



AN APPRAISAL OF THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The credibility of the teaching Literature-in-English at some senior secondary schools in Nigeria has steadily been declining at an alarming rate as a chunk of the products of such schools, learning Literature-in-English appears not to be at it pick and not compete with other counterparts from

around the world. In such vain addressing an appraisal of teaching Literature-in-English at the senior secondary

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schools in Nigeria that are embedded within

INTRODUCTION

Literature-in-English is now gaining more significance with its adoption as a criterion for admission into English studies programmes. In the past decades, the curriculum of Nigerian Polytechnics and other higher institutions of learning have chosen literay studies as an effective source of learning materials and experiences in both Use of English and Communication in English courses. Recently, communicative competency skills in the areas of journalism, advertisement, government and political studies among others have identify the significance of literature texts in Second Language

the shores resulting in order to understand the lack of available and academic hindrance true nature of the appropriate texts and need to be carried out. problem and its effects. resources, and gender
As such, a descriptive Several problems were construct issues in the study was carried out to indepthly reviewed. two states are the appraise the problems Challenges such as factors responsible for of teaching Literature- socio-economic and the non-teaching of a in-English at the senior cultural factors, Literature-in-English in secondary schools in unavailability of Senior Secondary Nigeria. A survey of qualified teachers, non- Schools in the study literature was done in functional curriculum, area.

Learning by providing rich linguistic input for classroom activities and effective tools for fluency and competency in communication. However, after so many years of hardwork prospective English studues and related programmes rarely secure admission and the graduate are far from the goal. The aim of this paper focuses on examining the current and prevailing challenges of teaching Literature-in-English at the Secondary School in Nigeria. The objectives are of two fold: (a) to remind teachers, schools and governments administrators about the need to curtail these predicaments (b) to bring to notice such issues to those teachers who were not in the picture especially those in the remote area. Drawing much from qualitative literature, the study also collected quantitative data from 7 senior secondary schools which involved 9 teachers of Literater-in-English via unstructured interview. The interviews were conducted using physical contact and through phone. Teachers' incompetence, limited time to teach the bulky subject, and inadequate resources are found to be the most profound forces for the setback. The paper saw the need for the establishment of Literature programme in our teacher training colleges and universuties in order to produce adequate qualified teachers of Literature-in-English and that adequate time and resource should be provided to enable students secure places in thier disired programmes and the labour market respectively.

Culture is one of the many webs of significance where humans use such webs in search of meaning of life. Literature is one of the core subjects that attempt cultural studies humanity thereby playing a central role in human's serach for meaning. Literature, through storytelling, acts and

expression of the subconscious mind perform the functions of telling human beings what is important in life, what is worthy of admiration or contempt, what is it like to live in different circumstances through different historical times and what we should pay attention or ignore. It tells us how life might be lived rather than that way to live it. Literature is helpful not just for disciplinary purposes but for the broadly educational purposes of preparing our students for lifelong tasks, careers' demands, parenting duties, civic responsibility and moral and ethical considerations (Labo-Popoola, 2010).

Teaching Literature subject is not just a difficult task but problematic because it requires an inter-disciplinary approach and practice. Doing it well requires scholarly and critical sophistication, high level of thinking, self-consciousness, theorising and criticism. In addition, it requires critical assessments on what, how, and when are students most likely to learn in order to set the learning items well (Mart, 2016).

English is a universal language; the language of communication across countries in the international world of trade, business, communication, air transportation and technology (Baurain, 2000). In the age of globalization and internet, people live in a small village in which they have no choices but dealing with English Language as the main means of communication (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997 & Nunan, 2003) English is considered one of the major subjects in the Arab world in general and in Nigeria in particular. In Nigeria, English is used as a Second Language next to Arabic, and therefore, it has become one of the obligatory subjects in the Nigerian school curriculum.

Being an integral part of the English curriculum in the Nigerian schools, it should be given appropriate attention so that the overall aim of teaching English can be achieved. Learning Literature by Nigerian students may not be an easy task because it is culturally, linguistically, and socially alienated from the students. It has become the teachers' responsibility to exert more efforts to make learning of Literature an easy, enjoyable and profitable experience in Nigeriann students. In their attempts to do so, teachers should recognize the new concepts towards teaching Literature as there is a mixture of different attitudes and beliefs in this field. Based on Literature discussions (Mart, 2016), the students could develop insightful responses concerning literal comprehension, personal connections, cross-cultural themes, interpretation, and evaluation of the text. Literature can also act as

a powerful change agent by developing students' intercultural awareness. Theoretically speaking, literature can play a useful part in developing general language skills because the basic goal of teaching literature is to facilitate the learning of language and communication skills. Beyond Language, Literature provides students with important comprehension and analysis tools. Through literature, students learn to identify and analyze conflicts, themes, issues, and characters (Labo-Popoola, 2010). Good texts, whether classic or modern literature, contain some universal themes which apply to the students' present and future lives. Literature is also an entryway into another culture. Moreover, learning literature enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows (Carter & Long, 1991).

The greatest pleasure and satisfaction to be found in literature occurs where it brings back to the realities of human situations, problems, feelings, and relationships (Moody, 1981). Literary texts so often touch on common themes and values which range from individual concerns to social issues such as death, love, pollution, and ethnic conflicts. Even the genres, conventions and devices portrayed are universal. Poetry has rhythm, rhyme and figurative usage; short stories and novels have plots with crises, conflicts and resolutions. Literature offers universal themes which are relevant to students own experience. It, unlike many teaching inputs, is also a mirror that reflects and heightens each learner s perception of the social world. Thus, literary texts are open to multiple interpretation and genuine interaction (Duff & Maley, 1990). Students may relate the ideas, events and things found in literary texts to their own lives. This inspires students' imagination and helps them to develop their critical abilities as well as increase their emotional awareness. It is clearly seen then that, literature creates motivation to interact with a text and help to develop students' reading proficiency. When they try to comprehend the meaning of the text, learners must make inferences, drawing both on content of the reading and their own experience. The reader is placed in an active international role in working with and making sense of this literary language (Brumfit and Carter, 1986).

Therefore, literature is considered the backbone of any nation. It plays an essential role in creating a new generation capable of changing the life style

and develops its culture. Literature is written for those who are sensitive and have a high sense of imagination; therefore, one cannot imagine learning English without learning its literature.

By learning literature, students learn to see a world through others eyes, observing human values and a different kind of living, and discovering others living in very different societies. They will understand and become broadly aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society. Through literature, learners can deepen their cultural understanding. Consequently, the primary aim of literature is to give pleasure and to entertain those who voluntarily attend to it. In fact there has been an increasing interest in literature as a useful material for teaching a foreign language. English teachers and learners who have devoted themselves to serious teaching and learning want to teach and learn the best curricula and practices to achieve more efficient and effective proficiency in English.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey design using mixed method (i.e. both qualitative and quantitative methods) of data collection and analysis. Existing related literature were extensively reviewed and data were collected from seven (7) senior secondary schools, involving nine (9) teachers of Literature-in-English. Information was collected using an unstructured interview in physical contact interactions and by phone contact, where the teachers are not available or are far in remote areas. The data was analysed using documentary analysis and information is interpreted.

Assessment on poor performance in the Subject

The rate at which students constantly fail Literature-in-English at the organised national and regional examinations is quite alarming that the bodies had call for something urgent. The West African Examination Council which is the widely patronised examination body in West Africa, for instance, had decried the situation when it recorded fewer than 25 per cent rate success with grades A1 – C6 in the subject for many years (Daily Post, 17/07/2018). This made the council to call on a revitalising measure from parents, schools administrators and governments to rescue the

situation. The council appealed that resources and support are provided to the students and ensure that they utilise them accordingly for their success. This portrays glaringly the critical situation of the educational sector as well as the need to address it for a better tomorrow. Moreover, the inclusion of literature-in-English as a criterion for securing admission to study degree and Masters programme as well as part of the English and Communication courses in the Polytechnics have even kept the pressure on the prospective students to possess the requisite credits that will enable them gain admission and survive through the programmes. Sadly, some students and parents resorted to the so-called “examination special centres” where students are almost certainly guaranteed to pass with at least credit in literature-in-English. However, an examination of these problems and solutions to them will prove that there is no need to cheat. Students have the potentials and the future is certainly bright. Below are some of the issues discussed.

Poor Reading Culture

In Nigeria, reading culture has suffered from widespread poverty, corruption, ineptitude and a dearth of dedicated quiet reading spaces like libraries. The decline in the standard of education has seriously affected reading ability. And it becomes harder when you have to deal with the many distractions and challenges that come with being an adult and living in a country like Nigeria. Perhaps, our socio-economic environment is not reader friendly. The daily struggle for economic survival provides little or no time for people to cultivate a good reading habit. Equally, high cost of books, particularly imported ones, has contributed to low readership promotion in the country. Studies have shown that there is an almost symbiotic relationship between reading and intelligence. The analytical skills that provide the ability to understand issues and solve problems are the product of intensive reading. Reading regularly is a way to mental health which enhances emotional intelligence, helps with self-awareness, empathy, social skills and managing relationships more effectively. Reading also provides a therapeutic effect and inner tranquility, while also slowing mental decline. Thus, the relationship between reading, knowledge acquisition, intelligence and personal empowerment is crucial for economic and societal development. A critical mode of thinking and human development is lost in the absence of reading.

Poor Literacy Level

Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult. People with low literacy skills may not be able to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet.

Lack of Motivation

Motivation has a direct impact on how an individual learns. The affects of motivation is normally far reaching because it increases an individual's energy level, determines the persistence in reaching a specific goal, affects the types of learning techniques used and an individual's thinking processes. According to human development professionals, there are two types of motivation. There's extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic is determined by the individual's outside surrounding and specific tasks. Intrinsic motivation can be found within the individual since the task can be viewed as valuable (Chinwe, 2016). Therefore, when applying the effect that motivation has on the learning process, it is clear that people learn better based on the perceived value of the task, subject matter, personal goals, financial incentives and wide array of different factors. Motivation can be increased or decreased based on many different factors. This is one of the reasons why instructors in any educational institution can have a substantial impact on their students learning. They are a part of the student's intrinsic motivation environment.

Student outcomes are the most relevant factor when it comes to measuring the success of a learning environment. Though classroom design has an important influence on learning achievement, the majority of time is spent on traditional methods of enhancing the learning progress, such as executing standardized tests, professional growth for educators, and advancement or mediation courses for students. Thanks to a growing awareness of the profound impact classroom design can have on the educational achievements of students, opinions on classroom design are changing, as educators are making strides toward constructing optimal

learning environments with the goal of meeting the educational needs of various groups of students.

Poor Power Supply

The acute inadequate power supply in Nigeria is a challenge for most teachers and students as it posit that many schools, especially in the remote areas lack electricity. This means that classrooms activities are conducted without television sets, radios, projectors, computers, internet, presentations, fans and air conditioning systems and that, night or evening classes are hardly taken to compliment or compensate missing activities (Morrison, 2018). According to the study, lack of access to energy greatly reduces the teaching resources and classroom materials because without electricity, both teachers and students cannot be able to make use of these gadgets including the Internet for research and learning respectively even though the materials are available online. They also can not access online resources, such as videos and other multimedia sources, in their classrooms as valuable methods for instruction. As a result, teachers are unable to provide their students with the quality of education they deserve. Energy poverty also complicates work for staff and school administration. School administrators are required to keep documentation of student's grades and attendance rates manually on paper, instead of keeping a reliable, online record. Another consequence of energy poverty is that it discourages teachers from working in areas without access to electricity. The lack of electric lighting, televisions, computers and other services deters well-trained and well-educated teachers from living and working in communities that may need them the most.

Furthermore, the lack of access to many necessities caused by energy poverty also serves as a major problem in many African schools. Children are oftentimes forced to collect firewood or clean water for cooking, heating and drinking instead of attending class, preparing for an exam or completing homework assignments. Alternative fuel sources or devices, like smoke hoods that cook food more efficiently, require the use of little to no firewood. Solar-powered water pumps provide families with easily accessible drinking water and reduce the number of cases of water-borne illnesses that contribute to disease and poor school attendance.

Inadequate and Poorly Designed Classrooms

When creating classroom designs suited to enhance the educational experience of all learners, educators are focusing on cultivating student growth in creativity, collaboration, and communication. Along with the initiative for personalized learning, a core focus of modern classroom design is flexibility (Jones & Carter, 2012). According to them, flexible classroom designs allow learners to make choices, experiment with learning techniques, and ultimately discover how they learn best. A flexible classroom layout also supplies teachers with a greater capacity to effectively respond to different students' learning needs. It also incorporates some type of group discussion area, a variety of seating options, and a flexible space, which can be adjusted for many specialized activities. With the central goal of providing the space for students to explore, share, and create collaboratively, flexible classroom arrangements provide the means for a variety of group set-ups and lesson formats in hopes of addressing all students' needs. Lighting enables classes to be taught early in the morning or late at night. Furthermore, electricity access facilitates the introduction of ICTs into the classroom using computers, radios and televisions. Electrified schools can enable principals to recruit and retain better qualified teachers, and have been correlated with improvements on both test scores and graduation rates. These facilities are acutely lacking in most Literature classes (Fatimayin, 2017) and these greatly affect learning the subject.

Inadequate qualified teachers

Despite its provision in the national curriculum, only two (2) public secondary schools, out of the total population of 33 Public Senior Secondary Schools in Bauchi Metropolis, even though there were some narrations and evidence that some of the schools did teach the subject in the past. Moreover, some of the schools that did offer the subject in the past, the subject was handled by a teacher with a Mass Communication at either Degree or Diploma level, Linguistics, Hausa Language and Islamic Studies. This corroborates Ogunnaike, (2002) assertion that generally there are no sufficient teachers to handle literature teaching in Nigeria and Vincent, (1979) that teaching Literature-in-English is usually handled by unqualified teachers using inappropriate teaching methods (Ogunnaike, 2002) which invariably result in poor and ineffective teaching. In addition,

Dahiru (2020) reported that even the related teachers of English Language are not qualified because they do not specialise in teaching Literature-in-English. The situation has reached the deteriorating stage that teachers who are found to teach the subject include National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) members (who read humanities and arts courses), community volunteers, casual and teachers from the Federal Government graduate schemes (N-POWER). This is a clear sign that the level of Teachers' inadequacy is very alarming.

Incorporation of Literature into English Language

The National Policy on Education revised 2013 stipulates that at the primary and junior secondary schools, literature is incorporated into English studies. It is at the senior secondary school level that it is taken as a separate subject of its own, with three periods per week (FGN, 2013). As a result the time allocated for the subject is constraints, students' attitude and motivation is thwarted, difficulty of the subject is ascertain which affect students' interest in the subject. This is understood as the curriculum for senior secondary school earmarked (or recommended) 10 drama and novel books and 12 poems for SS I; 27 additional drama and novels and 17 poems for SS II students while for SS III students, more 5 drama and novel books were allocated in addition to revising all the books studied in SS I and SS II.

Conclusion

As a broad objective, the paper sets out to investigate the problems or challenges of teaching Literature-in-English in public senior secondary schools in Bauchi metropolis with a focus on how these problems affects students' performances and success in securing admission into the tertiary institutions and read programmes of their choice. A survey of literature was done in order to understand the true nature of the problem and its effects. Several problems were indepthly reviewed. Challenges such as socio-economic and cultural factors, unavailability of qualified teachers, non-functional curriculum, lack of available and appropriate texts and resources, and gender construct issues in the two states are the factors responsible for the non-teaching of a Literature-in-English in Senior Secondary Schools in the study area. It was concluded that, these issues will continue to negatively affect candidates' chances of success unless urgent

measures were taken to curb them. These measures include revisiting the National Policy on Education to give Literature in English the status of English Language, separating Literature with Language at the beginning of the junior secondary school level, establishing Literature studies in Colleges of Education, and proper motivation among others.

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