



Bridging the Funding Gap: Issues Militating Against the Teaching of English Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria is still struggling to attain quality in its education due to poor funding to the sector. There are known factors suppressing the actualization of quality education in the country which includes; dilapidated facilities and lack of commitment of stakeholders in maintaining and innovating them, very poor funding and management as well as bad governance. Teaching and learning English language are also affected by these factors. This study seeks to identify the problems militating against the teaching and learning of English language, it also analyzed the implications of these problems on the performance of junior secondary school students in English language in Awka South local government area of Anambra State. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design in addressing the research problem in the study location. A total of 250 respondents constitute the research population (comprising 200 junior secondary school students and 30 English language teachers purposively sampled from 10 junior secondary schools). Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the field. Results from the study findings reveal that too much work load, poor teacher's welfare, inadequate facilities, lack of proficient teachers, poor school management, overcrowded classrooms are negatively associated with the effective teaching of English language in the study location. The research concluded that inadequate funding has significantly contributed to the poor teaching of English language in Awka South local government area of Anambra State. Based on the results from the study findings, this research recommends that government at all levels and stakeholders in private sector should employ more teachers, implement good teachers' welfare program and funds, provide sufficient facilities and resources, encourage the use of English language by providing more scholarships, training and competitions programmes for both teachers and students. Also, there is need for English language teachers to be engaged in professional development, attending trainings, and deploy the best methods in teaching English language.

Keyword : Funding-gap, Issues with Teaching and Learning, English language.

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Introduction

Education involves the acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills via various forms of learning. It could be through schooling (formal education), self-study, teaching, and training. Education is a life-long process of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to prosecute personal interest and to effectively participate and

contribute to socio-economic development of one's community. Formal education includes elementary, secondary, and higher education, vocational training. There are informal forms of education which includes self-training, on-the-job training and apprenticeships. The goals of education vary with context and according to individuals, however, it basically entails promoting intellectual development, development of critical thinking abilities and problem-solving skills, promoting creativity and innovation, and inculcating moral and ethical values in the individuals. Education is very important in human civilization. It equips people with right kind of knowledge and keep them informed about their environment. When one is informed, he/she makes better decisions. It is seen as tool for self-empowerment. The enormous gains of education may not be realized if an individual lacks the willingness to endure the process of education. It has been found that rewards and incentives help especially the younger minds to endure the process of learning. At this juncture, we must begin to consider the role instructors play in education – their methods and professionalism in instructing learners are crucial in context (Bano, 2018; Kingdom &Maekae, 2019; NadBarte, 2020; Prasad &Pushpa, 2020;Bhat, 2018 & United Nations, 2023) Education is key in the socio-economic development of any nation, Nigeria inclusive. It does this by way of equipping individuals with skills and knowledge which will increase their productivity, improve their health awareness, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, reduce poverty and empower women. In (Abosedo, 2020; Onwioduokit, 2020 &United Nations, 2023), the United Nations posits that "Education promotes socio-economic mobility and plays a vital role in escaping poverty. Education reduces gender inequalities and gender equalities in very important in the peaceful coexistence."

The importance of education cannot be over emphasized, however, more than 258 (nearly one fifth of the global population) million children and youth were reported to be out of school in 2023. (United Nations, 2023). The advantages of education particularly in driving socio-economic growth may be actualized at the level of Universal Basic Education. Grant (2022) stressed the importance of secondary education especially Junior Secondary Education in context.

English language as the official language and medium of instruction in Nigeria plays a vital role in national development, socio-economic development, national unity, and civilization. However, there are factors or problems militating against the effectiveness and seamlessness of teaching and of English language in Nigeria resulting from poor funding. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the problems militating against the teaching and learning of English language in Awka South local government area of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the major problems militating against teaching and learning of English Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Awka South local government area of Anambra State?

Literature Review

As the official language and medium of instruction in Nigeria, English language is very important Nigeria's education system. In a bid to improve English language education in the country, the Nigerian has implemented policies such as National Policy on Education, which encourages the use of English language and highlights the importance of English proficiency in national development and unity. Overtime, technological advancement appears to enhance English language education in Nigeria by way of development of dedicated software applications for English language education especially for those living in remote areas, and availability of resources on the internet. The provision of scholarship programs for teachers by the Nigerian government and some Non-profit organizations (NGOs) has enhanced quality of teachers, however, factors such as poor facilities, poor funding and multilingualism, tribal politics are still militating against English language education in Nigeria (Muhammad, 2018; Danladi, 2018; Foyewa & Ogundepo, 2019; Lucy, 2019; Mohammed, Isah, Shehu & Lami C. Nwachukwu, 2021; Njoku, 2018; Obiegbu, 2020; Innocent, 2018; Uwen et al., 2020).

Ijeoma (2020) studied the problems affecting the teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State and found that lack of specialist English teacher is the most pressing factor militating against the teaching and learning of English language in Ankpa Local Government Area of Kogi State. He explains that for this reason, unqualified teachers are tasked to teach English language. Teachers who lack classroom management abilities in teaching of English language, who makes learning of English language very unattractive to students, who cannot engage students in interactive learning process, who cannot prepare their student for competitions in English language, who cannot by way of professionalism in teaching of second language reduce students' anxiety and enhance their confidence and positive attitude towards learning of English language, who do not follow recommended curriculum are saddled with the task of teaching of English language. What do you would be the case? The students will not be good at the use English language. He then calls for in-service training for teachers of English language to equip them with all the necessary skills, knowledge and tacks needed for teaching and learning of English language.

Shortage of specialist English language teachers, lack of parental and societal involvement in encouraging the use of English language, lackadaisical attitude by both students and teachers towards English language, and issue of multilingualism are the

problems militating against the teaching and learning of English language in Yemen (Al-Sohbani, 2018). Junior Secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra state do not have access to modern technologies such as computers, internet, or other devices that can help them in the teaching or learning of the English language. English language teachers in Onitsha North Local Government Area do not have sufficient training on the latest teaching methods, techniques, and strategies that are effective in teaching English language and this greatly affect the learning of the English language by the students. Both English language teachers and students are having difficulties in either writing or speaking the English language. This is due to factors such as lack of practice, inadequate exposure to the language, or lack of proficiency in the language and interference of mother tongue (Udoye&Chituru, 2020). Gatugel (2020) identified the problems militating against the teaching and learning of English language categorically in terms of the students and the teachers. For the students, he itemized; interest, discipline, punctuality, interpersonal relationship, and peer pressure as factors affecting their leaning of English literature. He also outlined; interest, qualification, experiences, competence and choice of teaching method as the factors against the seamlessness of teaching English literature. He explains that students who are interested in the subject of literature in English are more likely to be motivated to learn and engage with the material. students who are disciplined and focused are more likely to be successful in their learning. According him, being punctual is important in any educational setting - students who are consistently late or absent may miss important information or fall behind in their learning. Positive relationships can foster a supportive learning environment, while negative relationships can lead to distractions and hinder learning. Negative peer pressure, such as a group of students who are not interested in learning, can negatively impact the learning environment. In terms of the teachers, he explains that; teachers who are interested in the subject of literature in English are more likely to be passionate and engaged in their teaching. teachers who are well-qualified in the subject matter are more likely to have a deep understanding of the material and be able to effectively convey it to students. Teachers who have experience teaching literature in English are likely to have developed effective teaching strategies and methods, which can lead to more successful learning outcomes. Teachers who are able to choose the most appropriate teaching method for the material and the students' needs are more likely to have successful outcomes in their teaching. In addition, Oribabor (2020) posits that high level of moral decadence which had led to lack of interest in education, the educational and socio-economic status of parents, and multilingualism are the factors against teaching and learning of English language in some secondary schools in Ife Central Local Government area of Osun State.

English language education is most effective when the right methods are deployed in teaching the language. Also, Adelabu and Matthias (2018) opined that

most English language teachers in Benue State are not aware and do not deploy modern and refined method in teaching English language and literature in English. This lack of awareness and proficiency on the part of the teachers had led to low performance of students in English language. They therefore recommend systematic and interval training for teachers of English language and English literature to keep them informed of modern and effective teaching methods. In the words of (Evue, 2019), indiscipline on the parts of the students, lack of proficiency of among teachers and non-adherence to approved curriculum are factors that militate against teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria.

Having established the fact that there are factors affecting the seamlessness of teaching and learning of English language in Nigeria in the literatures. Therefore, this research fills the gap in previous studies by analyzing the peculiar problems militating against teaching and learning of English language in Awka South local government area of Anambra State.

Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey research design in addressing the research problem in the study location. A total of 250 respondents constitute the research population (comprising 200 junior secondary school students and 30 English language teachers purposively sampled from 10 junior secondary schools). Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the field. The study population comprised of Junior Secondary School students and English language teachers from selected schools in Awka South local government area of Anambra State. A total ten secondary schools were selected - six government secondary schools and four private secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten students from the Junior Secondary of each school. A total of two hundred students were selected. A total of thirty teachers were selected. Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the literature review and previous studies on the subject matter. The questionnaire questions were validated by experts in the field of English language teaching and were pre-tested before the actual study. For simplicity, the instrument was structured on two-point rating of Yes or No with point weight of 3 and 1 respectively. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected from the field. Mean rating was used for data analysis. Decision was based on the average of the means. Mean of 1.5 and above were accepted and below 1.5 were rejected. The items with double asterisks were presented only to the teacher, items with one asterisk were presented only to the students while items with no asterisks were presented to both the teachers and students. Only the Yes responses are presented in the results.

Result and Discussion

Mean rating was used for data analysis. Decision was based on the average of the means. Mean of 1.5 and above were accepted and below 1.5 were rejected. The items with double asterisks were presented only to the teacher, items with one asterisk were presented only to the students while items with no asterisks were presented to both the teachers and students. Only the Yes responses are presented in the results.

Research Question: What are the major problems militating against teaching and learning of English Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Awka South local government area of Anambra State?

Table 1.

Analysis of the Mean on the Major Problems Militating Against Teaching and Learning of English Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State

S/N	Items	N	PTG (%)	Mean	STD DEV.
1	Too much work load**	23	77%	2.53	0.860
2	Poor teacher's welfare**	29	97%	2.93	0.365
3	Poor funding**	28	95%	2.96	0.456
4	Inadequate facilities	169	94%	2.88	0.480
5	Lack of proficient teachers *	137	91%	2.81	0.584
6	Poor school management	175	97%	2.94	0.330
7	Overcrowded classrooms **	25	83%	2.67	0.758
8	Non-supportive environment	171	95%	2.90	0.437
9	Poor teaching methods*	104	69%	2.39	0.925

Source: Author's Computation (2023)

Discussion

Overworked teachers are more likely to have shorter attention spans, which makes it harder for them to concentrate on the needs of specific student. This could cause students to miss out on crucial guidance and feedback, which would ultimately impede their ability to acquire strong knowledge and fundamentals of English language. This can lead to reduced quality of teaching because teachers may not have enough time to prepare and arrange their lessons if they are overworked. Burnout may occur in teachers who are overworked and can cause exhaustion, annoyance, and a lack of desire. This could result in teachers showing less excitement and energy in the classroom, which would be detrimental to the learning environment. A heavy workload can also lead to limited resources for teachers, including time, materials, and

support from colleagues. They may have limited professional development when they are overloaded with work.

1. Poor teacher's welfare

Teachers who are underpaid or under supported may lose motivation and lose interest in their work. This could result in a loss of vigor and vitality in the classroom, which could have a detrimental effect on the engagement and motivation of students to study English language. There may be a scarcity of experienced and trained English language teachers as a result of poor teacher welfare, which could lead to teachers quitting their jobs. Without enough support and funding, teachers may not have access to the tools and training they need to stay current with new technology and teaching methods and to adjust to the shifting requirements of their students. With poor welfare, the health and general wellbeing of teachers may devastate

2. Inadequate facilities

Technology is an essential component of modern language learning. Students without access to technology, such as computers, the internet, or language learning software, may miss out on opportunities to improve their language ability. Effective language acquisition requires adequate learning tools, including dictionaries, workbooks, textbooks, and other resources. The exposure of students to new vocabulary and grammatical ideas may be constrained by a shortage of such materials. The availability of a large variety of books, periodicals, and other resources that might aid students in developing their language skills makes library facilities crucial for language learning. Students' exposure to real-world language use may be limited due to a lack of library resources, which may impede their capacity to understand and utilize language.

3. Lack of proficient teachers

For English language learners to become proficient, they must be exposed to the enough language parlance and frequently. Without knowledgeable teachers, students might not be exposed to enough language input, which could impair their development. Effective instruction of English language learners requires teachers with the necessary abilities and knowledge. Without them, students might not receive top-notch training and might have trouble comprehending and using the language.

4. Poor school management

A lack of resources, such as books, teaching aids, and technology, can make it challenging for instructors to properly teach English language. Bad school management is one cause of this problem. Teachers could find it difficult to engage students and give them the materials they need to study and practice the language without enough resources.

5. Overcrowded classrooms

Overcrowded classrooms is a significant problem in teaching and learning of English language because the amount of time and resources teachers have to devote to each student in a large class is constrained. This can make it challenging for pupils who require more assistance to receive it.

6. Non-supportive environment

The teaching and learning of the English language can be significantly impacted by an unsupportive environment. Students' capacity to effectively learn a language may suffer when they are in a setting where they don't feel supported or motivated to learn.

7. Poor teaching methods

Lack of participation from students may be caused by poor teaching techniques. Students who are not engaged or interested in the subject matter or the method of instruction may perform poorly and forget the content.

Conclusion And Recommendations

Results from the study findings reveal that too much work load, poor teacher's welfare, inadequate facilities, lack of proficient teachers, poor school management, overcrowded classrooms are negatively associated with the effective teaching of English language in the study location. The research concluded that inadequate funding has significantly contributed to the poor teaching of English language in Awka South local government area of Anambra State. Based on the results from the study findings, this research recommends that government at all levels and stakeholders in private sector should employ more teachers, implement good teachers' welfare program and funds, provide sufficient facilities and resources, encourage the use of English language by providing more scholarships, training and competitions programs for both teachers and students. Also, there is need for English language teachers to be engaged in professional development, attending trainings, and deploy the best methods in teaching English language.

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