef p.e. Where in Nigeria are the dairy cows for

them to see? In the absence of this practical experience how can they 'talk and write effectively' on the practical experience they never had?

Bearing in mind one of the specific objectives of this research which is to investigate practical feasibility of the objectives, and methods

and approaches of teaching recommended in the programme, teachers were requested to respond to item 8 as to whether or not the objectives are achievable.

Teachers' responses to item 8 show that only- twenty four percent or 6 of the teachers in urban areas indicated that the objectives are achievable. In contrast seventy-six percent or 19 of the teachers indicated that the objectives are usually not achievable. In the rural areas on the contrary thirty-six percent or 9 of the teachers indicated that the objectives of the new English language programme are achievable. In the rural areas on the contrary, 9(36%) of the teachers indicated that the objectives of the new English language programme are achievable. Sixty-four percent or 16 however indicated that the objectives are achievable. In summary twenty percent of all the teachers in both urban and rural areas indicated that the objectives are not achievable.

Interview with some of the teachers showed that most of them in both urban and rural areas (see Table I.) indicated the fact that inability to achieve recommended objectives as one of the probable reasons for mass failure in English at the national level. In short it appears that most of the teachers in both urban and rural settings felt that there is need for a closer look at the new curriculum with a view to making its recommended objectives achievable. There is also need for re-visiting the document in terms of making its recommended methods and approaches achievable.

When the responses to the question in item 1 regarding a visit to a dairy farm only 22 (88%) of the teachers in urban areas indicated that they have visited a dairy farm. In contrast 3 (12%) of the teachers indicated that they never visited a dairy farm. In the rural areas, on the contrary, 5(20%) of the teachers indicated that they have visited a dairy farm while 20 (80%) of the teachers indicated that they have never visited a dairy farm.

Fifty-four percent of the teachers in both urban and rural areas indicated that they have never visited a dairy farm. An analysis of these responses show that fifty percent of the teachers who responded to the question have visited a dairy farm while the other fifty percent have never visited a dairy farm. It was observed that a greater percentage eighty-eight or 22 of the teachers in schools in the urban area claimed to have visited a dairy farm while only twenty percent of those in schools in the rural area claimed to have a similar experience. The teachers revealed that most of them visited dairy farms whilst abroad.

In a similar interview, the teachers in rural area revealed that there is no dairy farm around for them to visit.

It will be recalled that the new English language curriculum recommends that teachers should visit or take pupils to visit a dairy farm in order to complement the teaching of animal husbandry as contained in the document. With the absence of dairy farms in the teachers vicinity coupled with the fact that most of the teachers eighty-eight percent have never seen a dairy farm before, it is most likely that this defect may affect the implementation of this particular aspect of the programme. For example, the document specified under class activities under vocabulary development that "Pay a visit to a dairy farm" p.2 and under listening comprehension the document specifies "(a) Tape recorded speech talk (b) Live broadcast".

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