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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF LITERATURE – IN – ENGLISH IN NIGERIAN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS – A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Abstract

Teachers' preparation is important in the effective delivery of the course content and the competence of teachers in their respective lines of duty. The quality of teachers, therefore, depends on the quality of training they have acquired before qualifying to be called teachers. It is rather quite unfortunate that the quality of teachers of education in Nigeria is dwindling owing to the shortfalls in the country's policy of education with the visible gaps between policy formulation and implementation. This paper adopted qualitative research design with the use of focus group discussion (FGD) to elicit data from some teachers that are randomly selected through purposive random sampling. The focus group discussion is categorised under the themes of qualification, methodology, availability of resources and evaluation process. It was discovered that many of the teachers of Literature-in-English do not have requisite qualification and knowledge of methodology in the teaching of the subject. For better performance of teachers in the subject area of Literature-in- English, there should be dedicated attention to prepare these teachers to be cognitively and professionally competent and this should be reflected in their teaching pedagogy and methodology.

Key words: Teacher education, Teaching pedagogy, literature-in English methodology

Introduction

One of the subjects for senior secondary students is Literature-in-English, especially for students who have the future ambitions to become journalists, media practitioners, lawyers and teachers/lecturers of English and literary studies. For candidates who want to follow these identified professional paths, Literature-in-English is compulsory for the furtherance of their studies in institutions of higher learning – universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. This situation, therefore, accounts for serious concerns for policy makers, school administrators and teachers to be up to the task in the policy formulation and delivery of the subject matter of Literature-in-English to students, especially for those in Senior Secondary Schools preparing for terminal examinations as conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO).

Among all the people that are involved in the effective teaching of Literature-in-English to the examination candidates in Senior Secondary Schools, the centrality of teachers cannot be overlooked. This observation, therefore, underlines the significance of competence, readiness and motivation of teachers for effective service delivery. To this end, this paper explores the meaning of teacher education and teaching to know who is qualified to be called teachers in our basic institutions of learning such as primary and secondary schools. Attention is focused on basic institutions of learning because they are the foundations for further/higher learning.

Conceptual Clarification

Three important concepts run prominently through this paper and these are (i) teaching, (ii) teacher education and (iii) Literature-in-English.

i. Teaching

The term teaching has been simply defined as the process of imparting knowledge by someone who is called a teacher on someone or a group of people who are known as learners. This definition thus reveals that teaching cannot be actualised without learning as a two-way process. Alluding to this description of teaching as well as considering the process of teaching, it can be said that teaching is an art and a science. It is an art because knowledge impartation is natural to us in our daily activities while it a science because of the acquired learning of the process, methodology and principles of knowledge impartation for worthwhile outcome. In the light of this argument, this paper corroborates Rajagopalan's (2019:5) view that:

As an art, it lays stress on the imaginative and artistic abilities of the teacher in creating a worthwhile situation in the classroom to enable students to learn. As a science, it sheds light on the logical, mechanical, or procedural steps to be followed to attain an effective achievement of goals.

The science of teaching (of any subject) depends on quality teacher education which focuses on philosophy, principles and methodology of teaching.

ii. Teacher Education

Primarily, teacher education is described as any training/education meant for prospective teachers in any educational setting from basic to tertiary levels. This simple description of teacher education has been taken a step further with Sesan's (2021) description when he sees

teacher education as (i) education of teachers and (ii) education for teachers. While expatiating on these two concepts, Sesan avers that:

Education of teachers refers to all forms of professional training and education that a teacher is exposed to or acquired in the process of pre-qualification and post-qualification experiences aimed at the award of programme completion certificates, diplomas and degrees. This form of training and education has recognizable formal setting in colleges of education, institutes of education and universities, most especially in our contemporary time. In the past, however, the country used to have Teachers' Training Schools for the award of Grade II Certificates. Education for teachers, on the other hand, is the process of training intending teachers in colleges of education, institutes of education and universities. This process requires the interplay of policy makers, the policy statements, school administrators and teachers (in whatever names such as lecturers, tutors, instructors, facilitators and faculties) for sustainable cognitive and social development of intending teachers. One thing to note is that the two concepts have corresponding effect on each other as explained by input-output continuum – a phenomenon which underlines the fact that the quality and effectiveness of the input determines the quality of the output. This is to say, therefore, that the quality and effectiveness of education of teachers have direct corresponding effect on the quality of education for teachers.

(2-3)

Sesan offers a clearer view of what makes up of teacher education irrespective of geographical and educational space. Teacher education should take care of the need of prospective teachers while on training and their needs while in service.

iii. Literature – in – English

There is a need to clarify the concept of literature-in-English because of the perceived misconception of the term by some teachers and students who often interchange English literature for literature-in-English. One cannot use in the stead of another. Each of these concepts has different denotative and other level of meanings. To this end, this paper upholds the view of Raji and Sesan (2013:26) that:

For clarity, this paper distinguishes between Literature – in – English and English Literature. Literature-in-English is primarily concerned with the language of expression in a literary text while English literature is concerned with historical movement and

development of literature in England.... It is, therefore, not heartwarming to see how scholars and students use the two terms interchangeably.

Following the view of Raji and Sesan, the observation is that what students/candidates do in senior secondary school examination is literature-in-English with focus on African literature in English language and European literature in English language.

Research Design/ Methodology

This researcher adopts qualitative research design for this paper. This research methodology is primarily concerned with how people conceptualise and relate with variables that form the basis of a research activity. It is, therefore, “a form of social action that stresses on the way of people interpret, and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals” (Mohajan, 2018:2). This research methodology is commonly used in social sciences and humanistic studies to investigate some variables that have multiple and subjective interpretations. The respondents often have various subjective views about a phenomenon and variables in the research subjects. This research design makes use of some methodologies/approaches such as focus group interview (FGI), focus group discussion (FGD) and unstructured interview (UI), etc. Each of these research methodologies has their respective qualities and relevance to the actualisation of the goals of qualitative research design. In this paper, focus group discussion (FGD) is adopted owing to its significance in offering in-depth information about a phenomenon in a homogeneous group participation. Mishra (2016:2) offers the pattern and process of FGD as follows:

A focus group discussion is a form of group interviewing in which a small group – usually 10 to 12 people – is led by a moderator (interviewer) in a loosely structured discussion of various topics of interest. The course of the discussion is usually planned in advance and most moderators rely on an outline, or moderator’s guide, to ensure that all topics of interest are covered. A focus group discussion (FGD) is a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. The group of participants is guided by a moderator (or group facilitator) who introduces topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst them.

Mishra's position justifies the choice of FGD in this paper. The teachers of Literature-in-English are homogeneous groups that are gathered together to assess their modes of delivery of the subject matter and impact of the administrative and professional variables on their performance as reflected in the performances of their students after examinations. Teachers of Literature-in-English are randomly selected using purposive random sampling using the criteria of age, years of teaching experience, qualifications and gender. All these variables are considered because they determine the competence and performance of teachers in the course of their service delivery. The researcher only serves as moderator, thereby prompting the themes of discussion that borders on level of preparedness, availability of materials and the evaluation process. Out of the five types of focus group discussion that are available, this researcher used single focus group which is "the interactive discussion of a topic by a collection of all participants and a team of facilitators as one group in one place" (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee, 2017:24). The whole discussion is categorized under the following themes (i) qualification, (ii) methodology, (iii) availability of resources and (iv) evaluation process. The discussion is tape-recorded for transcription and analysis.

Literature Review

Chaudhary (2013) carried out extensive study on theories of teaching evaluating the appropriateness of each theory of teaching for sustainable outcome as reflected in the learners' performance evaluation. The theories of teaching that she considered are conscious of cognitive, emotional and environmental influences that affect teaching and learning in all contexts. The researcher grouped the theories of teaching into (i) formal theory, (ii) descriptive theory, (iii) normative theory, (iv) cognitive theory, (v) behavioral theory, (vi) psychological theory of teaching and (vi) general theory of teaching. The researcher is, however, self-contradictory with the conclusion that there is no theory of teaching and that what is available are the paradigms or models of teaching. This conclusion is counter-productive of the title and content of the whole paper. Besides, the paper does not situate its discourse within a specific subject area such as English language and Literature-in-English.

Raji and Sesan (2013) carried out a study on teaching and evaluation of Literature-in-English in Nigeria's public examinations. The researchers focused on public examinations such as West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) With the use of participatory observation and teaching engagement in some selected secondary schools, the researchers are of the view that teachers and students do not demonstrate committed interests and readiness in the teaching-learning process because as both of them (teachers and students) often rely on quick revision texts such as Exam Focus to prepare for Literature-in-English Examinations. These scholars also argue that some teachers of Literature-in-English do not have requisite qualification and professionalism in the teaching of the subject t and the consequence of this is the poor performance of students in public examinations. They also trace the poor performance in public examinations on Literature-in-English to the mode and process of setting questions for the candidates. These researchers conclude that all stakeholders should be held responsible for the poor performance of students in Literature-in-English.

Similarly, Sesan (2013) carried out a study on the management of space in the teaching-learning process of Literature-in-English. In his study, Sesan, presents space transcending the physical space that is feasible in the classroom and learning space provided for teachers and learners' interactions. His conceptualisation of space in the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English covers the process of course delivery and class management in impactful manner on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. He also argues that the materials to learn and curriculum strategies contribute to the effective learning and actualization of learning outcome in Literature-in-English. He concludes that everything should be done appropriately to ensure proper space management in the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English.

Al-Tamimi (2012) carried out a study on the teaching of literature to foreign language learners. The paper focuses attention more on the functions of literature with specific reference to the literary texts published in the indigenous languages of the learners. The researcher's argument is that the understanding of indigenous-language literature will help the learners to quickly understand the language structure and uses of the second language in communication. The claim of the researcher is that this process will serve as a medium to bridge the gap between cultures in particular. The paper's target language is Arabic while the foreign language in focus is English.

The researcher, therefore, emphasises adequate and proper methodology in the teaching-learning process of literature to learners of foreign language such as English in Arabian countries.

Ling and Eng (2016) carried out a study on types of literature teaching approaches adopted by teachers of form four and form five students in Malaysian secondary schools. The researchers combined quantitative and qualitative approaches through the use of questionnaires and interviews for teachers. Their findings reveal that the common approaches adopted by teachers are information-based approach, moral philosophical approach and paraphrastic approach. Of these three approaches, teachers of literature prefer the information-based approach because it often helps the learners to learn the concepts and contents of literature properly. The researchers aver that the choice of information-based approach by teachers is not influenced by age or years of experience of the selected teachers for the study. The approach (information-based approach) offers better clarification of terms and concepts in literature and thereby develops their understanding for literature and prepares them for Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM).

Discussion

This segment is grouped under the identified themes that were the foci of the group discussion in the process of interactions for data collection purpose. For clarity, the themes are reiterated thus: (i) qualification, (ii) methodology, (iii) availability of resources and (iv) evaluation process.

i. Qualification

The discussants have minimum of Bachelor of Education degree in English and Bachelor of Arts degree in English language. The few of them that have master's degree also have it in English language, Classics, Linguistics and Communication Studies. None of these teachers have specific focus on Literature-in-English. This is a serious limitation to their proficiency and performance in the teaching of the subject. In Nigeria's institutions of higher learning, English studies have two components of language and literature. Any student in the Department of English is exposed to the two components while area of specialization is chosen at the final year. The discussants claim that the area of specialisation they chose is language because they often find it difficult to read the literary texts in the genres of poetry, drama and prose. Unfortunately, these are the teachers that are engaged to teach Literature-in-English to the students in the senior secondary

school. The inference is that the teachers are not adequately prepared for the teaching-learning process of the subject.

ii. Methodology

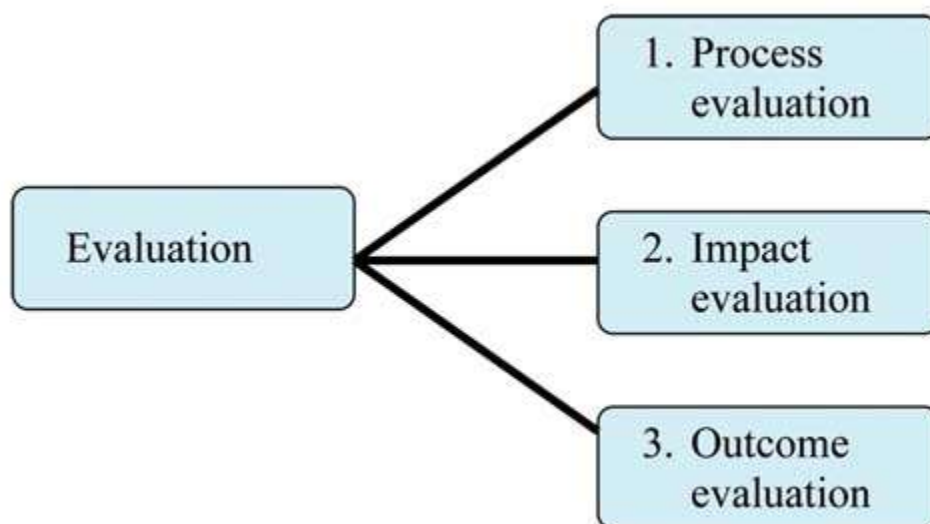
The methodology here refers to the approaches adopted by the teachers in the delivery of the subject matter of their lessons in a classroom. The teachers that have Bachelor of Education in English are able to relatively adopt some methodologies that aid learning of the students. What should be noted, however, is that the language methodology is different from literature methodology and for this reason, these teachers may not understand the appropriate method to be adopted in the teaching-learning process. Similar problem is identified in teachers with Bachelor of Arts degree in English, Classics and Communication Studies. They do not have the requisite knowledge of the methodology of teaching Literature-in-English. In the course of the discussion, the discussants averred that the lecture method is the common approach they often adopt for their learners. This is done by preparing the summary of the lecture in their lesson note and ask the students to copy the note from the board. With this approach, the students do not have the in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. The reason for this argument is that each genre of Literature-in-English has its own methodology and every teacher needs to understand this for effective teaching of the subject. A purpose-driven and goal-directed teaching of Literature-in-English should not be hinged on a single method (Sesan, 2013:44).

iii. Availability of Resources

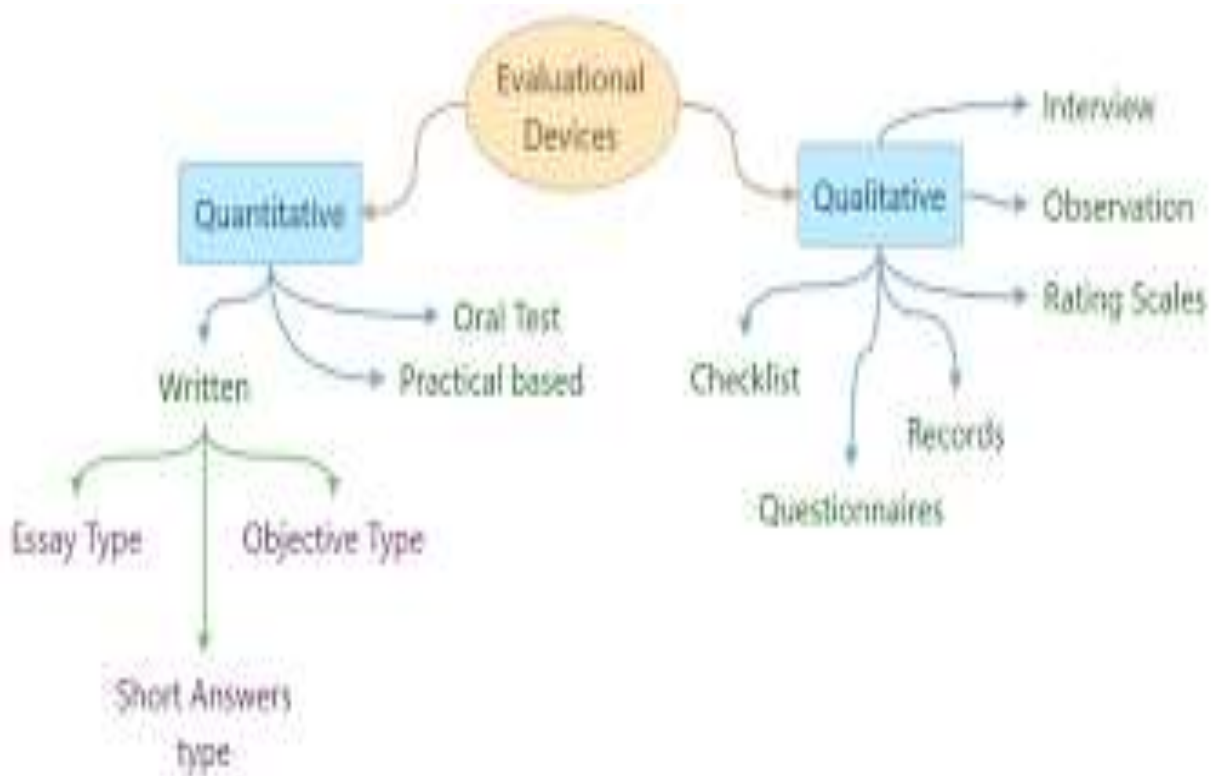
The discussants also stated that there are no available teaching and learning resources in their respective schools. The schools do not have libraries for the prescribed texts and other reading and learning materials. The teachers are left to their own fate to look for the textbooks to be used for the lessons. Besides, there are no instructional materials that can simulate and stimulate learning. To this end, the teaching of the subject is usually boring, unattractive and frustrating. The consequence of this unavailability of resources on learning is that the teaching and learning is based on rote learning whereby the learners memorise every bit of the subject matter.

iv. Evaluation Process

The teachers of Literature-in-English only focus attention on outcome evaluation which is primarily based on summative evaluation. The process evaluation is often overlooked because they believe that it is demanding and unnecessary. They do not focus more on cumulative assessment that makes use of quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment. These processes of evaluation consider learners' peculiarities and take care of the differences. Similarly, the quantitative and qualitative modes of assessment cover the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of the learners. Unfortunately, the discussants do not deploy all these modes of assessment in their classes. This connected, perhaps, to their levels of qualification and motivation for the jobs. The discussants unanimously agreed that they have not been motivated to teach effectively owing to non-availability of resources and poor remuneration by the government. The process and pattern of assessments expected of teachers of Literature-in-English are given in the following diagrams.



Source: <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=174&printable=1>



Source: <https://physicscatalyst.com/graduation/tools-of-evaluation-in-education/>

The diagram 2 above reveals that evaluation process of Literature-in- English and other school subjects are interconnected and systematic. It can, therefore, be said that the evaluation process should be cumulative of all variables that make up the assessment components – quizzes, tests, class discussions, practical demonstrations/performances and final examinations, etc.

Finding

The teachers of Literature-in-English in nearly all the secondary schools in Oyo State do not have specialisation in the subject. Many of them studied English and allied disciplines such as Linguistics, Communication Studies and Classics. This development has limited their competence and professionalism in the effective teaching of the subject. Similarly, many of the teachers of the subject do not have background in teaching methodology and the effect of this is visible in the teachers’ class management and overall course delivery. The performance of the students in the final examinations as conducted by WAEC and NECO reveals some of the lapses that are found in the teaching-learning process of the subject. The common methodology adopted

by these teachers is lecture method which they have found easier and more convenient owing to lack of adequate instructional materials to enhance their ability to vary the method.

Apart from qualification, the teachers are not properly motivated to deliver their services effectively. The total work condition and remuneration are very poor and consequently, the teachers are not committed to what they do. The staffrooms and classrooms are not conducive for effective services and learning. Similarly, the teachers do not have access to effective instructional materials and even textbooks. This situation makes teachers and learners depend on revision texts such as *Exam Focus* and *Comprehensive Literature*. There is also overall fall in the reading standard among the teachers and the students. Social media and video films have affected the quality of effective reading in our secondary schools. The reading in Nigeria secondary schools is now often conditional as students only read when they have examinations to prepare for. Students that are offering Literature-in-English are also in the same category and this informs why they always look for crook means to pass their examination.

In connection to teacher's qualification and background in education is the poor evaluation process of learning. The measurement and evaluation of learning adopted by teachers are not appropriate because many of these teachers only wait to assess the students during the general tests and examinations. The teachers do not engage in process, product and learning evaluation. They are

not care whether the evaluation of the students' learning covers the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of learning. This poor evaluation process in our secondary schools have been affecting the overall performance of the students in the terminal examinations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made.

- i. The recruitment process in the secondary schools should consider the level of requisite qualification of teachers of Literature-in-English. This recruitment process should live above the assumptions that every person who studied English Language should be able to teach Literature-in-English. Specific interviews should be conducted for teachers of Literature-in-English and such teachers, if employed, should not be

- saddled with the teaching of English Language for effectiveness and quality service delivery.
- ii. There should be on the job-training or refresher courses for teachers of all categories in our secondary schools. These refresher courses should be on the subject areas of the teachers and the teaching methodology. The aim of this is that it will help the teachers to update their knowledge while teachers with no education qualification will be able to understand the available teaching methodology for effective service delivery. The refresher programmes will also update the teachers' knowledge in evaluation process and procedure for better performances of the students.
 - iii. Government should make teaching attractive and rewarding for teachers. The conditions of services in terms of conducive work environment and good remuneration should be made available for teaching profession. This gesture will attract best of the academic brains into the profession for the benefit of the students.
 - iv. The school management should device means of making teachers and students have copies of the prescribed texts in the syllabi of the public examination bodies such as WAEC and NECO. Among the strategies is to make purchase of the books a prerequisite for admission into the class while teachers should also encourage the reading of the books by ensuring chapter-by-chapter summary (for prose) or act-by-act summary (for drama). Besides, the school management can get some copies of the prescribed texts in the school library for the loaning benefits of the students. With this, the problem of accessibility to prescribed texts will be addressed.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the preparation of teachers for the teaching of Literature-in-English in our secondary schools. Some of the teachers do not have requisite qualification and teaching methodology to teach the subject. The results of the focus group discussion (FGD) reveal fundamental issues that affect the teaching process and performance of the students in the public examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO. Following the findings, the paper recommends that the recruitment process should give priority to teachers with requisite qualification and

teaching methodology. The paper further recommends that refresher programmes should be conducted for teachers for knowledge update.

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