

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE READING COMPONENT OF THE NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (NCE) ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM: IMPLICATION FOR QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: The study was aimed at evaluating the implementation of the Reading Component of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) English Language Curriculum for colleges of Education. This study was carried out using some colleges of Education in Kaduna, Nigeria. Twenty (20) teachers and fifty (50) students i.e (teachers-in-training) were used for the study. A questionnaire tagged "Evaluation of the Implementation of the Reading Component of the Nigeria Certificate in Education English Language Curriculum (EIRCNEELC) was used to collect data from respondents. Data obtained was analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that the reading component of the NCE English Language Curriculum does not seem to be robust enough to train NCE students to become functional readers and effective reading instructors at the primary and secondary school level. The implementation of the curriculum was not efficiently and effectively done. In order to improve the quality of teachers in Teacher Education Programmes in Nigeria, the reading component of the NCE English language curriculum should be reviewed. The content should include topics/activities that will make NCE students become functional, competent, effective and efficient reading instructors at all levels of Education.

Keywords: Evaluation, Implementation, Reading, Curriculum, Teacher Education, Certificate

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Bright and McGregor (1973) refers to reading as "the core of the syllabus". Reading provides most students with the situations in which learning takes place. Where there is little reading, there will be little language learning. It is only by reading that learners can acquire the speed and skills needed for practical purposes when they leave school. Reading is the key to success in life, both in and out of school. Further education, especially in general knowledge will largely depend on the quantity and quality of reading. The more students read, the more background knowledge they acquire of other ways of life, behaviour and thought; and the more books they also find they can understand.

Besides these values derived from reading and understanding words in print, Bright and McGregor (1973) are of the opinion that reading sharpens sight and insight, widens experience and provides occasions for the exercise of judgment about man and his condition. It helps with the main business of education, the production of men and women capable of appropriate response to life, which includes response to examinations. It does this by making the mind work, re-create, at a level otherwise unattainable.

Reading and comprehension of written passages are essential part of education. They raise the level at which the mind can function, giving form and meaning to the data of experience, widen and deepen experience itself, offer attitudes, set out moral issues and deal with the matters of truth, goodness and beauty.

The Curriculum of the Nigeria Certificate in Education is known as the Minimum Standards for NCE. The extent to which the objectives of the curriculum are attained every year by the graduates of the colleges is in doubt. As Olaofe (2013) noted that the teaching of English is defective in schools (primary and secondary) and teachers are not proficient in the four language skills viz listening, speaking, reading and writing. There has also been a call for the review of the curriculum. Ajayi and Emoruwa (2012) discovered in their study that students' academic performance was poor and there was the need for a review of the curriculum.

One of the important consequences of the vital role of English language (which reading is a part of) in our national life is that it has been learnt consistently at school over a long period of time by every school child more than any other subject. Other subjects have to be taught, learnt and evaluated using the medium of English language. Thus, success at each level of the educational system depends largely on competence in English and this puts additional heavy responsibility on the English teacher who incidentally, is also the Reading

teacher. He/she should not only be interested in the teaching of general 'English' but also reading skills and reading instruction. It is in view of the foregoing that this study sets out to evaluate the implementation of the reading component of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) English language curriculum.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher education is designed to produce highly motivated, sensitive, conscientious and successful classroom teachers that will handle students academically and professionally for better educational achievement. The objectives of the NCE programme are to:

- a) Develop the four English language skills; listening; speaking, reading, and writing for communicative purposes;
- b) Make students to become confident and competent in the use of spoken and written English for various purposes.
- c) Equip students to teach English effectively at the J.S.S. level; and
- d) Prepare students for further studies in the subject.

In any country, the quality of education cannot surpass the teachers' quality. Teacher quality is an important variable in the achievement of students as research (Bamber and Mourshed, 2007) has shown that the outcome of students' performance is dependent on teacher quality. Teacher quality is an indicator of the importance of teacher training (Mohammed and Yusuf, 2014). The different achievement levels of students are majorly dependent on the quality of teachers as research confirms that a positive difference in the achievement level of students is mainly traceable to teachers (Gbenu, 2012). It has been asserted by the Science and Engineering Indicators that the index of teacher quality are the academic capabilities of the entrants into the teaching workforce, the education and preparation of teachers in teaching, consistency or inconsistency between teachers' schooling and subject content allocated each teacher and the experience level of the teachers.

The prosperity of the economy of a nation is dependent on the quality of the teaching workforce. It has been affirmed that the quality and quantity of education provided is the rationale for the distinctiveness in the economies of developed and undeveloped nations. In addition, Olulobe (2006) contends that "a country can only develop significantly and attain greater heights in the committee of nations through a comprehensive teacher education programme". In some countries, such as Finland, the teaching profession is an enviable one, as one out of every 10 selective candidate is accepted into teacher training programmes after two processes of selection. In Singapore also, potential teachers are chosen from the best students in the secondary schools.

In Nigeria, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is stated as the minimum entry qualification into teaching. With these laudable objectives, it would be expected that only the intellectually promising and qualified persons should be trained as teachers. Unfortunately, most of the students admitted into our Teacher Education institutions are usually the worst academically. Better qualified youths prefer to seek admission into other departments and faculties different from education. Gbenu (2012) reported that about 23% of the over 400,000 teachers employed to teach in the nation's primary schools do not possess the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate, even when the minimum educational requirement to teach in the nation's primary schools had been upgraded to NCE.

In a study conducted by Akinbote (2007) to investigate the entry qualifications of colleges of education students and their reasons for enrolling in the colleges, it was revealed that most of the students admitted into the colleges were the "dregs of the society". Students admitted usually had no other admission option and it was also reported that just 24% of the sample studied met the requirements of good students (i.e students, who got 5 credits at one sitting) from secondary schools; the colleges had intended at their inception to admit brilliant students of secondary schools and teacher training colleges.

According to Yoloye (1978), the major role of educational evaluation may be to inform the producers about the worth of what they are producing considering the energy, the time and the money invested. Educational Evaluation helps in producing a worthwhile material. It also helps in the selling of a programme to involve the policy makers to produce or improve the quality of the competing programmes initiated by the ministries.

Obanya (1985) suggested that one of the purposes of evaluation in education is to identify some of the problems that the students may need to overcome in order to progress in learning. Evaluation facilitates the

identification of what is left to be learned. It produces feedback on students' achievement and encourages men to learn more and progress faster in the instructional programmes.

At this point, it is important to explain the concepts of Evaluation and Implementation. Evaluation in Education provides adequate and effective feed back on students' achievement not only in the cognitive area, but also in the areas of interest and manipulative skills. It provides feed-back from students to the teacher about the effect of the teacher's teaching method. It also provides feedback from the teachers to the parents about their ward's performance. It provides feed-back from school administrators to the policy makers to determine the success of the programme. Continual educational evaluation provides valuable information about the students' progress and comparison with other students in the class. Adequate educational evaluation also acts as an incentive to students' studies.

Implementation on the other hand is an interaction between those who have created the programme and those who are charged to deliver it. Implementation requires educators to shift from the current programme which they are familiar with to the new or modified programme. Implementation involves changes in the knowledge, actions and attitudes of people (Yusuf, 2012).

Curriculum needs to be implemented with the help of teachers in an actual school setting to find out if the curriculum achieved its goals. Implementation refers to the actual use of the curriculum or syllabus or what it consists of in practice. Implementation is a critical phase in the cycles of planning and teaching a curriculum.

Implementation of the curriculum does not focus on the actual use but also on the attitudes of those who implement it. These attitudinal dispositions are partially important in educational systems where teachers and principals have the opportunity to choose among competing curriculum packages.

According to Oyetunde (2002), curriculum implementation at the classroom level is the responsibility of the teacher. It is the teacher who translates the objectives, concepts and topics in the curriculum into activities that are meaningful to the learners. Oyetunde (2009) holds tenaciously that, the teacher must have a good knowledge of the curriculum and be able to decide the depth to which a subject should be studied at the different levels of education.

Yunusa (2008), states that in particular, it is important that the teacher should know how to reduce the different topics of the curriculum to specific lesson plans. Doing this requires not only a knowledge of the curriculum but also an understanding of what is involved in teaching and learning. Teachers, for example, need to see themselves as both facilitators of knowledge and encouragers of learners. In other words, they are both planners and mediators of learning, who teach not only the content but also the strategies required by the content to make learning meaningful, integrated, and transferable.

There are several components in the curriculum that make implementation easier, simpler and realizable. The teacher who is the implementer of the curriculum must as a matter of fact know what constitutes effective teaching on his own side. The teacher must organize and explain the content in ways appropriate to students' abilities and must as a matter of fact, create a conducive environment for learning. It is against all of the foregoing that this study was undertaken to evaluate the implementation of the reading component of the NCE curriculum in English language.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To evaluate the level of implementation of the reading component of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) English language curriculum.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the level of implementation of the reading component of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) English language curriculum?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. The study was carried out using the two Colleges of Education

available in Kaduna state i.e Federal college of Education, Zaria and College of Education, Gidan waya. Twenty (20) teachers and fifty (50) students were used for the study. A questionnaire tagged “ Evaluation of the implementation of the reading component of the Nigeria certificate in Education English language curriculum (EIRCNEELC) was used to collect data from respondents. The study also made use of classroom observation schedule in order to assess the implementation of the curriculum. The instrument was designed to take on the spot record of what happens in the classroom during a typical reading lesson. The method adopted by teachers in teaching reading, activities of both teachers and students during the lesson, as well as the mode or technique adopted by the teachers are also captured in the instrument. Each observation lasted the duration of the lesson. Data obtained was analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Table 1: categorization of teachers by their highest educational qualification

Highest qualification	Frequency	Percentage
NCE English	NIL	0
NCE (other subjects)	Nil	0
BA Ed/BA	5	25
MA/M.Ed	12	60
PhD	3	15

Table 1 indicates that none of the teachers had NCE as highest qualification. Though some of them had NCE and B.Ed. 25% had BA.Ed/BA, 60% had MA/M.Ed and 15% had PhD. This implies that majority of the teachers are qualified to teach in Colleges of Education in Kaduna State.

Table 2: Categorization of teachers by their years of experience on the job

Years of teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 5	10	50
6 – 10	8	40
11 – 15	2	10
16 – 20	NIL	0
Above 20 years	NIL	0

Table 2 shows that majority of the teachers had between 1 – 10 years experience. Only 10% had between 11 – 15 years experience. None of the teachers had above 16 years experience. This implies that majority of teachers had reasonable years of teaching experience to teach effectively in the colleges of Education.

The observed implementation levels of the reading component of the NCE English Language Curriculum were assessed on a four point Likert scale. These were very well implemented (VW), well implemented (W), poorly implemented (P) and very poorly (VP) implemented.

Table 3: Implementation of the reading component of the NCE curriculum in English language as perceived by teachers.

Curriculum contents	VW	W	P	VP
Reading challenges	8(40%)	12(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Eye regression	15(75%)	5(25%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Training with fingers	7(35%)	10(50%)	3(15%)	0(0%)
Repetition (in oral reading)	9(45%)	9(45%)	2(10%)	0(0%)
Word recognition/analysis	13(65%)	5(25%)	2(10%)	0(0%)
Word comprehension	8(40%)	12(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Sentence comprehension	13(65%)	7(35%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Paragraph comprehension	5(25%)	15(75%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Text comprehension for areas such as inferential reading and critical reading	4(20%)	8(40%)	7(35%)	1(5%)
Reading for sequence	5(25%)	10(50%)	5(25%)	0(0%)
Intensive and extensive reading practice including poetry and prose	5(25%)	12(60%)	2(10%)	1(5%)
Drama passages involving narration of real life stories and exposing students to diverse texts.	7(35%)	8(40%)	4(20%)	1(5%)

Table 3 revealed that most teachers (more than 85%) are of the opinion that the reading component of the NCE curriculum in English language is well implemented in their colleges of Education. The only area they have difficulty in implementing is inferential reading and critical reading.

Table 4: Implementation of the reading component of the curriculum as perceived by teachers-in-training.

Curriculum contents	VW	W	P	VP
Reading challenges	0(0%)	5(10%)	35(70%)	10(20%)
Eye regression	0(0%)	10(20%)	23(46%)	17(34%)
Training with fingers	0(0%)	5(10%)	27(54%)	18(36%)
Repetition (in oral reading)	0(0%)	3(6%)	25(50%)	12(24%)
Word recognition / analysis	0(0%)	5(10%)	35(70%)	10(20%)
Word comprehension	0(0%)	8(16%)	33(66%)	9(18%)
Sentence comprehension	0(0%)	10(20%)	29(58%)	11(22%)
Paragraph comprehension	0(0%)	3(6%)	37(74%)	10(20%)

Text comprehension for areas such as inferential reading and critical	0(0%)	5(10%)	30(60%)	15(30%)
Reading for sequence	0(0%)	7(14%)	23(46%)	20(20%)
Intensive and Extensive reading practice to include poetry, prose and	0(0%)	5(10%)	35(70%)	10(20%)
Drama passages involving narration of real life stories expose students to diverse texts	0(0%)	4(8%)	30(60%)	16(32%)

Most teachers as perceived by the students in training have much difficulty in implementing text comprehension such as inferential reading and critical reading. They often tend to ignore such areas rather teach them.

The classroom observation of the actual implementation of the reading component of the English language curriculum is presented in table 5 and 6. The scores in the tables were converted into percentages to enable even comparison of the actual implementation of the curriculum in the selected colleges.

Table 5: Classroom Observation

Curriculum contents	Level of implementation in COE 1 %	Method of teaching	
		Lecture method	Modified lecture method
Reading challenges	50	93	7
Word recognition / analysis	53	95	5
Word comprehension	72	98	0
Sentence comprehension	70	95	5
Paragraph comprehension	65	91	9
Text comprehension for inferential And critical reading	50	100	0
Reading for sequence	55	98	1
Intensive and Extensive Reading	62	99	1
Drama passages	50	97	3

Table 5 indicates that most of the curriculum contents were implemented at the level of 50-70%. Extra effort needs to be put in by teachers to raise the level of implementation. The methods used by most teachers (over 90%) in teaching the reading component of the NCE curriculum is purely lecture method. The implication of this is that it does not make teaching learner based on student centred but rather teacher based or teacher centred. This may not be a favourable trend. Most of the teachers use oral questions for evaluation and students activities.

Table 6: Classroom Observation

Curriculum contents	Level of implementation in COE 2	Method of teaching	
		Lecture method	Modified method
	%		
Reading challenges	50	98	2
Word recognition / analysis	55	96	4
Word comprehension	80	99	1
Sentence comprehension	78	100	0
Paragraph comprehension	75	99	1
Text comprehension for inferential	51	92	8
And critical reading	50	97	3
Reading for sequence	60	99	1
Intensive and Extensive Reading	52	98	2
Drama passages	50	100	0

Table 6 indicates that most of the curriculum contents were implemented at the level of 50-80% Extra effort needs to be put in by the teachers to raise the level of implementation to 100%. More than 90% of teachers use lecture method to teach the curriculum contents and they use oral questions for evaluation and as a technique for students' activities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study has identified challenges implementation of the reading component of the NCE English language curriculum. The observation carried out revealed poor interpretation of the curriculum and monotonous lecture method as probably the main cause of ineffective implementation. The teacher trainees complained that they are not really taught all of the content of the reading component of the curriculum and the curriculum is inadequate in terms of content. Teacher trainees are not adequately equipped and oriented to prepare teachers meaningfully for reading instruction at the primary or JSS level. Teachers confessed that most often, they tend to ignore or poorly teach reading as a component of the English language curriculum as a matter of fact teachers said they pay more attention to other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing more than reading. Most teachers are however of the opinion that the curriculum is well implemented, whereas, the teacher trainees are of the opinion that teachers have difficulty in implementing the curriculum. Teachers observed demonstrated very limited understanding of the basic principles of reading instruction. This study is in line with Olaofe (2013) Ajayi & Emoruwa (2012) and Ololube (2006) who emphasized the need to improve the quality of teachers in our teacher training colleges in order to improve the quality of Education in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study had revealed the vital role of teachers in curriculum implementation. The implementation of the reading component of the NCE English language curriculum has not been efficiently and effectively done by teachers due to poor interpretation of the, overcrowded classrooms, and monotonous teaching method.

Teachers need to create environment that are conducive for learning for quality teacher education as no nation can rise above the standard or quality of her teachers. The respondents data revealed that both NCE students and teachers want a review of the curriculum from time to time. They also want to be involved in the curriculum development process. Teachers should not be merely implementers of the curriculum alone, they should be partners in the process of development. There is no doubt that promoting teacher quality is a key element in improving primary, secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of teachers in Teacher Education Programmes in Nigeria, the reading component of the NCE English language Curriculum should be reviewed to include the basic principles of reading instruction.

The content of the reading component of the English language Curriculum should include topics/activities that will make NCE students (would-be teachers or teacher trainees) become functional, competent, effective and efficient reading instructors at all levels of Education. Such topics could include the concept skills nature and process of reading, how children learn to read, methods of teaching reading, etc. such topics if included in the curriculum will help to make it robust and make NCE would-be teachers to become functional readers and effective reading instructors at the primary and secondary levels of education.

Ineffective implementation of the reading component of the NCE English language Curriculum could be attributed to the lack of some basic facilities such as reading rooms, well-equipped library, large classrooms that can accommodate large group of students, audio visual materials, ICT facilities etc. These basic facilities should be provided to facilitate the smooth implementation of the curriculum.

The methodology of teaching reading should be taught intensively and extensively in all Colleges of Education throughout the 3 years duration of the NCE programme.

Teachers need to present their lessons in ways that are meaningful for learning and in ways that will encourage students to take notes. This will help to arouse their interest and also make them more attentive and alert in class.

Implication for Quality Teacher Education

Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions should offer courses in Reading in order to produce quality reading specialists.

Teachers of English language should ensure that their activities do not always dominate those of the students in any given lesson because for the teaching/learning to be meaningful and result oriented both teachers and students must be actively involved. Teaching should be learner centred not teacher centred.

It is often said that no country or nation can rise above the standard and quality of its teachers. Therefore, in order to improve the economy of the Nation and to improve the quality of teachers nationwide, teachers should constantly be trained and retrained through workshops, seminars/conferences to improve their teaching methodology for quality curriculum content delivery.

Teachers need to constantly reflect and evaluate their teaching in order to improve on the quality of their teaching.

Teachers who do not have teaching qualification, masters degree or doctorate degrees should be encouraged to enrol for such programmes in order to upgrade their qualification.

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