

An Examination of Senior Secondary School Students' Perceptions of Challenges Facing Teaching and Learning of Literature in English in Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The inclusion of Literature in English in Nigerian School curriculum evidently reveals its importance in the sustenance and development of human society. Yet, decades after its teaching and learning, the nation is yet to reflect the positive effects on its citizenry. This study is embarked upon to identify the challenges facing its teaching and learning in Ado-Odo/Otta Local Government area of Ogun State Nigeria. The senior secondary school Literature in English students of the Local Government area formed the population of the study. Two hundred students randomly selected from ten randomly selected schools were the respondents. A twenty-two (22) items questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analysed with the means score technique. The findings revealed that there were student-related challenges, Teacher-related challenges and Curriculum-related challenges hindering effective teaching and learning Literature in English at the senior secondary school level in Ado Odo Otta Local Government of Ogun State. Equally, some ways by which the problems could be solved were identified and suggested. If the steps are taking, the justification of the inclusion of the subject in the curriculum shall be established.

Keywords: Literature-in-English, challenges, Teacher-Related, Student-Related, Curriculum-Related, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Among school subjects, Literature is very unique, and, highly important. From the elementary school to the tertiary level of education, literature in its different genres is exposed to learners with its diverse functions to individuals, and, society in general. Though, many people view literature as instrument of pleasure because it entertains, whereas, beyond the pleasurable attributes, it contributes to society in no small measure.

The importance of literature to society apart from the entertaining attribute includes, projecting, and, sustaining the socio-cultural life of a people, educating and enlightening the society, and providing means of livelihood to members of society, it defines the role of every member of society individually and in groups for development and sustenance. Hence, the justification for its inclusion in the school curriculum is highly commendable.

In Nigeria, literature is included in the curriculum and spreads through the elementary to the tertiary level. At the senior secondary level, Literature-in-English is among the subjects examined by WAEC. The record from the examination body revealed that the performance of students in the subject is not encouraging, and, this has been noticed consistently for a period of time. As revealed by Chief Examiners' report between 2011 and 2019, students' poor performances were identified ranging from inability to interpret questions correctly, poor knowledge of literary appreciation, lack of critical skills, shallow knowledge of themes, writing out of context, poor knowledge of the set texts, and, other elements of literature. This situation is

worrisome, and it leaves every stakeholder bewildered, knowing fully well that, the achievement of a learner suggests in a way how successful an educational endeavour or engagement is. WAEC (2018) and (2019), declared that the performance of students in literature in English was on the decline.

Therefore, beyond the worry of academic achievement of the students by the yardstick of formal examination, the inherent values of Literature in English to the students, and, society as a long-life endowment seems jeopardised. Hence, it is necessary to critically refresh our memories on why any society or nation deemed it crucial to include the subject in her educational curriculum. Nigeria's national goals upon which the formulation of her educational policy stand are,

- A free and democratic society;
- A just and egalitarian society;
- A united, strong, and self-reliant nation;
- A great and dynamic economy;
- A land full of opportunities for all citizens

While the Nigerian philosophy of education seeks in individual citizen, sound and effective development, full integration into the community, and, equal access to educational opportunities; the goals of education that inform the inclusion of Literature in English includes the inculcation of national consciousness and unity, right type values and attitude, understanding of the world around and acquisition of skills and self-development to contribute to the society, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004; NPE 2013).

As a result, Literature in English is included in the curriculum to achieve the national goals based on the philosophy. Among all other school subjects, Literature in English is the most appropriate to achieve national goals because of its encompassing nature. Literature is capable of:

- Instilling the spirit of national consciousness and unity.
- Inculcating right type of values and attitude in an individual and a group of people.
- Projecting the world around with proper understanding perspective to people.
- It is capable of inculcating self-dignity and consciousness of personal responsibilities.

With the adequate knowledge and justification of the inclusion of Literature in English in the school curriculum, reported poor performance of students at the WAEC examination level, reveals threat to the achievement of the set goals and realisation of the philosophy of Nigerian Education.

Though, many stakeholders as researchers have examined the teaching and learning Literature in English in Nigerian Senior Secondary school, they attempted to focus their lenses through the perspectives of the teachers and other stakeholders while the students are yet to be adequately explored, (Fatimayin, 2017; Ugwu, 2022) . Hence, this study examined the challenges by the perspectives of the students, the implications to the achievement of the national goals and philosophy shall be scrutinised and possible remedies shall be proposed.

LITERATURE AND NIGERIAN EDUCATION

Education in Nigeria could be traced to the indigenous form of training people by the oral passing of information and informal transferring of skills to individuals. Political, social, economic, religious, cultural, and educational activities are carried out informally. Along with all, Literature which in modern recognition is referred to as Oral Literature, was highly effective in the education of the people. In its form, storytelling in diverse ways was used to teach peaceful co-existence in society, dignity of labour, respect of communal laws and order, obedience to authority, love, sacrifice, unity and many more. It must be noted that the

society was more peaceful and secured than what we have today. Lawal (2019) identified literature as an instrument that reflects the world's imperfections to the society and makes efforts through its artistic potentials to recreate it for the perfections.

Formal education as an enduring legacy obtained from the colonial masters assist in making indigenous Literature – Oral literature to be reduced to writing and continue to be useful in sustaining and developing cultural, religious, social and economic riches of the people. In the old Western State, Nigeria, reading books used in schools were replete with some of the forms of the Oral literature. Oparebea and Alhassan (2022) stressed that before the European colonised the continent of Africa, there had been indigenous literature, tradition of which thrives till now. The forms of Oral literature include, legends, proverbs, folktales, folksongs, epics, myth, riddles, specific type of songs and chants, and tong-twisters. The content of all forms of Oral literature provides good educational subjects to the people from childhood to adulthood.

The utilitarian nature of the literature endeared it to be adopted in the formal education system at inception of Western Education at the wake of independence in Nigeria. This researcher having been a beneficiary of the then school system, witnessed and passed through the use of folktales, fables, folk songs, riddles, specific type of songs and others in different reading books used in school. Most importantly Yoruba reading book titled Alawiye with different editions from primary one to primary six.

In the modern society and introduction of Literature in English, the culture or tradition of use of literature in sustaining and developing society instead of going into extinction, continue to wax strong. Okeke and Ugwanyi (2020) stated that the current position of the African Literature owes much to the adaptation of oral literature as exemplified in folktales, songs, legends, myths, story-telling and others. The origin of Nigeria literature in English and its development is the legacy of Oral Literature having the works of Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe and Elechi Amadi among others as evidences.

It is hereby reiterated that the importance of Literature in English and its inclusion in the school curriculum cannot be over emphasised. Therefore, an effective pursuit of its success in all ramifications to realise the aims and objectives of its inclusion in the curriculum must be priority of the stakeholders. Hence, the way to properly identify the challenges that hinder its success in schools and then proffer possible solutions, is imperative in the face of continuous decline in the performance of the secondary school students in literature in English, as well as increase in social, political, religious and cultural misdemeanours in country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One fundamental problem of unrealizable goal in any endeavour is carelessness or non-challant attitude. It is novel for Literature in English to be included in the curriculum but what is the attitude towards making it beneficial to society? Labo-Popoola (2010) observed that literature is regarded and handled as an optional subject in at all levels of Nigerian education system despite the enormous resources and richness inherent in it. This could in a way down play its importance and hinder the realization of the purpose of its inclusion in the curriculum. Not everyone would be exposed to the benefits which are to be enjoyed by the entire citizenry. In addition, time allocated for the teaching of Literature in English is not enough, (Fatimayin, 2017; Ihejirika, 2014). For this reason, Austay (2013) stressed that in order to create interest in reading, aims of literature education should be widespread.

Reviewing studies that have investigated or examined challenges facing the teaching of English Literature, Nur, S. and Nurul Asma, A (2023) concluded on the situation of English Literature teaching and learning in Malaysia, that, the situation of myriad challenges identified could dampen the aspiration of the nation focusing on production of well-rounded citizens who would be able to compete and flourish in the globally

competitive world. It is an evidence that any nation that understand literature well will definitely pursue it for national development.

Literature as a study Abdul and Mohammed (2029) affords learners to acquire knowledge of other cultures and geographical locations of distant lands, giving opportunity for cultural assimilation, ideology of cultural pluralism, liberalism and global citizenship. They stressed further that counting on history, fostering of personal understanding, love of mankind, tolerance, moral standards, understanding of self and society are functions of literature.

As revealed by some studies, teaching of foreign literature in some nations offers protection against racist and sexist discrimination which strengthens sense of empathy in students towards others overlooking ethnicity, race and region, thereby building them as world citizen (Gusnetti and Romi, 2019),

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Literature in English is included in Nigerian Education curriculum in order to achieve the national aims which aspire to build a free and democratic society; just and egalitarian society; united, strong and self-reliant nation; great and dynamic economy; land full of opportunities for all citizens. It is worrisome that after more than two decades of its inclusion in the curriculum with teaching and learning at all levels of the education system, the nation remains in a state of dilemma, more or less a dependent nation, bedeviled with ethnocentric problems, political imbalance, economic depression, religious crises and many more. If Literature in English has taken its proper course as expected, its impact would have addressed the problems confronting sustenance of peace, and development of the nation. Hence, this research work seeks to identify what the challenges and possible solutions there are, through the perceptions of the students of Literature in English at the Senior Secondary level.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is embarked upon to investigate the challenges facing the teaching and learning of Literature in English at the Senior Secondary School level in Nigeria.

Specifically, students' perception of the challenges shall be sought based on the following factors:

- Student-Related Challenges
- Teacher-Related Challenges
- School-Related Challenges
- Curriculum- Related Challenges

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to give direction to this study, the following questions were generated and answered at the end of the research.:

1. What is the Student-Related Challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning of literature in English?
2. What is the Teacher-Related Challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning of literature in English?
3. What are the School-Related Challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning of literature in English?
4. What is the Curriculum- Related Challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning of literature in English?

5. What are the possible solutions to the identified Challenges?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUDY

This study is highly important at this time that the Nigerian nation is experiencing diverse social and other related problems which proper use of Literature in English can address. All stakeholders that include, teachers, parents, students and curriculum planners will benefit from the outcome of this research. To all, the actual problems hindering the effective teaching and learning literature in English shall be identified and solved.

- The parents will get to understand the importance of literature which includes: reading proficiency, writing, speaking and inculcation of morals into their children. In the strength of this knowledge, they will encourage their children to take literature serious and even study it as a course in the university.
- To the curriculum planners, learning has its challenges, therefore they will get to know the problems faced by teachers and students in the course of teaching and learning literature: they will look for ways to surmount it accordingly.
- To the students, they will benefit from this study as all the problems encountered in the study of literature will be neutralized by the parents, teachers and curriculum planners thereby creating a conducive learning environment for the study of literature

METHODOLOGY

This research employed the survey research design. In this design, the representative sample of the population is studied in order to determine the whole characteristics of the population. All secondary school students of Literature in English in Addo- Odo/Otta Local government Area of Ogun State formed the population of this study. The sample consist of ten (10) randomly selected among the fifty-one (51) senior secondary schools in Local Government Area. Twenty literature in English Students were randomly selected from each of the ten schools as respondents. The total number of respondents was two hundred (200). The instrument used to collect data for the study was a questionnaire designed to cover the research questions. The questionnaire structured using the four-point likert scale with Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD) respectively was in two parts with the section a requesting the demographic data of the respondents while section b contained the twenty two items having four each based on the four questions formulated for the study. To administer the questionnaires, two research assistants who were properly briefed approached five of the selected schools each seeking permission from relevant authorities and with the aid of the teachers distributed the questionnaire to the students. Because of the direct contact and supervision of the distribution and collection, all the questionnaires were returned. The data collected was presented in a tabular form and analysed using simple table percentage for the bio data, but the four research questions formulated for the study were answered using mean scores. The 200 questionnaires distributed, were all returned.

RESULTS

Bio Data of Respondents:

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	F	Percentage
Males	70	35
Females	130	65
Total	200	100

The Table 1 revealed that 35% of the respondents were males while 65% of the respondents were females. The implication is that most of the respondents were females.

Research Question One: What are the student-related challenges that pose a hindrance to teaching and learning of Literature in English in Addo- Odo/Otta of Ogun State

Table 2: Showing the Student-Related Challenges that Pose a Hindrance to Teaching and Learning of Literature in English

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	
1	Students' lack of interest in reading recommended literary books	104	20	40	36	592	2.96
2	Students' inability to read properly	176	8	4	12	748	3.74
3	Students of literature do not discuss their prose texts with classmates	88	40	68	24	632	3.16
4	Some of the students do not have the recommended texts	124	20	44	12	656	3.28

Table 2 reveals that items 1, 2, 3 and 4 are rated with the mean score of 2.96, 3.74, 3.16 and 3.28 respectively all above the acceptance level of 2.50. It therefore shows that most of the students' lack interest in reading recommended literary books, unable to read properly, students of literature do not discuss their prose texts with classmates and some of the students do not have the recommended texts. They are all accepted as student-related challenges that pose a hindrance to teaching and learning of Literature in English.

Research Question 2: What are the teacher-related challenges hindering the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English?

Table 3: Showing the Teacher-Related Challenges Hindering the teaching and learning of Literature in English

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	
5	Some teachers are not qualified to teach literature classes	66	104	8	22	610	3.05
6	Negative attitudes of the teacher towards literature as a subject	92	36	28	44	576	2.88
7	Lack of proper use of teaching methods and instructional materials	158	42	0	0	799	3.99
8	Lack of subject mastery by the teacher	124	36	32	8	676	3.38

The information presented on table 3 reveals that items 5, 6, 7 and 8 are rated with the mean score of 3.05, 2.88, 3.99 and 3.38 respectively and the acceptance level of 2.50. It therefore shows that the teacher-related challenges hindering the Teaching and Learning of Literature in English include that: some teachers are not qualified to teach literature classes, negative attitudes of the teacher towards literature as a subject, lack of proper use of teaching methods and instructional materials, and lack of subject mastery by the teacher. Therefore, all these are the teacher-related challenges hindering teaching and learning of Literature in English

Research Question Three: What are the school-related challenges that pose as challenges to teaching and learning of literature in English?

Table 4: Showing the School-Related Challenges that Pose as Challenges to Teaching and Learning of Literature in English.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	
9	Overcrowded classroom constitutes a problem to the students' comprehension in Literature-in-English	102	36	46	16	622	3.11
10	Lack of adequate time allocated to the teaching of literature	48	108	20	24	580	2.90

11	Lack of recommended books in the library	42	100	34	24	560	2.8
12	Non-observation of literary days in the school	36	124	32	8	588	2.94

Table 4 reveals that items 9, 10, 11 and 12 are rated 3.11, 2.90, 2.80 and 2.94 above the acceptance level of 2.50. It is therefore, the opinions of the respondents that overcrowded classroom constitutes a problem to the teaching and learning of Literature in English, lack of adequate time allocated to the teaching of literature, lack of recommended books in the library and non-observation of literary days in the school are the school-related challenges that pose hinder teaching and learning of literature in English. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the above are the school-related challenges.

Research Question Four: What are the curriculum-related challenges that hinder teaching and learning of Literature in English?

Table 5: Showing the Curriculum Related Challenges that Hinder teaching and learning of Literature in English

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Decision
13	Some of the recommended books do not reflect the back ground of the students	156	32	12	0	744	3.72 Accepted
14	The language of some texts are difficult	120	44	26	10	674	3.37 Accepted
15	Some recommended books are difficult to get or scarce	80	60	56	4	616	3.08 Accepted
16	Frequent changes of curriculum	144	44	12	0	756	3.78 Accepted

Table 5 indicates that items 13, 14, 15 and 16 with the mean scores of 3.72, 3.37, 3.08 and 3.78 respectively. This goes on to show that the curriculum related challenges that hinder teaching and learning of Literature in English include: some of the recommended books do not reflect the back ground of the students, the language of some texts are difficult, some recommended books are difficult to get or scarce and frequent changes of curriculum. Therefore, all these are the curriculum related challenges that hinder teaching and learning of Literature in English

Research Question Five: What are the possible solutions to the identified Challenges?

Table 6: Showing the possible solutions to the identified Challenges.

	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Decision
17	Only qualified teachers should be employed to teach literature in English language	80	60	50	10	610	3.05 Accepted
18	Students should be encouraged to act the prose texts they read in the class	92	98	6	4	678	3.39 Accepted
19	Classes that are overcrowded should be shared into 2 or more arms	144	12	16	28	660	3.30 Accepted
20	The use of relevant instructional materials like audio- visual aid will enhance the teaching and learning of literature English.	124	40	16	20	668	3.34 Accepted
21	Adequate recommended texts should be made available in the library to improve teaching and learning of literature in English.	160	24	12	4	740	3.70 Accepted

22	Adequate time should be allocated for literature lessons so that prose will be properly taught to the students.	62	26	72	40	510	2.55	Accepted
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Table 6 indicates that items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 with the mean scores of 3.05, 3.39, 3.30, 3.34, 3.70 and 2.55 respectively. This goes on to show that the possible solutions to the identified challenges of teaching and learning of Literature in English include: only qualified teachers should be employed to teach literature in English, students should be encouraged to act the prose texts they read in the class, classes that are overcrowded should be shared into 2 or more arms, the use of relevant instructional materials like audio-visual aid will enhance the teaching and learning of literature, adequate recommended texts should be made available in the library to improve teaching and learning of literature in English and adequate time should be allocated for literature lessons so that prose will be properly taught to the students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study was carried out to make an examination of students’ perceptions on challenges hindering teaching and learning Literature-in-English in selected senior secondary schools in Addo- Odo/Otta Local Government Area of Ogun State. The following are major findings of the study:

The first research questions which sought to examine the student-related challenges that pose a hindrance confronting teaching and learning of literature in English showed that most of the students’ lack of interest in reading recommended literary books, students’ inability to read properly, students of literature do not discuss their prose texts with classmates and some of the students do not have the recommended texts were student-related challenges. The implication of these challenges presupposes that desired learning outcome would be disappointing because the set objectives would not be achieved. This revelation negates the submission of Nadesan and Md. Shah (2020) that the solidification of students’ overall achievement in Literature in English should be ascertained at secondary school to be cognitively matured enough to contribute to society and nation.

The second research question which sought to examine the teacher-related challenges hindering teaching and learning of Literature-in-English indicated that: some teachers are not qualified to teach literature classes, negative attitudes of the teacher towards literature as a subject, lack of proper use of teaching methods and instructional materials and lack of subject mastery by the teacher were teacher-related challenges. The outcome of this study corroborates the submissions of other researchers on the negative effects of incompetence of teachers, use of inappropriate or ineffective use method. Poor performance of students is always the consequence. Concerning Mathematics, Alio and Anibueze (2017) identified teacher’s poor method of teaching as one of the factors attributed to students’ poor performance. Badru (2020) referred to problem of teaching methods and strategies as re-occurring factor. He posited that such strategies lack potential to inculcate lifelong learning skill in learners. It is instructive therefore, that urgent solution should be sought for better results.

The third research question which sought to examine the school-related challenges confronting teaching and learning of Literature-in-English indicated that overcrowded classroom , lack of adequate time allocated to the teaching of literature, lack of recommended books in the library and non-observation of literary days in the school are the school-related challenges to teaching and learning of literature in English. The fourth research question which sought to examine the curriculum related challenges confronting teaching and learning of Literature-in-English indicated that: some of the recommended books do not reflect the background of the students, the language of some texts are difficult, some recommended books are difficult to get or scarce and frequent changes of curriculum. One of the problems of education at times is the policy makers and curriculum planners who many times are separated from the real situation in the schools. They only sit in the office and plan without involvement of the implementors who are so crucial in the aspect of the level of knowledge and interest of the students. The problem of inappropriate texts selected for learners was identified by (Farhanah & Hadina, 2022; Yulnetri, 2018; Tayib & Hassan, 2020)

The fifth research question which sought to examine the possible solutions to the identified Challenges showed that only qualified teachers should be employed to teach literature in English, students should be encouraged to act the prose texts they read in the class, classes that are overcrowded should be shared into 2 or more arms, the use of relevant instructional materials like audio-visual aid will enhance the teaching and learning of literature, adequate recommended texts should be made available in the library to improve teaching and learning of literature in English and adequate time should be allocated for literature lessons so that prose will be properly taught to the students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that there are diverse challenges faced by teachers and learners in students' comprehension in Literature-in-English in selected senior secondary schools in Addo- Odo/Otta Local Government Area. These challenges range from student-related challenges, curriculum related challenges, teacher-related challenges and school-related challenges. All these challenges hinder the proper students' comprehension in Literature-in-English in senior secondary schools.

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Only qualified teachers should be employed to teach literature in English.
2. Students should be encouraged to act the prose texts they read in the class.

Classes that are overcrowded should be shared into 2 or more arms.

3. The use of relevant instructional materials like audio-visual aid should be used by teachers to enhance the teaching and learning of literature.
4. Adequate recommended texts should be made available in the library to improve teaching and learning of literature in English.
5. Adequate time should be allocated for literature lessons so that prose will be properly taught to the students.

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