



Crises in Implementation of English Studies Curriculum at Junior Secondary School Level in Nigeria

Dr. (Mrs.) A. A. Ibrahim¹, Bello Muhammad GEDAWA²

¹Department of Curriculum Studies and Information Technology, Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto

²M. Ed. Language Education (in view)

Department of Curriculum Studies and Information Technology, Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto

ARTICLE INFO

Published Online:
30 August 2022

ABSTRACT

English language plays roles as language of instruction and core subject at junior secondary school (JSS) level in Nigeria as it is indicated in the National policy on Education (NPE (2004)). The English studies curriculum at JSS level of education is an integrative document where English language and Literature in English language were integrated to achieve the set objectives of language education. This paper, therefore, attempts to make a review on the challenges in the implementation of JSS English studies curriculum in Nigeria. A review of the previous studies related to this paper, revealed that the crises include lack of teaching materials and ICT instructional gadgets, lack of provision of incentives to language teachers, insufficient time to cover the curriculum, lack of mentoring, lack of steady supervision, monitoring and evaluation. The paper suggests that Literature in English and English language should be taught separately and school principals should encourage mentoring relationship among the language teachers. It was also suggested that parents should learn the key components of the curriculum and develop attitude of visiting the academic works of their wards at home, so as to take appropriate actions at school level in the event they noticed lack of content coverage of the curriculum.

Corresponding Author:

**Bello Muhammad
GEDAWA**

KEYWORDS: English Studies, Challenges, Crises, Curriculum Implementation, Junior Secondary School

INTRODUCTION

Going by the provisions of National policy on Education (NPE (2004)), English language serves as language of instruction and core subject at junior secondary school (JSS) level. The JSS level of education is a three-year upper basic programme out of the current 9-3-4 system of education in Nigeria. According to Charity (2015), the system of education undergoes revisions and as a result of that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was introduced in Nigeria in September, 1988. Following this, in 2008 the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed and introduced the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in schools by realigning all extant Primary and Junior Secondary School Curricula to meet the key targets of the UBE programme. The researcher also highlighted that the subjects and contents flow systematically and spirally from Primary 1 to JS 3. In addition, the curriculum is organized to ensure continuity and

flow of themes, topics and experiences from primary school to junior secondary school levels.

Moreover, the NPE (2004) indicated that Junior Secondary Education (the upper basic education of three years duration provided in secondary schools), is expected to:

- i. provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity for education of higher quality;
- ii. diversify its curriculum to cater for deficiencies in talents, opportunities and roles;
- iii. equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology;
- iv. develop and project Nigerian culture;
- v. raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others as well as have respect for dignity of labour;
- vi. foster the unity of Nigeria; and
- vii. inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement of Nigeria

However, at Junior Secondary school level there is a prescribed English language curriculum tagged ‘English studies curriculum’ which identifies not only a list of content to be covered in a specified period of time but also recommended methods of teaching and instructional materials to be used in the course of implementation. The curriculum also integrated teaching of English language and Literature. The objectives of the new Upper Basic Education (JSS) Curriculum are both remedial and developmental (Gide and Ibrahim 2018). It sets out to:

- i. tackle the language deficiencies brought in from the lower basic (primary).
- ii. develop language proficiency for both lower and upper Basic (JSS and SSS).
- iii. develop the language proficiency necessary for performing well in other school subjects.

These set of objectives of the JSS English studies curriculum could be achieved only when it is implemented effectively by the language teachers. But the challenges they face in its implementation create difficulties to meet the desired objectives. It is the argument of this paper, therefore, that the objectives of the English education at JSS English level could achieve only when the challenges in the implementation of the curriculum are addressed. Thus, it is important to conduct a review study on the challenges with a view to suggest solutions to check the menace in English language education at the implementation stage at JSS level in Nigeria. In this paper, however, the crises affecting content delivery of the curriculum in classroom are tagged as ‘challenges in the implementation of JSS English studies curriculum.

Curriculum Implementations of English Studies in JSS

Curriculum implementation refers to putting into practice of the developed educational programme. According to Ejike and Ejike (2018), curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study. The putting of the curriculum into practice requires an implementation agent. The teacher is identified as agent in the curriculum implementation process. They maintained that implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, skills, knowledge, ideas and attitude that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in the society. They also insisted that the teacher, the learner, teaching materials, and the teaching environment, the school management all constitute major players at the implementation stage. In curriculum implementation, the most important single determinant of what takes place in JSS English language classroom is the teacher, whose lesson notes, management of curriculum, sophistication and appropriation of teaching aids which are subsumed in transactional skills are the function of training, experience and natural flair (Yusuf 2014).

At the implementation of the curriculum, the major active participants- teachers and students witness a lot of challenges that hinder effective content coverage which in

turn affect the achievement of the set goals and objectives of the prescribed and integrated curriculum.

Current Practice in the Implementation of JSS English Studies Curriculum

The proper way of implementing the curriculum is to expose language learners to all components of the curriculum within a stipulated period of time. Currently, language teachers are implementing only part of the integrative curriculum. Literature in English language and English language are combined together as one subject. However, language teachers give more emphasis on language aspects of the curriculum and ignore the aspect literature. In the language aspect where four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are prescribed to be implemented, language teachers, teachers concentrated on reading skills as indicated in Ibrahim (2013). These crises are happening at the curriculum implementation arena-classroom. And they affect content delivery in the language classroom.

Implication of the Crises in the Curriculum Implementation

The researchers are of the belief that the implication of crises in the curriculum implementation caused ineffective content coverage of the curriculum thereby creating huge gap in the achievement of its objectives. Moreover, unless the curriculum is implemented effectively, the proficiency of learners in English language at JSS level will be affected adversely which in turn affect their performances in JSS certificate examination, Senior Secondary level of language education and high institution. However, if language learners are exposed to all components of the curriculum, their efficiency in the language will be impressive.

Crises in the Implementation of JSS English Studies Curriculum

Though language teachers are not involved in the process of curriculum planning and development, they are the key implementers of curriculum. They are saddled with the responsibility to ensure that the content of the curriculum is covered within a specific duration. In implementing the curriculum, they encounter challenges that affect content delivery. Previous studies that related to the present study identified challenges as crises in the JSS English studies curriculum implementation. The challenges are highlighted as follows:

1. Inadequate Instructional Resources for English Language and Literature in English Language

Language teachers are mandated to use the recommended instructional materials in the implementation of the curriculum. The dearth of the materials amounts ineffective coverage of the curriculum. Despite the fact that English studies curriculum is an integrated one that combines literature in English language and English language as a subject, there is no single standard text book that contains comprehensive notes on both components (English language

and Literature in English language). As such, Emmanuel and Idorenyin (2014), opine that one of the challenges facing the teaching of English studies at the junior secondary school level is lack of a single standard text book that comprises both literature and English as what we have in integrated science which is a combination of physics, chemistry and biology.

They further maintain that this lack of texts in English studies hinders the teaching of literature while promoting the teaching of English language because only English language text books are available. They also maintain that language teachers concentrate in the teaching of grammatical rules without encouraging the students to read prose and drama literature texts for the mastering of communicative competence from stories and actions in literature books. They are of the belief that teaching English Language alone cannot take the place of literature aspect in the junior secondary level, since literature entails cultures and traditions of human societies and their relationships with people and other natural things in their societies.

Moreover, inadequate supply of relevant instructional materials by state and federal government creates a huge crisis in the implementation of JSS English studies curriculum. This is because some materials provided go beyond the culture and age level of language learners. It is against this background that Ogele, Ishiwu and Rosemary (2021) insisted that inadequate supply of relevant instructional materials affect curriculum implementation adversely in junior secondary school level. According to them the instructional materials that are needed for the curriculum to be implemented effectively include concrete or non-concrete such as visual, audio and audiovisual. The materials are relevant if they are not against the culture and religion of the language learners. For example, the settings of some prose and drama texts in Nigeria that language learners in northern part of the country are expected to study at JSS level are not similar to what they are experiencing around their environment.

In addition to this, Adhikari (2017), opines that most often the teachers do not bother trying out the teaching techniques that they learned in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs due to the lack of resources and lack of support from school administration. This indicates that school administration has important role to play in sourcing teaching resources from state and federal ministries of education by intensifying a ‘follow-up’ process.

2. Lack of Incentives to Language Teachers

Apart from the meager amount of salary that Federal and State Government are paying them monthly, there is no provision for any incentive to motivate language teachers in Nigeria. Obviously, in the absence of teaching materials, they are expected to improvise ones that can serve as substitute to fill the gap of the dearth materials. Teachers find it difficult to source funds in order to make such improvisations. This in

turn affect effective implementation of the JSS English studies curriculum. Despite the fact that Oladunjoye (2016) insisted that teacher has the liberty to bring innovations into his/her teaching that will help learners to have a sense of belonging, the researchers of the present study are of the belief that language teachers can develop interest to make such innovations if they are motivated.

3. Lack of Information Communication Technology (ICT) Instructional Resources:

The designers of the curriculum according to Gide and Ibrahim (2018) borrow from the structuralist theory of language learning, a theory that believes that language is primarily what is spoken and only secondarily what is written. In view of this, the researchers insisted that the JSS English curriculum firmly believes that the skills of listening and speaking form the ‘bedrock of the language’. To promote efficiency in listening and speaking, the 9 – year English Studies Curriculum made ample provision for aural-oral exercises through the use of particularly recorded materials, the language laboratory, the radio. This calls for the importance of the use of ICT tools in the implementation of the curriculum.

Moreover, at this era of using ICT in language teaching, adequate ICT tools such as computers, television, radio, projectors, video, internet facilities are required in junior secondary schools’ language laboratories for language teachers to have easy ways in imparting the content of the English studies curriculum. Udoh and Egwuchukwu (2014) stated that before now, teachers of the English language find it very difficult to teach phonics/pronunciation in the English language.

They highlighted that language teachers in the traditional teaching method will continue to pronounce correct sounds until they are tired without even the student getting at what they are trying to impart in them but in recent times, with the use of computer, ICT, learning pronunciation in the English language has become so interesting instead of the language teachers reciting the sounds verbally, they simply re-correct the correct pronunciation of sounds using any of the numerous ICT facilities which includes mobile phones, radio cassette, DVD disco and so on and transfer this knowledge to the learner. These facilities help students to listen repeatedly to these sounds thereby learning them easily. But it is the opinion of the researchers of the present study that it is of no doubt that language teachers at JSS level in Nigeria especially in remote areas where internet facilities and electricity supply are not available, have no means of using ICT tools to implement the curriculum.

Moreover, despite the significant roles that the use of ICT plays in language teaching, in JSS level some language teachers exhibit low level of computer use due to their limited technology access, skill, lack of power supply/Electricity and interest (Udoh and Egwuchukwu 2014). In addition to the lack of ICT resources in JSS schools, teachers lack skills to

handle the limited ones in schools if any. This is due to the fact that they are not well trained to the use of ICT tools in language teaching. This is the reason why Dilek (2016), claimed that teachers may have difficulty in relation to the integration and implementation of technological tools into course syllabus and curriculum.

Thus, the researchers in the present study believe that since the language teachers are not adequately provided with ICT tools in schools, language learners find it difficult to use ICT tools in language learning, despite the fact that, few of them use mobile phones in the learning activities outside classrooms. Though, previous studies preach that language teachers should use the mobile phones available to students to implement language curriculum at all levels of education as suggested by Ghobadi and Taki maintained (2018) that one way teachers can aid language learners in their attempts to absorb more vocabulary items in a foreign language is using different technologies available to students, in Nigerian context, language learners at this level, with parental and societal influence, are denied the opportunity of using mobile phones in language classrooms. This negatively affects the implementation of the JSS English studies curriculum.

4. Large Class

Ayeni and Olowe (2016) are of the belief that large class size is one of the problems in the educational sector that developing nations have been grappling with. This indicated that it is obvious that large class problem exists in Nigeria specifically at JSS level. Adhikari (2017), highlighted that the classroom size and played a determining role and did not allow the teachers to put their belief into practice. Hornsby, Osman, De Matos-Ala (2013) discussed that given the diversity of learning contexts that may exist – varying approaches to and styles of learning, unequal access to teaching and learning support mechanisms, unique disciplinary milieus, and developed vs. developing countries – a large class may be defined in different terms depending on the discipline and/or the pedagogical needs of the learning environment.

They further define large class as an environment where the quality of student learning may be negatively impacted by the number of students in the class. Ogele et al is of the opinion that lack of compliance to the recommended teacher-student ratio of 1:35 at JSS level as a result of increasing number of enrolments in schools without corresponding increase in the number of teachers recruited, and block of classrooms amounts to ineffective curriculum implementation. Language teachers find it difficult to implement items prescribed in the English studies curriculum in an overcrowded classroom.

5. Lack of Mentoring among Language Teachers

Mentoring is considered as one of the ways that ensures effective implementation of English studies curriculum. According to Amos (2017), mentoring is a very important system in educational development among teachers

as it encourages the new/young teaching staff. It makes teaching activities very attractive to the new/young staff and stabilizes young and new staff in the teaching function. Mentoring is a frequently used model in providing personal and professional development.

Mentoring as a learning partnership, is one of the most effective ways to transfer skills and offer people the opportunity to learn needed skills that allow them to function at a more senior level (Odimegwa, Udemba, Obiekwe 2021). Despite the importance attached to mentoring in implementing the language curriculum, it is clear that proper mentoring is not taking place at JSS level. Thus, lack of mentoring of new language teachers by senior colleagues, head of departments or principals in JSS schools engenders effective implementation of the English studies curriculum.

6. Lack of Steady Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation:

Modern-days teachers are better trained and experienced and are professionals in their own fields, thus the need for modern supervision which should be positive, democratic, informal, cooperative, participatory, comprehensive, active and dynamic (Adeze and Wushishi 2014). Ogunode, Adah, Wama and Audu (2020), reported that to achieve quality of education, the federal government established the department of inspection and supervision in the Federal ministry of education and created some monitoring and evaluation agencies in the country.

At both Federal and State levels of the Ministries of Education, there is an Inspectorate Department whose main task is to ensure quality and maintain standards in all schools in the federation and the states. However, Okugbe (2009), insisted that monitoring and supervision to ensure effective content coverage of JSS curriculum is not impressive and the constraints to effective supervision and monitoring of the UBE scheme is attributed to inadequate vehicles for monitoring, inadequate number of vehicles for monitoring officers, inadequate office accommodation, lack of funds, transport equipment and time factor militate against effective supervision. It can be inferred that ineffective monitoring, supervision and evaluation by supervisors in states and federal ministries of education is one of the challenges that cause crisis in the implementation of the curriculum at JSS level. This is because language teachers need to be supervised to effective content coverage, lack of supervision amounts otherwise.

8. Parents Attitudes Towards Curriculum Implementation

Parents are identified as participants in the JSS English studies curriculum. Eyiuche (2013) stated that in line with the evidences of the gains of parental involvement in education, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004) includes a mandate that requires that the local people particularly parents will be encouraged to participate in school management.

Parent attitudes towards their wards use of ICT gadgets is not encouraging. This is because some parents do not afford to provide smart mobile phones for their wards due to economic hardship. Those who afford to provide it, are not encouraging their children to use such devices in language learning at home. In addition to this, parents especially the elite are not frequently visiting schools to ensure effective content coverage of the curriculum.

Solutions to the Identified Challenges

After reviewing the identified challenges in the English studies curriculum implementation at JSS level, this paper makes the following suggestions as solutions:

1. Adequate relevant teaching materials should be provided to state and federal junior secondary schools and English language and Literature in English Language should be taught separately.
2. Incentives should be provided to language teachers so as to motivate them
3. ICT instructional resources should be adequately provided in JSS and language laboratories should be constructed and equipped with required instructional resources.
4. Conducive learning atmosphere should be provided in schools by constructing blocks of classrooms and rehabilitating dilapidated ones so as to reduce congestions in language classrooms.
5. School principals and Head of Departments should encourage mentoring relationship among the language teachers.
6. Supervisors, Monitoring and Evaluation officers in State and Federal Ministries of Education should be provided with mobilities to enhance their supervisory activities at JSS level.
7. Parents should learn the key components of the curriculum and develop attitude of visiting the academic works of their wards at home, so as to take appropriate actions at school level in the event they noticed lack of content coverage of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

It is stated clearly in the National policy on Education (NPE (2004) that English language plays roles as language of instruction and core subject at junior secondary school (JSS) level. The proscribed English studies curriculum at this level of education is an integrative one where English language and Literature in English language were integrated to achieve the set objectives of language education. This paper makes a review on the challenges of implementation of JSS English studies curriculum in Nigeria. Previous studies reviewed related to the paper revealed that the challenges affecting effective content coverage of the curriculum include; lack of adequate relevant teaching materials and ICT instructional gadgets, lack of provision of incentives to language teachers, insufficient time to cover the curriculum,

lack of mentoring, lack of steady supervision, monitoring and evaluation. The paper suggested remedies to the identified crises.

REFERENCES

1. Aadaeze, C.O., Wushishi, D.I. (2014). The need for effective monitoring, supervision and evaluation systems in the implementation of environmental education in school science curriculum in Nigeria *Journal of Information, Education, Science and Technology*, 1,(2), 2014, 1319 <https://www.researchgate.net/>
2. Ayeni, O. G. O and Olowe M. (2016).The implication of large class size in the teaching and learning of business education in tertiary institution in Ekiti state. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1126751.pdf>
3. Charity, O. I. (2015) “Recent Curriculum Reforms at the Basic Education Level in Nigeria Aimed at Catching Them Young to Create Change.” *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2015): 31-37. doi: 10.12691/education-3-1-7.
4. Dilek, Ç. (2016). The use of ICT in teaching English as a foreign language. *Participatory Educational Research (PER) Special Issue 2016-IV*, pp., 73-77 ISSN: 2148-6123 <http://www.partedres.com>
5. Emmanuel, M.E. & Idorenyin, T. U. (2011). Challenges and innovations in the teaching of English studies in junior secondary schools in Nigeria educational system. *Knowledge Review* Volume 23 No. 3, December, 2011
6. Ejike, C. N. O. & Ejike G. (2018) Challenges of curriculum implementation and the realization of national philosophy of education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies (IJMSSPCS)*, Vol.1 No.1 December, 2018; p.g. 62 – 67
7. Eyiuche, I. O. (2013). Parental Involvement in Curriculum Implementation as Perceived by Nigeria Secondary School Principals. *Journal of Education and Learning*; Vol. 3, No. 1; 2014 ISSN 1927-5250 E-ISSN 1927-5269 doi:10.5539/jel.v3n1p40 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v3n1p40>
8. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004).The National Policy on Education (Revised) Abuja, Nigeria: Federal Government Press
9. Gide, U. S. & Ibrahim, M. (2018). The factor of attitude towards the implementation of the aural – oral skills component of the 9 – year english studies curriculum at jss level in Katsina state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* |Volume II, Issue V, May 2018|ISSN 2454-6186. <http://www.rsisinternational.org/>

12. Hornsby, D. J. Osman, R.& De Matos-Ala (2013). Teaching large classes. Stellenbosch: Sun press. DOI:1018820/9780992180690/01. <https://www.researchgate.net/>
13. Ibrahim, A. A. (2013). A Study of teachers and learners preferences in English language teaching and learning in junior secondary schools in Sokoto state. PhD. Dissertation. Usmanu Danfodio University Sokoto
14. Odimmega, C.G., Udemba N.F. &Obiekwe, K. K. (2021). Strategies for mentoring new secondary school teachers for greater performance in Anambra state, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education Studies* ISSN: 2501 - 1111 ISSN-L: 2501 - 1111 DOI: 10.46827/ejes.v8i5.3718 Volume 8 | Issue 5 | 2021. www.oapub.org/edu
15. Ogele, I.U., Ishiwu I. U. & Rosemary O. A. (2021). Curriculum Implementation at Junior secondary school level: a way forward for functional education system. *International journal for system in education*. Voesl.17, Issue 3.
16. Ogunode, N. J., Adah S., Wama, P. & Audu, E. (2020). Monitoring and evaluation of education in Nigeria: challenges and ways forwards. *Middle European Scientific Bulletin* Issn 2694-9970. <https://www.researchgate.net/>
17. Okugbe, G. E. (2009), The challenges affecting the implementation of the universal basic education (ube) in delta state, Nigeria. *Soc Sci*, 20(3): 183-187 (2009). <http://www.krepublishers.com>
18. Udoh, V. C. & Egwuchukwu, I. (2014) Integrating ICT in the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigeria schools. *World Journal of Management and Behavioral Studies* 2 (3): 69-73, 2014 ISSN 2306-840X © IDOSI Publications, 2014 DOI: 10.5829/idosi.wjmbs.2014.2.3.1312
19. Yusuf, H. O. (2014). Assessment Of The Implementation Of The Reading Component Of The English Language Curriculum For Basic Education In Nigeria *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* ISSN: 2203-4714 Vol. 5 No. 2; April 2014 Doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.5n.2p.96 Received: 17/02/2014 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.5n.2p.96> Accepted: 03/04/2014