





Capacity Building of Secondary School Teachers' of English Language: A Panacea to Effective Teaching in the Post COVID-19 Era

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Abstract

This study investigated the capacity building of secondary school teachers' of the English language in the Onitsha metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study population size was one hundred and fourteen (114) secondary school teachers' of English language from the 22 public secondary schools in the Onitsha metropolis. There was no sampling because the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers with 34 items measured on a 4-point liker scale. Three research questions guided the study while the data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Two experts from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe, validated the instrument. The findings revealed that teachers of the English language need capacity building in teaching some aspects of the language as well as in innovative methods of teaching the subject and in the use of some instructional materials, especially ICT gadgets. It was therefore recommended that in-service teachers of the English language should undergo capacity building once every term to enable them to update their knowledge and skill in English Language and be relevant.

Keywords: capacity building, effective teaching, English language, teachers, secondary school

Introduction

Language is a means of social control since it is only through its use that man communicates his thought. Language is the initial factor that differentiates human beings from other creatures of the earth. It is the most remarkable tool invented by man that has been used for various purposes such as dialogue, transfer of culture, or other social interaction. Thus language is a means of capacity building in individuals, particularly learners. In a multi-linguistic and heterogonous society like Nigeria, there is a necessity for a second language that serves as a link to bridge the communication gap created by diverse languages. The English language plays a role in Nigeria.

The English language is an indispensable means of communication for expression and writing both in academic activities in schools and in social operations in society. It is a core subject in Nigeria school system with the aim of teaching it to enable Nigerians to speak fluent and acceptable English that is, enabling Nigeria speakers to enjoy mutual intelligibility with the English spoken and written in other parts of the globe, especially

Britain, the U.S, Canada or Australia, etc. In Nigeria, according to Oladipo (2018), proficiency in the English language is a sine-qua-non for success in all other subjects, and a credit pass in English is a compulsory requirement for admission to study any courses in Nigerian higher institutions. Nigeria is a multi-lingual society, and as such, the teaching and learning of the English language have always been a matter of concern to educators, parents, educational planners, and the general public with regard to its appropriate use in communication and academic purposes. The English language is a core subject, medium of instruction from basic upper level as well as the language of government and commerce. As a result, it becomes apparent why its teaching and learning should be given serious and better attention it deserves, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. English language as a core subject provides a solid foundation for everyday living, particularly for students. Students meet new and challenging concepts in different school subjects, especially in the English language, where concepts are evolving on a daily basis. And it is an open secret that many learners are still unable to communicate meaningfully in the English language even after many years of learning the language. Thus it has remained one of the

least successful subjects in the secondary school system. The situation seems to be getting worse after almost a year of students' staying at home because of the lockdown policy of the government as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ahaotu (2017) lamented that a significant part of the problem in teaching English stems from the inability of conventional classroom lessons to provide sufficient authentic materials that could guarantee a continuous flow of learning and practice. Then the COVID-19 Pandemic worsened the situation. Regardless of the importance of the English language, it is both disheartening and disappointing that despite the amount of time allotted to its teaching at the secondary school level, the performance of students has remained low and poor.

Stakeholders in education and research findings have in the recent past identified several factors as the causes of students' poor performance in the English Language. Among such factors identified are lack of recruiting qualified teachers, non-supply of basic infrastructure, and lack of adequate supply of instructional materials to schools (Akinyeye, 2015). Amuseghan (2007) remarked that the mastery of the different skills of the English language and developing communicative competence are part of the aims of teaching the English language. Learners' proficient use of the English language is important because it is the medium of delivery in schools. Gwarjiko (2015) stated that the English language enables Nigerians to function as a political entity considering their multi-ethnic and lingual difference.

The success or failure of any teaching and learning largely depends to a great extent on the teachers. Teachers are one of the key elements and critical ones that matter in the educational system. This refers to a core of highly qualified personnel who are equipped with the desirable skills, knowledge, competencies, commitment, and compassion, which in addition, are empowered to perform the expected functions of teaching learners to learn. Teachers are, therefore, very central to teaching and learning since the quality of education in any society is reflected by the quality of the teachers (Eleje *et al.*, 2022).

The ingenuity of teachers is required in order for classroom instruction to impact learners positively. It becomes necessary to equip teachers with necessary innovative competencies that will contribute to effective and efficient teaching and learning of the English language so that learners will learn desired positive knowledge and skills, which are critical for sustainable development in the 21st century, especially after the COVID-19 Pandemic. No desired meaningful learning can be achieved in the classroom without recourse to teachers. Teachers are curriculum implementers and serve as guides to the learners (Okey, 2012). So they need to be abreast of new teaching pedagogies with innovations in instructional strategies and other research-based developments in teaching and learning. The teacher is responsible for the content learned in class on a daily basis, and as such, delivering the subject content successfully requires varying methods and strategies of teaching to meet the individual needs of the learners. The quality of the educational attainment of each learner ultimately depends on the initiative and competence of the teacher. The teacher equally manages the available resources in teaching and learning and most times improvise resources that some learning contents may require but which may not be readily available in schools. So teachers' capacities must be constantly developed to understand, interpret and implement the curriculum at the classroom level. It is important to reemphasize that for teachers to impact learners positively, they should have the capacity to perform their tasks efficiently. This is because the attainment of a functional and qualitative education will be a dream without adequate and well trained and qualified teachers to meet the challenges of the school system *visa-vis* any challenges confronting them in the discharge of their duties, such as the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As Okey (2012) opined that knowledge is not static, and so even the "professionals" need to undergo some training/retraining programs as the need may arise to enable them to meet the challenges in the academic field. Society has undergone myriad changes and is still undergoing serious changes which have affected society and the school system in particular. For example, is the issue of COVID-19? Thus, there is a need for teachers who are capable of demonstrating skills that are fundamental to the challenges raised by the Pandemic, particularly

in a core subject like the English language. Uzoegwu and Mbegbu (2020) stated that the teacher determines the success or failure of English language curriculum objectives which are set to make learners proficient users of the language as a condition for adaptation, further educational pursuit, and ultimately productivity in a multi-lingual nation like Nigeria. Hence the discussion on the capacity development of teachers of the English language at the secondary school level.

Capacity Building (CA) implies a continuous process of teacher improvement, investing in human resources for positive empowerment for sustained and effective productivity. Jaquith *et al.* (2010) explained that capacity building has to do with the allocation of an investment in resources – physical, intellectual, or human especially when other intervening variables have failed within a given institutional or social context. It aims at making teachers efficient in their classroom service delivery. CA enables teachers to acquire new skills and methods/procedures and improve their abilities which will likely enhance their output and productivity. This would help them learn new teaching techniques for better service delivery since teachers are great determiners of educational quality. Their numbers, training, retraining, and experiences all impact students' program and experiences (Okey, 2012). Okey further stated that teachers could make or mar the school curriculum; therefore, their adequacy and quality for better service delivery needs to be constantly improved. This assertion is particularly vital for a subject like the English language and in this post-COVID-19 era when teachers should invest their all in order to help learners deal with the realities of the period. Students during the COVID-19 lockdown stayed at home so many months without the traditional face-to-face classroom instructions, especially those in public schools. Strategies for teaching are forever changing. The question is, are teachers of the English language aware of different innovations in the teaching and learning of the subject?

Consequently, Ayaka and Muodumogu (2019) investigated the effects of environmental literacy on students' achievement in writing (English language) that revolves around reading and acquiring information from print and the environment for better academic achievement. The researchers noted that many teachers are not aware of these strategies in the English language classroom. Muodumogu and Viashima (2019) recommended that teachers should use strategies such as comics to encourage the students to read and write. Again, Ekanem *et al.* (2019) found that Think-Pair-Share (TPS) is an indispensable teaching strategy for effective teaching of reading comprehension in secondary schools because it is learner-centered and maximizes the active participation of the learners. The researchers, therefore, encouraged English language teachers to adopt this strategy during the lesson to enhance students' performance. Also, Ibitoye (2019) advocated the inclusion of reading Aloud (RA) in the ESL curriculum in Nigeria after empirically confirming the effectiveness of the strategy.

Building the capacity of English language teachers for effective teaching and learning is an avenue through which English language teachers will be better equipped with the necessary capabilities, knowledge, and skills to maximize their potential in their classroom service delivery in order to add better values for positives outcome of the learners. In order words, English language teachers' capacity building should be a continuous process that aims for sustained productivity. Djoub (2018) referred to it as teacher improvement. Djoub described teacher improvement as professional learning by a teacher already engaged in professional practice in the process of developing the necessary knowledge base and skills they require to carry out their roles effectively. So English language teachers should constantly upgrade their methods of teaching, skills, and approaches to teaching in order to enhance and sustain their output efficiently.

In Nigeria's secondary schools, particularly public schools, the different aspects of the English language are handled by the same teacher, and so the capacity building of teachers should be in all aspects. But attention should be given to areas some teachers skip or neglect to teach and/or where it is taught; it is done poorly. For instance, Akinyeye (2015) asserted that English language teachers have failed in their responsibilities to help learners acquire

functional and critical writing skills. Onukaogu (2003) had earlier observed that reading is highly neglected, while Okebukola (2004) stated that secondary school teachers' are not instructed on how to intervene appropriately or adequately when they encounter some of these problems like non-readers in their classroom.

There seem to be many odds against proper English language instruction at the secondary school level in Nigeria. The students themselves constitute a great problem. Nworah (2017) observed that many students do not buy textbooks recommended for them, study at home, and make a lot of noise in the classroom. Yet, many scholars like Ibitoye (2019); Tata and Rabi (2014) noted that, among other factors, improper use of methods in teaching the English language and inadequate instructional facilities are responsible for the poor performance of students in the English Language in Nigeria. The use of proper/adequate instructional methods and materials in the language classroom cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, teachers of the English language need capacity building in all these areas.

Teachers are expected to improvise facilities which some learning contents require, as well as manage the available resources in teaching and learning. But it is not realistic to expect teaching excellence in an environment/situation that predisposes both the teachers and learners to poor performance. Gwarjiko (2015) recommended that there should be regular language professional development seminars, workshops, and in-service or on-the-job training for teachers of the English language. These seminars/workshops should be innovative teaching methods. So if the teachers' capacity is constantly developed, the quality of their classroom service delivery will improve; therefore, the researchers investigated the areas teachers of English language need capacity building for better teaching and learning in public secondary schools.

Research Questions

1. What aspects of the English language do teachers of English need capacity building as perceived by Secondary School English Teachers (SSET) in Onitsha metropolis?

Table 1

Mean Responses on the Aspects of the English Language the Teachers of English Language Need Capacity Building

English language teachers need capacity building on	N	SA	A	SD	D	M	Remark
Classification of English words	114	54	54	2	4	3.40	Accepted
Concord and agreement	114	62	45	4	3	3.44	Accepted
Vocabulary development.	114	68	35	5	6	3.45	Accepted
Sustained reading comprehension	114	55	49	2	8	3.37	Accepted
Teaching summarization.	114	49	59	2	4	3.35	Accepted
Grammatical structures (phrases and clauses)	114	65	49	0	0	3.57	Accepted
Oral English	114	81	33	0	0	3.71	Accepted
Grammatical properties of English words	114	55	54	2	3	3.42	Accepted
Creative writing	114	54	57	1	2	3.43	Accepted
Dictation	114	22	59	8	25	2.83	Accepted
Word Mechanics	114	25	72	3	14	3.04	Accepted

Table 1, all the items were indicated as the aspects of the English language which teachers of English language need capacity building for effective teaching of the subject in this post-COVID-19 era with the grand $M = 3.35$ and $SD = 2.90$. The major aspect which

2. Which of the innovative methods of teaching the English language do teachers of English language need capacity building as perceived by SSET in Onitsha metropolis?
3. What instructional materials do teachers of the English language need capacity building on for better classroom instruction as perceived by SSET in the Onitsha metropolis?

Methodology

The design adopted in this study was a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of hundred and fourteen (114) teachers of English language from 22 public secondary schools in Onitsha Metropolis of Anambra State, Nigeria. The sample size was 114, as the population was manageable. All the respondents were teachers employed by the government and those employed by Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs). The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire item structured in four-point (SA – Strongly Agree

A – Agree, SD – Strongly Disagree, D – Disagree) rating scale, which consisted of 34 items. Two experts in the Measurement and Evaluation unit from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, validated the instrument. The researchers visited the schools and approved the teachers of the English language in the staff rooms. Available teachers were handed the questionnaire in some schools. Some of the teachers reported they were busy at the time but made an appointment with the researchers to complete the questionnaire. The researchers distributed 114 copies of the questionnaire in the 22 public secondary schools used for the study. All the one hundred and fourteen teachers completed the questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Results

The results from the data analysis are provided in the tables below based on the research question and followed by a brief discussion.

Research Question 1: What aspects of the English language do teachers of English need capacity building?

most teachers need serious capacity building on is item 7, which is Oral English, with a mean of 3.71.

Research Question 2: Which of the innovative methods of teaching the English language do teachers of the English language need a capacity building?

Table 2

Mean Responses on the Aspects of the Innovative Methods of Teaching the English Language the Teachers of English Language Need Capacity Building

English language teachers needs capacity building	N	SA	A	SD	D	M	Remark
Read aloud	114	21	52	15	26	2.69	Accepted
Using comics strips	114	24	75	5	10	3.03	Accepted
CAPS principle	114	21	54	24	15	2.63	Accepted
Think-pair share method	114	17	66	9	22	2.79	Accepted
Team teaching approach	114	39	72	0	3	3.31	Accepted
Cooperative instruction	114	31	68	3	12	3.11	Accepted
Reciprocal teaching strategy (expository/instructional strategies)	114	51	58	1	4	3.39	Accepted
Using context clues	114	37	65	4	8	3.18	Accepted
Word play or consciousness strategy	114	22	73	9	10	2.94	Accepted

English language teachers needs capacity building	N	SA	A	SD	D	M	Remark
Using whole language strategy in English language classroom	114	44	59	6	5	3.23	Accepted
Peer teaching method	114	43	56	4	11	3.21	Accepted
Project method	114	53	58	1	2	3.42	Accepted

In Table 2, all the items indicated as the innovative methods of teaching the English language, which teachers of the English language need capacity building on to improve teaching and learning with the grand $M = 3.08$ and $SD = 2.64$. The major innovative method that teachers of the English language need

serious capacity building on is item number 23, which is the project method of teaching with a mean of 3.42.

Research Question 3: What instructional materials do teachers of the English language need capacity building on for better classroom instruction?

Table 3

Item by Item Analysis of Teacher's Mean Responses on the Instructional Materials that Teachers of English Language Need Capacity Building on

English language teachers need capacity building on	N	SA	A	SD	D	M	Remark
The use of flashcards (vocabulary development & polling)	114	46	45	11	12	3.10	Accepted
The use of PowerPoint project.	114	56	51	2	5	3.41	Accepted
The use of English language textbooks	114	42	48	8	16	3.08	Accepted
Overhead projectors	114	58	47	4	5	3.39	Accepted
The use of computers as a tutor and tool	114	73	36	0	5	3.59	Accepted
Pictures	114	44	42	6	22	3.08	Accepted
The Internet	114	58	53	3	0	3.45	Accepted
Use of e-library	114	60	47	2	5	3.44	Accepted
The use of the e-book.	114	71	30	3	10	3.48	Accepted
The use of video conferencing.	114	55	47	0	12	3.37	Accepted
WhatsApp	114	37	50	11	16	2.99	Accepted

In Table 3, all the items showed that the instructional materials teachers of the English language agreed they need capacity building with the grand $M = 3.31$ and SD of 2.87. The major instructional material that teachers of the English language need serious capacity building on is item 28, which is the use of the computer as a tutor and tool in teaching the English language, with a mean of 3.59.

Discussion

The study was aimed at investigating the capacity building of secondary school English language teachers as a panacea for effective teaching and learning of the language, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. This was informed by the fact that some teachers of the English language in Nigeria, despite the different novel global trends towards the teaching of the subject, seem not aware of some of these teaching pedagogies with innovations in instructional materials.

The result of the findings indicated that there are aspects in the English language which teachers of the English language need capacity building on. They include Oral English, grammatical structures (phrases and clauses), vocabulary development, classification of English words, summary writing, creative writing, grammatical properties of English words, and so forth. This becomes significant given that the teachers of the English language determine the success or failure of English language curriculum objectives (Uzoegwu & Mbegbu, 2020).

There are various innovative methods of teaching that English language teachers need capacity building on in order to improve teaching and to learn the subject. These innovative methods include the use of comic strips, think-pair share method, CAPS principle, team teaching, context clues, whole language, strategy, project methods, and read-aloud. Supporting this finding, Muodumogu and Viashima (2019) and Ekanem et al. (2019) revealed and recommended that teachers of the English language should use strategies such as comics and think-pair share to encourage students in reading comprehension and grammar.

The result of the study further indicates that there are aspects of instructional materials in which teachers of the English language need serious capacity building in order to improve teaching and to learn in the post-COVID-19 era. They include the use of flashcards, different Information and Communication Technology (ICT) gadgets, particularly computers as a tutor and tool, and even pictures. This confirms Anakpua's (2016) assertion that the availability of the requisite infrastructure and material makes teachers succeed in teaching and pedagogical practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that for effective teaching and learning of the English language in secondary schools, the teachers of the English language need serious capacity building in different aspects of the language, use of innovative methods of teaching and improvements in the use of instructional materials to enhance classroom processes.

Recommendations

The researchers, therefore, recommended that:

1. English language teachers should identify and properly articulate difficult aspects/content areas in the ESL curriculum at the senior secondary level so that these areas will be given adequate attention during capacity-building workshops.
2. Again, teachers of the English language should be involved in curriculum planning by the National Education Research Development Council (NERDC) for the purpose of developing a curriculum that is both relevant and achievable, incorporating innovative strategies and resources.
3. Teachers of the English language at the secondary level should involve themselves in coordination and marking different external examinations such as SSCE, NECO, and others.
4. Government should provide adequate funds, infrastructural facilities such as conducive classrooms, and other recent teaching and learning facilities for English language teaching and learning.
5. Teachers of the English language should undergo capacity building at least once every term.
6. Teachers of the English language should be ICT compliant.

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Capacity Building of Secondary School English Language Teachers Questionnaire (CBSSELTQ)

Section A:

Name of school:

Gender: Male () Female ()

Years of Teaching experience: 1 -15 () 15-above ()

Section B:

Instruction: Please tick (√) in the columns for all the items to indicate the areas/aspects English Language Teachers need capacity building for effective teaching and learning of English language in the post COVID-19 era by using the following keys:

SA – Strongly Agree

A – Agree

SD – Strongly Disagree

D – Disagree

Research Question 1: What aspects of the English language do teachers of English language need capacity building?

Cluster 1

Table 1

Aspects of the English Language the Teachers of English language Need Capacity Building

S/N	English language teachers need capacity building on	SA	A	D	SD
1	Classification of English words				
2	Concord and agreement				
3	Vocabulary development				
4	Sustained reading comprehension				
5	Teaching summarization				
6	Grammatical structures (phrases and clauses)				
7	Oral English				
8	Grammatical properties of English words				
9	Creative writing				
10	Dictation				
11	Word mechanics				

Research Question 2: Which innovative methods of teaching English language do teachers of English need capacity building?

Cluster 2

Table 2

The Innovative Methods of Teaching English Language the Teachers of English Language Need Capacity Building

S/N	English language teachers needs capacity building	SA	A	D	SD
12	In read aloud				
13	In using comics strips				
14	On CAPS principle				
15	On think-pair share method				
16	On team teaching approach				
17	In cooperative instruction				
18	In reciprocal teaching strategy (expository/instructional strategies)				
19	In using context clues				
20	On word play or consciousness strategy				
21	On using whole language strategy in English language classroom				
22	On peer teaching method				
23	On project methods				

Research 3: What instructional materials do teachers of English language need capacity building on for better classroom instruction?

Cluster 3

Table 3

Instructional Materials the Teachers of English Language Need Capacity Building on for Better Classroom Instruction

S/N	English language teachers need capacity building on	SA	A	D	SD
24	The use of flash cards (vocabulary development & polling)				
25	The use of power point project.				
26	The use of English language textbooks				
27	Overhead projectors				
28	Computers as tutor and tool				
29	Pictures				
30	The internet				
31	Use of e-library				
32	The use of e-book				
33	The use of video conferencing				
34	WhatsApp				