

The Teacher as a Resource in the Planning and Implementation of Primary English Classes

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Abstract: The study examines the role of the teacher as a significant resource in the planning and implementation of primary english instructions. The study highlights the need for adequate preparation (planning) on the part of the teacher as a condition for successful delivery of the subject matter to the pupils. The teacher should know far above the pupils. He should adopt appropriate methods in the teaching of different topics of the language. His disposition to the pupils and to the teaching should be favourable and should manage the class effectively. His use of the Language and use of teaching aids should be perfect. For the teacher to be an effective resource in planning and implementation of instruction he has to among many other things be studious and he should keep on learning.

Key words: Teacher, resource, planning, implementation, primary, English

INTRODUCTION

Three major components are involved in the teaching-learning process. These are the teacher, the learner and the subject matter. The teacher is the giver of knowledge (subject matter) and the learner is the receiver of the knowledge. In other words, the teacher is the one who imparts knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and feelings to the learner. The subject matter is firstly with the teacher, who passes it to the learner in the teaching learning process.

Learners learn when they might have been sufficiently convinced by the teacher. The teacher involves many things in his teaching function. Some of those things that the teacher employs in his teaching function are teaching aids, teaching method, learning environment, his skill and experience. Of all those resources at the disposal of the teacher to use, the most important one is the teacher himself who coordinates all other resources together to ensure that learning takes place in the learner. An attempt is therefore, made in this study to examine, the importance/significance of teacher in the teaching of English Language in the primary school. The study also highlights ways by which the teacher can improve on his performance to better the lot of his pupils in the teaching and learning of English language in the primary school.

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS (EDUCATION)

The teacher is so important in the teaching-learning function that to many people he is all in all as far as the learning of the learner is concerned. The teachers are often regarded and seen as the foundation and the roof, because no one can become anything without them (Olawale, 2001). This is the reason why people will generally put the blame of learners poor performance on the teacher. However, the irony is that when pupils do well, only few people will remember to acknowledge the role of the teachers in the teaching-learning process.

The importance of the teacher to the educational institution has been identified by the National Policy on Education (1981), which states as follows:

Teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

More than identifying the significance of the teacher in the educational system, the policy statement has also identified the relationship between the quantity of teachers and that of the students. In other words, the quality of the teachers goes a long way to affect the performance of the pupils.

In his own contribution to the issue of teacher significance, Ukeje (1978) states that:

...indeed that the quality of school and that of the teaching profession so permeate each other that a vicious circle is created in analysis of their interrelationship, for we cannot have good schools unless we have good teachers.

By 'good' teachers, Ukeje (1978) has in mind qualified teachers, which in essence has to do with the qualifications of such teachers. In recognition of the fact that the quality of teachers can help raise or ensure high academic performance on the part of the learners, the following provision was included in the National Policy on Education (1981).

All teachers in our educational institutions from pre-primary to university will be professionally trained. Teacher education programme will be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties... the NCE will ultimately become the minimum basic qualification for entry into the teaching profession.

A number of studies have suggested positive correlation between teachers qualification and students performance in schools. Teachers quality has been extensively dealt with in relation to academic achievement. The preparation of effective and efficient teacher is very important in any education system. The Nigerian Government plays an important premium on the production of qualified teachers, hence, such provisions cited are from the National Policy on Education (1981). It is then safe to conclude on the importance of teacher in the teaching-learning process by quoting Bolorunduro (1998), who says:

The more qualified a teacher is the more effective he is likely to be in the teaching-learning process. This implied that only qualified teachers should be given teaching appointments.

THE STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

English language is one of the subjects that is being taught in the primary schools in Nigeria. As a matter of fact it is the only subject that is given the greatest priority on the time-table of primary schools in Nigeria. The subject comes up twice in a school day and ten times in a week. The reasons for this priority accorded English

language in primary school may not be far fetched. One of such reasons is our historical linkage with the Europeans. The second reason stems from the first reason and that is the use (roles of), which English Language is put in Nigeria. It is the language of: Government (official language), business, media, instruction, etc.

If the subject is given so much attention as described above, it means that the government is expecting so much from its teaching. It then means that much is expected from the teachers in order to achieve the purpose of the government on the teaching and learning of the language in the primary schools. The expectation of the government is that the pupils will be able to use the language to express themselves in simple and correct sentences and be able to take simple instructions given in the same language. In other words, basic foundation in the language should be laid properly at this level for super structure to come at the secondary and tertiary institutions.

The use of which English language vis-à-vis other languages should be put in primary school is also specifically stated in the National Policy on Education (1981). The policy statement among others says:

Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English.

From the above policy statement the following can be inferred:

First, there is a role that each language-first or second is expected to play in the formal education process in school, secondly, the usability of mother-tongue (L_1) is limited to the pre-primary as well as lower primary. And thirdly, while English Language (L_2) is to be taught as a subject in the pre-primary and lower primary, it is to be used as the medium of instruction from the upper primary up to the levels of education above the primary school. Fourthly, the mother-tongue, which is used as the medium of instruction becomes a subject for teaching as from the upper primary (Alabi, 1999).

Since 1977, when the first edition of the National Policy on Education was out, the above stated language policy has not been fully implemented. The government is now taking the step in the right direction when through the PEP II: Teachers professional support services cluster in-service training model, determines to try out the implementation of the policy in the teaching of Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. It then implies

that while, the pupils may be enthusiastic in those three subjects because they are being taught in the mother-tongue they may not be in English, which continues to be taught in the foreign language-English. As a result, the teacher has a lot to do in order to make the teaching of English language at this level more interesting and rewarding to the pupils.

THE TEACHER FACTOR IN TEACHING PRIMARY ENGLISH LESSON-PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION

The teacher is always seen as an embodiment of knowledge. At primary school, he is a generalist as well as a specialist. The teacher is expected to be an expert to a certain level in English language and use it with ease. He should be good at every major area of language teaching at the primary school level. Those major areas of teaching include: pronunciation, reading, comprehension, grammar, composition and poem. The teacher should even know beyond what is written in the pupils' textbook. The textbook should not be taken as all-in-all but rather as a guide. He should not be in the dark as to what a particular topic is all about and what it aims at teaching/achieving. As the director of English language learning in the primary school class, he should prepare well for his teaching. His preparation should go beyond mere writing of lesson plan in English. He should take the preparation phase very seriously. The preparation will help him to determine what to teach, how to teach it and with what materials. The teacher should be able to organize or arrange what to be taught in sequential order. For example, if the teacher is to teach 'personal pronouns' in a lesson on grammar, he should not just focus his attention on that topic alone. He should consider starting his teaching on pronouns (revision) laying a good foundation on the topic before he can go ahead and be assured that the pupils will follow. In addition, he should now determine to arrange the teaching in an order that will facilitate learning on the part of the pupils. For example, he can arrange to teach the topic as follows:

- 1st person pronouns singular.
- 1st person pronouns plural.
- 2nd person pronouns singular.
- 2nd person pronouns plural.
- 3rd person pronouns singular.
- 3rd person pronouns plural.

Furthermore, if the teacher is to teach Yes/No question formation to the pupils in a grammar lesson, he should understand that a good knowledge of simple sentence/clause formation is a necessity for pupils to

understand and do well in that topic.

The teacher then has to start his lesson with the pupils on simple sentence formation and gradually move to Yes/No polar question formation. For an topic in each of the major areas that the teacher has to teach, he should plan and organize the learning content from such knowledge that are prerequisite to the actual topic to be taught in a lesson.

TEACHING METHODS

There are different methods of teaching. All the methods of teaching can be grouped into two namely, pupil-centred and the teacher-centred methods. In the pupil-centred method, the teacher acts as a guide or adviser to the pupils, suggesting activities that are appropriate. The pupils are actively doing the study under the leadership of the teacher. In other words, the method places the pupils at the centre of all the teaching activities. Play way, demonstration and story-telling are very useful in the teaching of English language in primary school.

The teacher-centred method is a direct opposite to the pupils-centred method. The teacher is the main actor, while the pupils are passive listeners. The pupils remain silent for most of the time during the lesson. Such methods should be discouraged in the teaching of English language in the primary schools.

However, it is important also to note that one method may not be able to satisfy the teaching objectives in any particular topic in an English language class. Therefore, the teacher should combine as many methods as will help in achieving the lesson objectives. As such, the teacher will have to employ eclectic method also known as the situation or integrated approach to teaching. Eclectic method combines all that is good in different methods and uses such in a teaching process. As such, it is not a particular method. It is a mixed and balanced method of teaching.

Teacher's comportment and behaviour: This is another teacher factor that can contribute positively or negatively to the pupils' learning of English language. The teacher should be positively disposed to the teaching of English. He should show interest in the subject. Even, if he does not like the subject yet he should not let the pupils see that in his attitude. He should speak favourably about the subject-English and make pupils to develop interest in learning the subject. He should not speak discouraging words about the subject. The teacher should be lively, active and enthusiastic in the teaching of English. Such a disposition is favourable to pupils encouragement-the learning of the language.

Classroom management: Many of the classes in our primary schools now are abnormal in size. This is due to population explosion in the schools. The abnormal class sizes has implication for teachers' effectiveness in classroom management especially in the teaching of English. The teacher should keep every pupil busy and involved. He should prepare more exercises than that which could be found in the textbook. He should focus on the whole class and not on one side of the class, while teaching.

He should be sensitive to every action, reaction or pupils activities in the course of the teaching and nib bud any of such that can lead to disorderliness in the class. He should be firm in executing judgement in the class. He should encourage good and positive performance always.

Use of teaching aids: That teaching aids are very important in the teaching of English language in primary school cannot be over-emphasized. It is the responsibility of the teacher to produce and make use of teaching aids-English Language classes/lessons. Most of the teaching aids to be used in the teaching of English language in primary schools are not far fetched. The teacher, however, needs to be innovative and creative in identifying appropriate teaching aids, draw them and or bring the real objects to class and utilize them appropriately.

Teacher's use of the language: This is another important teacher factor in the teaching of English language in the primary schools. The teacher is a model in the use of the language. He is a model for his pupils. The pupils look up to him in the use of the language. To the pupils, he is the expert and the model to be copied in every aspect of the use of the language. The teacher should be what the pupils think of him/her. He is expected to be competent user of English language. He should also create the language environment for his pupils at the school. As much as possible, he should use the English language throughout his lesson in English and avoid translation or transliteration to pupils mother-tongue except where necessary.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the teacher factor in the teaching and learning of primary school English are many. The teacher should keep on studying the language. He should not be satisfied alone with the training he received in his college or university days. He should attend conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. on English language. He should develop a programme of self-development in the

language. He should with conscious effort overcome his own deficiencies in the use of the language. He should keep abreast with the new teaching methods, discoveries and knowledge in English language.

He should also, be interested in buying new textbooks and materials on English language and on general teaching methodology as well, such will also fill a gap in his knowledge and teaching performance.

The teacher must be a hard worker. He must not be lazy neither must he be tired of teaching. He must do his best in teaching aid production and be ready to do a little sacrifice of his time and money in order to ensure that his pupils acquire the necessary skills of the language. Thus, the teacher must be in perpetual labour, for the diligence characteristic of labour yields the fruits of knowledge (Noah, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The importance of the teacher factor in English language teaching and learning cannot be over-emphasized. The teacher will be able to exhibit these factors fully provided the governments do her best to make for job satisfaction. Government should also continue to provide programme of self-development for teachers. Teachers should be provided with financial assistance to attend conferences, seminars, workshops and in-service training programme.

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