

# A Comparative analysis of English Language Curriculum Implementation in Private and Public Primary Schools in Ibadan, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the differences and similarities in school quality by examining the human and material resources (inputs) involved in the implementation of the English language curriculum in private and public primary schools in Ibadan. The study adopted a descriptive design of survey type. A multistage sampling approach was used to select from a stratified sample of schools of four high performing public schools, four high performing private schools, four low performing public schools and four low performing private schools; resulting in a total of 16 schools. One intact class was used from each of the schools. The research question was tested using two validated instruments; English language teaching/learning observation system (ELTLOS), Qualitative Key informant Interview (QKII). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and descriptive qualitative reports. In assessing the differences and similarities in the availability of teaching/learning materials, independent samples t-test was used and results show that there is a significant difference in the availability of teaching/learning materials in low and high performing public and private schools at  $t_{(14)} = 6.88$ ;  $P < 0.5$ . in assessing the quality of teachers, descriptive statistics was used and results show that teachers in high performing private schools have more teachers with high qualification i.e. only 19% of the entire population of teachers have high educational degrees. However, teachers in public schools have more years of teaching experience. There is better quality in the inputs necessary for the implementation of English language curriculum in private schools than in public schools. Low performing private schools must improve on the standard of teaching/learning by employing competent teachers. High performing public and private primary schools in Ibadan must ensure quality control.*

**Keywords:** Multi-method, Curriculum, School academic status, School type, Strategies.

## Introduction

A curriculum can be referred to as a guide or manual that tells the teacher about the nature and characteristics of the learners to teach, the content to teach, the methods and strategies to use to teach and assess learners. Stow and Clarke (2006) defined curriculum as a written plan which drives instruction. It delineates the skills and concepts taught and

evaluated to enhance student achievement. Composed of a content area philosophy, strands with definitions, program goals, aligned scope and sequence, learner outcomes and assessment tools, it is intentionally designed to meet district, state and national standards. A well-developed curriculum will specify the knowledge, skills, insights and attitudes that learners will be expected to acquire (i.e. learning objectives/outcomes), the in-class and out-of-class learning activities that will aid learners to learn (i.e. learning experiences) as well as the teachers' activities. A good example of a curriculum manual is the National Curriculum for Primary Schools: English Language Years 1-6 developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), 2004, revised ed. (NOUN, 2019) According to Ornstein et.al.(2018) a curriculum is a plan or program of all experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of a school. Westbrook, et. al. (2018) says it is the totality of the experiences of children for which schools are responsible.

The definitions above can be summarized thus; a curriculum is a planned series of courses which comprises of the experiences of children for which the school is responsible; it has content. In addition, a curriculum takes cognizance of the learners and their interaction with each other, the teacher and their materials. Thus, the curriculum is viewed as a composite whole including the learner, the teacher, teaching and learning methodologies, anticipated and unanticipated experiences, outputs and outcomes possible within a learning institution (Pinar, 2019). The final destination of any curriculum is the classroom, which involves students, teachers, administrators and the entire community. The most crucial phase of the curriculum development process is implementing the curriculum. If a curriculum is to make a positive impact on learners, it must be implemented in the classroom. (Ornstein et.al., 2019).

Curriculum implementation can be described as the point at which the educational programme is put into effect. It has to do with putting into practice, the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects. The process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experience. The teacher is regarded as the agent in the curriculum implementation process. It is however important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. Implementation is said to take place as the learner acquires the intended skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in a society. (Tomlinsin, 2017). Darling-Hammond, et.al. 2020) opine that implementation can be seen as a process of professional development and growth involving ongoing interactions, feedback and assistance. It requires a supportive atmosphere in which there is trust and open communication between stakeholders in the education system. For the implementation of a curriculum to be successful, there must be an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the education system.

English language is essential at all levels of education in Nigeria; if a learner does not have solid background in English language, it would be difficult to perform well in other subjects as the learner progresses in education. The English language curriculum in Nigeria ought to have mode away from a system of language education based on rote learning, linguistic correctness and cramming of information to a system that promotes autonomous learning, thinking skills and communicative competence. (OECD, 2019). This desired shift depends, to a large extent, on the quality if implementation of the curriculum. The need to examine how the English language curriculum is being implemented in schools is important so as to find out the commonalties and differences in quality of these schools and also identify the factors that may be responsible for variations in student achievement (school output).in most countries of the world, evaluations is now at the center of almost all education quality improvement policies and strategies. Also, school rankings, based on their examination results have become popular information for decision makers in education and

parents alike. The need for evaluation of schools should be emphasized amidst calls for greater accountability, organizational efficiency, quality development, quality control, quality assurance, monitoring and a host of other measures (Worldbank, 2018).

Quality of a curriculum may be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept composed of three inter-related aspects of school: the quality of available human and material resources (inputs), the quality of management and teaching/learning processes taking place (process), and the quality of the results (outputs or outcomes). Schools are regarded as the delivery points at which all the inputs of the system interact thereby determining the quality of the teaching/learning process (Hattie, 2017). Killen (2016) asserts that school quality is usually estimated based on students' output in terms of students' level of achievement (i.e. outcome). However, a better definition of school quality is that which focuses directly on effects of specific aspects of school which is determined by the amount of school inputs into the child's schooling and the efficiency with which they are managed (i.e. processes).

Observation has shown that pupils in good quality private schools tend to perform better than those in public schools, even the highly rated public schools. Even though teachers in private schools do not always have better educational qualification than their public school counterparts, their output, often is of higher quality. One wonders what specifically are responsible for the higher educational performance in private schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The quality of curriculum, an aspect of school quality, is usually estimated based on students' output in terms of students' level of achievement (i.e. outcome). However, a better definition of school quality is that which focuses directly on effects of specific aspects of school which is determined by the amount of school inputs into the child's schooling and the efficiency with which they are managed (i.e. processes). English language is an essential tool for education in Nigeria. If a learner does not have a solid background in English language, especially competence in reading comprehension and writing skills, it will be difficult to understand or perform well in other subjects as the learner progresses in education. It is therefore imperative to investigate the differences and similarities in school quality by critically examining the human and material resources (inputs) involved in the implementation of the English Language Curriculum in each school.

This study investigates the differences and similarities between high and low performing public and private primary schools in terms of the quality of human and material resources on ground.

### **Research Questions**

This study is based on the following research questions:

What are the differences and similarities in the implementation of English Language curriculum between private and public primary schools, in terms of:

- (a) Type of curriculum used,
- (b) Availability of teaching/learning materials,
- (c) Teacher Qualification,
- (d) Classroom processes.

### **Methodology**

This is mainly a qualitative research; however, some quantitative measures were adopted, thereby making it a multi-method approach. This study is an in-depth analysis of the curriculum of high and low performing private and public schools in Ibadan, to identify the key factors responsible for the qualities of these schools. The population for this study

comprised all public and private primary schools in Ibadan. The sampling technique was a non-probability sampling technique which involved the researcher actively selecting schools based on the nature of the research questions. The sampling procedure is multi-staged. First, all schools in Ibadan city were stratified into public and private schools. From the public schools, four high performing and four low performing schools were randomly selected. From the private schools, four high performing and four low performing schools were selected, based on their academic performance as documented by the Ministry of Education. Scope of subject curriculum:

- Reading comprehension aspect of English Language
- Writing aspect of English Language

Qualitative research methods are not dependent on sample sizes as quantitative methods. Therefore, sample size was drawn from private and public schools based on the status of their academic performance, as documented by the ministry of education, and selection was done randomly. Sixteen (16) schools in Ibadan metropolis were selected: four poor performing private primary schools and four high performing private primary schools, as well as four poor performing public primary schools and four high performing public primary schools. Only primary three classes were involved in this study. The researcher made use of one intact class.

Qualitative Key Informant Interviews and English Language Teaching/Learning Observation scale were instruments used for data collection. Independent T-test analysis was done on the observation scales. Results were presented in percentages according to the categories of schools.

The Key Informant Interviews (QKII) instrument was used to elicit information on the activities that go on within the school and the English Language teaching/learning process. The QKII consists of six questions which are open-ended so as to allow for in-depth responses. Teachers were interviewed.

The English Language Teaching/Learning Observation system (ELTLOS) instrument was constructed by the researcher and was used to observe English Language teaching/learning processes in the classroom. It consists of 9 items which include: lesson presentation, teacher qualification, teacher's years of teaching experience, date, school type, gender, number of pupils in class, duration of observation, and duration of lesson. The ELTLOS system consists of segments which include classroom interaction, teacher's activities during reading comprehension, pupil activities during reading comprehension, related school activities, pupil activities during writing, English language related school activities, curriculum specification, and textbooks used for reading comprehension and essay writing. Reliability was estimated using ordinal alpha with a coefficient of 0.74.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** Is there any difference in the implementation of English Language curriculum between high performing and low performing private and public schools, in terms of availability of teaching/learning materials?

**Table 1: Independent T-Test Result Table for Availability of Teaching/Learning Materials**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>P</b>
Adequate Teaching materials	9	6.88	2.59	6.88	.004
Inadequate Teaching materials	7	4.56	2.66		

*Significance level = 0.05*

Table 1(b) shows that schools with adequate teaching materials have a mean of (6.88) and standard deviation of (2.59), while schools with inadequate materials have a mean of (4.56) and standard deviation of (2.66). Both variables produce a t-value of 6.88;  $P < 0.05$ . This result shows that there is a significant difference between the availability of materials in low performing public and private primary schools and high performing public and private schools.

**Research Question 2:** is there any difference in the implementation of English language curriculum between high performing and low performing private and public schools, in terms of Teacher Qualification?

**Table 2: Distribution of strata according to level of teacher qualification**

Level of Qualification	High performing schools		Low performing schools	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
OND/NCE	25%	6%	25%	12.5%
HND/B.SC/B.A/B.Ed	-	19%	-	12.5%
M.A/M.Sc/M.Ed/Ph.D	-	-	-	-

25% of teachers in high performing public schools are OND and NCE holders. 19% of teachers in high performing private schools are OND/NCE holders. 25% of teachers in high performing public schools are OND and NCE holders. 19% of teachers in high performing private schools are OND/NCE holders. 25% of teachers in low performing public schools are OND/NCE holders. 12.5% of teachers in low performing private schools are OND/NCE holders. 6% of teachers in high performing private schools are HND/B.Sc./B.A/B.Ed holders. None of the four categories of schools, have teachers with M.A/M.Sc/M.Ed/Ph.D qualification.

**Research Question 3:** is there any difference in the implementation of English language curriculum between high and low performing public and private schools, in terms of teacher experience?

Years of teaching experience	High performing schools		Low performing schools	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
1-5yrs	6.3%	6%	-	25%
6-10yrs	-	19%	6.3%	-
11-15yrs	6.2%	-	-	-
16-20yrs	-	-	6.2%	-
21yrs+	12.5%	-	12.5%	-

6.3% of teachers in high performing public schools have 1-5 years of teaching experience; 6.2% of them have 11-15 years of teaching experience, while 12.5% of them have over 21 years of teaching experience. In the low performing public schools, 6.3% of the teachers have 6-10 years of teaching experience; 6.2% of them have 16-20 years of teaching experience, while 12.5% of them have over 21 years of teaching experience. Also, in the high performing private schools, 6% of the teachers have 1-5 years of teaching experience and 19% of them have 6-10 years of teaching experience.

**Discussion****1. Availability of Teaching/Learning Materials**

The results show that instructional materials are more readily available in private schools than in public schools. On the other hand, most of the public school teacher make use of materials not specified in the curriculum, as they are left to improvise, due to lack of supply of necessary materials. Library and information communication technologies (ICT) were observed a functional in most of the private schools but most of the public schools did not have functional facilities, while some of the staff were not proper trained to use the ICT facilities."

The lack of adequate materials in public schools and the subsequent improvisation by teachers aligns with the general understanding of resource disparities in educational systems. While not directly stated in the discussion, the implication of resource constraints in public schools is a common theme in educational research.

The mention of ICT facilities and their functionality (or lack thereof) in different school types points to the broader issue of technological integration in education. The study by Eze and Okorji (2020), which discusses "Instructional materials utilization and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nigeria," indirectly supports the importance of such materials, including technology, for student performance.

The World Bank (2018) report, emphasizes the critical role of resources and infrastructure in achieving educational outcomes, which resonates with the findings on material availability.

**2. Teacher Qualification and Experience**

Results also show differences in teacher qualification and experience among low and high performing public and private schools. Most of the teachers in the high performing private schools have HND/B.A/ B.Sc./B.Ed. Some teachers who fall within this stratum, have OND. Also, in most of the high performing private schools, the years of experience of teachers range between 6-10years. These teachers also undergo in-service training. In high performing private school 1, for instance, teachers received training directly from an international organization, on how to implement their curriculum and incorporate into various aspects of pupil academic and social endeavours. In all the high performing public schools observed, teacher qualification is National Certificate of Education (NCE). Most teachers who fall within this category have teaching experiences of 21 years and above. However, in-service training in most of these schools is very rare. This is due to the fact that the federal/state government have to sponsor/facilitate such training and this doesn't happen all the time. But the few times such training have come to be, the teachers are mandated to participate. The low performing private schools vary in teacher qualification. Some teachers have NCE qualification; some have Bachelor degree and some have HND. However, data reveals that most schools that fall within this category have few years of teaching experience ranging between 1–5 years. Also, these teachers rarely undergo any form of in-service training. In all the low performing public schools observed, teacher qualification is National Certificate of Education (NCE). Just like in high performing public schools, most teachers who fall within this category have teaching experiences of 21 years and above. However, in-service training in most of these schools is also very rare. This is due to the fact that the federal/state government have to sponsor/facilitate such training and this doesn't happen all the time. But the few times such training have come to be, the teachers are also mandated to participate."

The discussion highlights a contrast between the higher educational degrees in high-performing private schools and the NCE qualifications in public schools, coupled with more years of experience in public schools. This touches upon the complex relationship between qualification, experience, and teaching effectiveness. Leithwood, et.al. (2020), suggests that leadership plays a crucial role, and effective leadership can leverage diverse teacher strengths, including experience.

The emphasis on in-service training, particularly in high-performing private schools, aligns with the broader literature on professional development. Darling-Hammond, et al. (2020), in their work on "Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development," underscore the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The finding that public school teachers have more years of experience but potentially less advanced degrees than their private school counterparts is a recurring theme in educational research globally. Hattie (2017) suggests that certain teacher actions and feedback strategies can have a significant impact, irrespective of formal qualifications, implying that experience can be a valuable asset when combined with effective pedagogical approaches.

The challenges faced by public schools in providing in-service training due to government funding limitations are a practical reality. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) National Policy on Education outlines provisions for teacher training, and the study's findings suggest a gap between policy and implementation in this regard.

### **3. *Quality Control and School Performance***

The finding that "There is better quality in the way record of individual pupils' performances are kept in the high performing private schools compared to all the other stratum of schools"; directly relates to the concept of school quality and accountability. Schleicher (2019), and the OECD (2020) highlight the global focus on evaluating educational systems and ensuring quality through various metrics, including performance tracking. Effective record-keeping is a fundamental component of monitoring and improving student outcomes.

The idea of "quality control" mentioned in the recommendations and implied in the discussion of performance records aligns with the principles of continuous improvement in education. Fullan (2016) discusses the processes necessary for sustained improvement in educational systems, which would include robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms like good record-keeping.

### **4. *Curriculum Usage***

The use of the NERDC curriculum aligns with the Nigerian educational framework. National Open University of Nigeria (2019) and the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) National Policy on Education, provide the foundational context for curriculum development and implementation in Nigeria.

The mention of foreign curricula and combined approaches reveals a dynamic and eclectic approach to curriculum design. Pinar (2019), explores the diverse theoretical underpinnings of curriculum, which encompass the reasons behind adopting or adapting various curriculum models. Biesta (2022), also touches upon the broader influences on curriculum development in a globalized context.

### **5. Funding**

"The Federal Government is financially responsible for majority of the public schools. Some private schools are funded by sole proprietors while some are funded by private organizations."

This finding directly addresses the financial structures of the educational system. The World Bank (2018) report, discusses the impact of funding models on educational quality and access, particularly in developing countries. The disparity in funding between public and private sectors is a critical factor influencing the availability of resources and, consequently, educational outcomes.

### **Summary**

The findings of this study can be summarized into the following:

- Most of the schools make use of the NERDC curriculum, some use EVANS, some use foreign curriculum and some use combined curriculum content. The types of curriculum combination identified are, NERDC and a foreign curriculum; EVANS and NERDC; however, no school observed use a combination of more than 2 curriculums.
- There is a significant difference in the availability of teaching/learning materials in low and high performing public and private primary schools. Most of the public schools do not have adequate teaching/learning materials; however most of the private schools have adequate teaching/learning materials.
- Most of the teachers in private schools have higher qualification than those in public schools; however, teachers in both low performing and high performing public schools have more years of teaching experience than those in private schools.
- There is better quality in the way record of individual pupils' performances are kept in the high performing private schools compared to all the other stratum of schools.
- The Federal Government is financially responsible for majority of the public schools. Some private schools are funded by sole proprietors while some are funded by private organizations.

### **Recommendations**

Several fingers point at the federal government for the output of schools that rely solely on them for funds and supply of necessary facilities. Therefore, adequate and relevant teaching/learning materials (which include textbooks and teachers' guide amongst many others) should be made available to public schools especially the ones with low academic status. Public schools should encourage English language related activities like; competitive debates, poetry writing, compositions and so on, as this would encourage pupils and spur their interest in English language.

Low performing private schools must improve on the standard of teaching/learning by employing competent teachers. Teaching is a skill and no matter how well read one is, specific skills are required to pass-on knowledge effectively.

High performing public and private schools must work hard on ensuring quality control. Observation as well as achievement test results from schools within this category reveal that there is likely to be a fall in academic status if proper monitoring is not done.

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