

PROFESSIONAL UPDATES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN A DIGITALLY INFECTED CLIME: THE ICT UTILIZATION SENSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT: *The teaching profession in Nigeria is faced with a lot of problems which militate against the integrity of the profession. This is because educators have come to realize that any meaningful improvement in the education that students receive is highly dependent on the quality of the instruction that the teacher provides. The paper looks into the training and retraining needs of English language teachers for effective utilization of ICT in secondary schools in Ekiti State. The research design was descriptive. The population for the study comprised all English Language teachers (571) in the senior secondary schools in Ekiti State. Multistage random sampling technique was utilized in selecting the sample. In all, all (20) English Language teachers in the selected schools were used as the sample. A research instrument titled “Teachers’ Assessment of the Need for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Language (TANICTENG)” was tested for both validity and reliability procedures and used for data collection. Reliability coefficients of 0.67 was obtained. Conclusion was drawn and recommendations were made among which are that teachers should engage in personal development; Teacher Training institutions should see to effective teacher education programmes; government at all levels should create an enabling environment that could help the teachers to perform optimally, among others.*

KEYWORDS: ICT, Pedagogy, Hyper-dynamism, Integration, Blended Learning

INTRODUCTION

The Language Teacher is adjudged to be at the fulcrum of educational success. This is evident in the unique dual responsibilities expected of any Language Teacher. The first responsibility is the knowledge given to students for the purpose of acquiring competency and performance in Language issues. The other responsibility makes the Language Teacher a service manpower to all other disciplines. Communication is imperative and germane for global development and survival. Akinwamide 2017 says, even when not everyone will be professional Linguist, it is an undeniable fact that everyone aspires to be a good communicator and exposure to the intricacies of Language –as a vehicle of social function and interactions cuts across all professions. Hence, the position and functions of Language Teachers are very crucial in the revamping of the society and educational sector in Nigeria. Teacher training has been a concern of government over the years. This is because the success of an educational enterprise particularly in terms of quality depends to a large extent, on the regular supply of teachers in adequate quantity and quality and education is a very powerful tool for every societal progress and development. Jekayinfa (2015) observes that the origin and development of teacher education can be traced to the beginning of western education in the country, the various church Missions such as the Wesleyan Methodist, the Church Missionary Society, the Baptist, the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and the Roman Catholic were very active in Nigeria between

1842 and 1860. They contributed in no small measure to the development of teacher education. The government has also established teacher training colleges, institutes and faculties of education devoted to the training of teachers.

Effective teaching is that delivered by an effective teacher, who is a master of his subject and whose objective is to ensure that the learner learns through his teaching which brings about a positive change in behaviour of the learner. Fakeye (2012) opines that teachers are among the most important players influencing students' achievement, holding the key to sealing the gaps in students' achievement. It takes a competent teacher to be able to teach the language skills effectively and to make them competent users of the English language. This means that the teacher should possess some characteristics to make him an effective teacher.

Language is a veritable tool for all round development of man, that is, socially, educationally, politically, economically, etc. According to Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu (2006), language is the vehicle of social interaction and effective language is needed to function properly in the work place, for social interaction, and indeed, for functional literacy.

Fakeye (2012) observes that English Language performs a lot of functions in Nigeria schools as it is the medium of instruction in all the educational levels. The knowledge of English language helps in understanding other school subjects since it is used to teach all other subjects except local languages. Good foundation of the language paves way to success in life. Students whose performance in English language is high usually have no problems with other subjects except in rare cases. Mwanti and Garridau (2013) observe that language is the main pillar through which the vision of Nigeria's ability to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and its being a significant player in the global economic and political arena can be realized. This is because language is central to learning and to life itself.

The poor performances of students in English language in public examinations in recent times have left a number of questions to be answered. For years, educators and researchers have debated on factors affecting students' performance especially in English language. Onukaogu (2002) in his study reported that various factors such as absence of vigorous and robust language policy, inadequate materials and infrastructure for teaching the language, and unequipped teachers among other factors are responsible for this ugly trend. Studies such as Babalola (2013), Adebile (2009), Adakonye & Ogbonyom (2012) and others have shown that teacher education, ability and experience are associated with increase in students' achievement across schools.

Adakonye & Ogbonyom (2012) say the hue and cry over the current poor academic performance in Nigeria could easily be traced to the deplorable state of the teaching and learning of English language in the country. English language is the main medium of instruction through which other subjects is taught from primary schools to all levels of tertiary institutions. Citing Barrow and Sander (2003), "education of the highest quality requires teacher of highest quality." This is why a majority of educational policies focus on the role and quality of teachers as no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. The teacher is at the center of the delivery of quality education in any nation.

Information and Communication Technology is the design, production, application, and evaluation of means, modes and devices for disseminating, managing and storing information about the principles and methods of solving human (biological, environmental, economic and education) problems. ICT is relevant in education as it is in other industries. It is indispensable

in educated men, women as well as the youths as it is applicable in all the aspects of this type of education (Nwodo, 2011).

To Nworgu & Oyim (2005), for the teaching of English language to benefit from ICT, teachers should know not only how to make use of ICT but more importantly, when to employ ICT in their classrooms. There is also need to know when to use an appropriate ICT package for a particular lesson. To this effect, teachers should develop such special ability to be able to manage the lessons effectively when using computer for class instruction. The teacher more or less acts as a facilitator in the instructional process.

Nworgu (2007) further stresses that to develop these competencies in teachers, the integration of ICT into teacher education curricular becomes imperative. Indeed ICT applications should be an indispensable aspect of contemporary teacher education curriculum. The approach should be to integrate both information literacy and information technology skills across the curriculum of teacher education. It is only such a curriculum that can help the teachers with necessary competence and knowledge for meeting the challenges of the 21st century classroom practice.

Studies have revealed that a lot of problems have been observed in relation to teacher performance ranging from acute shortage of teachers in our educational institutions; low performance of students in English language; students having so much difficulty with their communicative skills in the English language; poor reading habits of Nigerian students; subject matter knowledge (competence), teachers' qualification, teachers' teaching experience, classroom behavior; newly employed teachers do not undergo any form of induction; the corps of teachers who are expected to bring reform into Nigerian education system went through the traditional 'old' system without any exposure to ICT which becomes a difficult problem for these set of teachers to acquire adequate mastery of skills and content that are embedded in ICT and inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum.

It has been said that the quality of teachers mirrors the quality of education in a nation. Indeed, the success or otherwise of any educational system depends largely on the quality of teachers. Just as a solid foundation ensures stability and solidity of a house, high quality teachers engender high quality education (Ene, 2007).

The dynamic nature of the human society, more so, the hyper-dynamism of this information age, has placed a serious demand on the innovations and strategies in the issue of teacher preparation, which would enable any given society to cope with contemporary issues which Nigerian educators should, not only just get interested in, but be fully involved in [Fasae, 2013), citing Agomuo (2007)]. Owolabi, Oyewole & Oke (2013) assert that ICT in teacher education will improve the quality of teaching and learning process in schools. They state that the relevance of Nigeria in the educational development programme in the 21st century solely depends on the degree of free flow research works and ideas, findings and innovation in education and curriculum reformation. These can be fully achieved through full integration of the nation into the global highway which is ICT oriented. ICT should be more emphasized in teacher education programme and should always be seen as a tool for teachers to use and not as a substitution for teachers.

For functional education in the 21st century, language teachers must go along with the technological world. In a world that technology has reduced to a global village, no professional can afford to be conservative (Akinwamide, 2007). Jibowo (2005) says there ought to be an

increased interest in the analysis of learners' needs at the level of the language teacher preparation programme. This becomes necessary if English Language teachers and teaching are to be made current and functional. No educational ideology can afford to neglect the teacher factor and stand. Teachers of English must be equipped with the state of the art technologies so as to be abreast of students.

According to Adebile (2009), training and retraining of teachers is important because teachers' productivity is an important factor in educational development and also a vital factor in consolidating the Nigerian educational system; it determines the quality of the output and no nation can progress without the effective development and management of teachers; English being a functional language in Nigeria has so many aspects which every qualified English language teacher should be able to master for effective teaching productivity; it aimed at increasing the ability of individuals and groups to contribute to organizational effectiveness; it is in the ethics of the profession to improve methods, skills, and procedures to enhance their out-puts, efficiency and productivity.

Adebile (2009) therefore claims that for functional educational system in Nigeria, teachers in English language should be recognized as a vital consolidating factor sustaining the position of Nigerian educational system. The curriculum is being interpreted, moderated and disseminated by the teacher through the English language. English is synonymous with formal education in Nigeria; the ability to speak English, places the speaker high on the social ladder than one who is unable to speak it; and the productive implementation of the curriculum is effectively done by professional English language teachers. On the whole, English language is the means by which teachers can implement the educational system effectively and productively. Teachers who have this vital responsibility of implementing the curriculum need be adequately prepared for the great task.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the training and retraining needs of English Language teachers for effective utilization of ICT. Hence it found out whether there was adequate provision for the human capacity building necessary for the classroom application of ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers.

Research Questions

1. Is there adequate provision for the building of the human capacity necessary for the classroom application of ICT in English Language?
2. What efforts have been made for the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the provision put in place for the human capacity building for classroom application of ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers.

METHOD

The research design for the study was a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all English Language teachers (571) in senior secondary schools in Ekiti State. Multistage random sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample. In all, all (20) English

Language teachers in the selected schools were used as the sample. Questionnaire was used for collecting data and was properly validated and reliability coefficient of 0.67 was obtained for the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Is there adequate provision for the human capacity building necessary for the classroom application of ICT in English Language?

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on Provision of Human Capacity in ICT

S/ N	ITEMS	NO OF RESPO N- DENTS	RESPONSES								REMAK S
			SA	%	A	%	D	%	S D	%	
1.	There is inclusion of ICT in the Teacher Education Curriculum	20	-	-	7	35	7	35	6	30	Disagree
2.	The government sponsors teachers for ICT training	20	2	10	4	20	10	50	4	20	Disagree
3.	The PTA makes provision for sponsorship of teachers for ICT training	20	-	-	-	-	8	40	12	60	Strongly Disagree
4.	The government organizes conferences/seminars for teachers' training in ICT	20	1	5	11	55	6	30	2	10	Agreed
5.	There is the provision of ICT technicians put in place to maintain and repair available facilities	20	1	5	2	10	8	40	9	45	Strongly Disagree

From table 1 above, 12 (60%) of the respondents agreed with item 4 that the government organizes conferences/seminars for teachers' training in ICT. All other items score less than 50%. Since 50% and above represents agree, the results show that there is no adequate provision for the building of human capacity necessary for the classroom application of ICT in English Language.

Research Question 2: What efforts have been made for the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers?**Table 2: Acquisition of ICT Skills by Teachers**

S/ N	ITEMS	NO OF RESPO N- DENTS	RESPONSES								REMAK S
			SA	%	A	%	D	%	S D	%	
1.	During my course of study	20	5	25	8	40	4	20	3	15	Agreed
2.	Through personal computer training	20	4	20	9	45	5	25	2	10	Agreed
3.	Through in-service training	20	3	15	2	10	7	35	9	40	Strongly Disagree
4.	Through seminar/workshop	20	1	5	2	10	7	35	10	50	Strongly Disagreed

From table 2 above, items 1 and 2 rated above 50% which means that respondents agreed that they acquired ICT skills during their course of study and through personal computer training. Items 3 and 4 rated below 50% which show that some of the teachers have managed to acquire ICT skills through personal efforts.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the provision put in place for the human capacity building for classroom application of ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers and students.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient between provision of Human Capacity in ICT and acquisition of ICT Skills

Variables	N	r-calculated value	r-critical value	Inference
Provision of human capacity in ICT	20	0.044	0.444	Not significant
Acquisition of ICT Skills	20			

p < 0.05

Table 3 shows that the r-calculated value (0.044) is less than the r-critical value (0.444) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the provision put in place for the human capacity building for classroom application of ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills by teachers and students is accepted. This implies that the provision does not make teachers/students to acquire skills.

DISCUSSION

Findings show that there is no significant relationship between the provision put in place for the human capacity for classroom application of ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills by

teachers and students. One probable reason might be because teachers have not received necessary ICT training and so could not acquire the necessary skills. In consonance with Nworgu (2005), human capacity building is fundamental to sustainable and productive application of ICT in our national life. In support, Warshauer and Meskill (2000) noted that ICT must be successfully integrated into both the English curriculum and English pedagogical practice because ICT is a valuable tool to enhance teaching and learning and that for teachers, ICT is a professional resource, a mode of classroom delivery, and a source of valid and valuable text types.

CONCLUSION

In the pursuit of functional Education in the 21st century, Language Teachers must go along with a professional vision of ameliorating the historical constraints inherent in Language Learning. Now, with the current radical change in educational outlook, which compels educators to critically review, reappraise and re-strategize the design and delivery of their curriculum to ensure that it aligns more closely with the intensive global forces of change in the 21st century, a well-designed and orchestrated plan of action will be a necessity for laying a solid foundation for highly-transforming Language Education paradigm in a dynamic world (Akinwamide, 2010).

There is no gainsaying the fact that teachers are really in need of rigorous training and re-training in order for Nigeria to be able to cope with achieving its visions and missions of becoming a great nation. Furthermore, ICT usage is inevitable in the effective teaching and learning of English Language in this information-driven age and teachers are the carriers of this inevitable knowledge. In conclusion, effective training of teachers and ICT utilization will improve students' performance in English language in our secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the expositions in this paper, it was recommended that:

Teachers should see themselves as important in the development of education and therefore improve themselves in spite of personal, government and educational institutions' difficulties and expose themselves to the use of ICT because of its efficacy and global focus. This will help them to justify their position in enhancing students' overall performance.

Teacher Training Institutions should see the urgent need to reposition the teaching profession in Nigeria in the preparation of teachers with emphasis placed on adequate knowledge and application of ICT in the teaching-learning process in their teacher education programmes. Hence the urgent need for the training and re-training of trainers and teachers in primary and secondary schools on the use of ICT in classroom teaching.

It is a truism that the government cannot do everything but it rests more with governments at local, state and federal levels to pay adequate attention to the provision of ICT facilities in our various schools in order to create an enabling environment that could help the teachers to perform optimally.

English language teachers are very scarce. The situation where non-specialist teachers are teaching the subject should be discouraged. Government should therefore ensure that English language teachers are in high supply by employing new teachers who are given the necessary training (pre-service) in order to be effective teachers.

Cost is an important factor in training and re-training of teachers and in the procurement of ICT facilities, the government should therefore subsidize in order to make accessibility and affordability easy.

Frequent seminars and workshops should be organized and should be made compulsory for teachers to attend in order to update their skills and knowledge.

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