

An Assessment on the Availability and Utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the Teaching and Learning of English Language

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Abstract

In the Contemporary world, every sphere of life, including education is increasingly becoming ICT driven. There is need for both teachers and students to be acquainted with ICT in order to meet the challenges of the changing world. This paper therefore investigated the availability and utilization of ICT in the teaching and learning of English Language. The study was carried out in Abakaliki Education Zone, of Ebonyi State. The population consisted of all 250 English Language teachers in Abakaliki Education Zone and sample size of 200. The instrument was a 36 item researcher-developed questionnaire. The instrument was face validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation. It was trial tested for reliability. Test-retest was used to determine the reliability and it yielded a Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient of 0.84. Mean was used for data analysis. A mean of 2.5 was the cut-off mark for the acceptance of an item. The findings indicate that most ICT facilities are not available for the teaching and learning of English language and consequently, not being utilized, while the constraints to the utilization of ICT facilities include: unavailability of ICT facilities, incompetence among English Language teachers on the use of ICT, inadequate power supply, and lack of ICT teachers and technicians. Some of the recommendations made include: (1) Provision of ICT laboratories (2) Employment of ICT teachers and technicians in secondary schools.

Keywords: Availability, Utilization, ICT, Teaching, Learning, English, Language

Introduction

English Language is one of the core subjects in Nigerian Secondary Schools. It is an official and second language in Nigeria, a country with many minority linguistic and ethnic groups. English Language is the language used for communication and instruction in most countries that use it as a second language. It is therefore important in the development of the students as individuals and as human resources for the wealth of a nation. Herbison in Eya, Ugwu, and Alu (2001) noted that capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, while human resources are the active agents, who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. This justifies the need for effective teaching of the English Language through the use of ICT for human capital development.

Pryse (1983) observed that English Language is now recognized as the international language of conferences and negotiations, trade, commerce, as well as the language of aviation, computer, technology, science, and medicine. English Language has evolved and is still evolving to keep pace with many social, political, scientific and technological changes that have and are taking place in the recent time. The Nigerian child's training in the socio-cultural, scientific, and technological knowledge is largely through English Language.

Despite the crucial role that English Language plays in the development of the Nigerian child, West African School Certificate Examination Chief Examiner's reports in recent years show poor performance of students in senior secondary school certificate examination in English Language. Igbokwe and Asogwa (2010) stated that English Language studies in Nigeria has been on the decline for more than a decade and has come under systematic criticism over the years. Anizoba (2001) and Igbokwe (2007), lamented that students are no longer able to communicate in English and that many of them cannot compose essays nor are they able to write any type of letter. Teacher factor, inappropriate teaching methods and insufficient instructional materials have been identified as the paramount problems facing the teaching and learning of English Language (Aluko 1990; Maduabuchi, 2006).

It is therefore imperative that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) be applied in the teaching and learning of English language to supplement and complement the conventional teaching methods and instructional materials. According to Anderson and Glen (2003:52), information and communication technologies (ICTs) refer to "those technologies that are used for accessing, gathering, manipulating and presenting or communicating information which includes hardware and software applications, and connectivity and video conferencing". ICTs include computers and their accessories as well as Internet and networking infrastructures. ICTs are engines that house new growth and tools for empowering societies to change into knowledge economies and information societies (Hooker, 2009).

The impact of ICT is being felt and increasingly being pronounced worldwide in every sphere of life. ICT provides opportunity and possibility of enhancing the teaching and learning of a second language. Educational

Systems all over the world are under increasing pressure to use ICT in the teaching-learning process in order to help students acquire the knowledge and skills they need in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2002). However, certain problems could pose challenges to effective utilization of ICT in teaching-learning process in secondary schools. Some of the problems according to Ololube (2006) include: unavailability or inadequacy of ICT facilities, and incompetence in the use of ICTs in teaching learning- process. No matter the myriads of promises that ICT holds for effective teaching and learning its impact may not be felt in our schools except ICT facilities are adequately available and effectively utilized by the teachers and students. This paper therefore seeks to assess the availability and utilization of ICT facilities for the teaching and learning of English Language.

Research Questions

1. What are the information and communication Technologies (ICTs) used in teaching and learning of English Language in Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Education zone?
2. What is the extent of utilization of ICTs in teaching and learning of English Language in Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Education Zone?
3. What, are the constraints to the utilization of ICTs in the teaching and learning of English Language in secondary schools in Abakaliki Education zone?

Method

The survey research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprises all English Language teachers in 62 Government owned secondary schools in Abakaliki Education zone. 250 English language teachers in the 62 secondary schools formed the population of the study. The sample is made up of 200 English Language teachers drawn from 50 secondary schools owned by the Government. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw four English Language teachers from each of the schools. A structured questionnaire containing 36 items was used for data collection. The instrument was structured on a four point rating scale-strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point), and very Great extent (4 points), Great extent (3 point), little extent (2 points) and very little extent (1 point). Three experts in Measurement and Evaluation face validated the instrument. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained through test-retest with a time lag of two weeks. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient of 0.84 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Mean of 2.5 and above is accepted, while mean below 2.50 is rejected.

Results

The results of the study are presented according to the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the information and communication technologies (ICTs) available for teaching English Language in secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone?

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviation Ratings of the ICTs used in teaching English Language

| S/n | ICTs | \bar{x} | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|-----------|------|----------|
| 1. | Language laboratory | 2.49 | 1.32 | Disagree |
| 2. | Projectors | 3.48 | 1.30 | Agree |
| 3. | Computer Aided Instruction (AI) packages and programmes. | 1.81 | 0.98 | Disagree |
| 4. | Simulation and games | 2.13 | 1.24 | Disagree |
| 5. | Audio-visual equipment | 3.38 | 0.96 | Agree |
| 6. | Power-point | 2.31 | 0.95 | Disagree |
| 7. | Internet facilities | 1.63 | 0.5 | Disagree |
| 8. | Electronic textbooks | 2.31 | 0.6 | Disagree |
| 9. | Computer systems with efficient peripherals | 2.08 | 0.48 | Disagree |
| 10. | Wording processing software | 1.63 | 0.5 | Disagree |
| 11. | Programmed instruction/teaching machine | 1.44 | 0.63 | Disagree |
| 12. | Video conferencing | 1.69 | 0.98 | Disagree |

The data in Table 1 above show that the respondents agree that out of the 12 ICTs in the table 2 are used in teaching English Language. The items are projectors with mean of 3.48 and standard deviation of 1.30; and audio-visual equipment with mean of 3.38 and standard deviation of 0.96. The rest of the items on the table have means less than 2.50.

Research Question 2

What is the extent of utilization of ICTs in teaching English language in secondary schools in Abakaliki zone?

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation of Extent of Utilization of ICTs in the Teaching of English Language

| S/n | ICTs | \bar{x} | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|-----------|------|--------------------|
| 13. | Use of language laboratory in practical classes. | 1.66 | 0.73 | Very little extent |
| 14. | Use of projectors in teaching. | 2.85 | 1.45 | Great Extent |
| 15. | Use of simulations and games | 2.43 | 1.34 | Little extent |
| 16. | Use of Computer Aided Instruction Packages and Programmes | 3.55 | 1.32 | Great extent |
| 17. | Use of power point in teaching. | 1.63 | 0.77 | Very little extent |
| 18. | Use of internet in teaching and learning | 0.65 | 1.65 | Very little extent |
| 19. | Use of electronic textbooks in teaching. | 1.81 | 0.97 | Little extent |
| 20. | Use of word processing software in teaching and learning process | 2.47 | 0.73 | Little extent |
| 21. | Use of Computer System with efficient peripherals in teaching. | 2.10 | 0.89 | Very little extent |
| 22. | Use of programmed instruction/teaching machine in teaching. | 1.44 | 0.63 | Very little extent |
| 23. | Engage in video conferencing with other people in teaching-learning process. | 1.75 | 0.96 | Very little extent |

Result presented in Table 2 above shows that out of 11 ICT items, the respondents agree that 2 are greatly utilized in the teaching of English Language. These are: use of projectors, with mean of 2.85 and SD of 1.45; and use of audio-visual aids with mean of 3.55 and SD of 0.96. While 3 items are utilized to little extent. These include: use of simulations and games with mean of 2.43 and SD of 1.24; use of computer and games with mean of 2.43 and SD of 1.34; Use of computer aided instruction with mean of 2.31 and SD of 0.96, with mean of 1.81 and SD of 0.97. Use of word processing software with mean of 2.47 and SD of 0.73, 6 ICT items are utilized to very little extent. These include: language laboratory-mean 1.66 and SD 0.73; Power point mean 1.63 and SD 0.77; internet-mean 0.65 and SD of 1.65; computer-mean 2.10 and SD 0.89; Programmed instruction with a teaching machine-mean of 1.44 and SD 0.63; and video conferencing-mean of 1.75 and SD of 0.96.

Research Question 3

What are the constraints to the utilization of ICT in the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Abakaliki Education zone?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Rating on the Constraints to the Utilization of ICT in Teaching of English Language

| S/n | ICTs | \bar{x} | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|-----------|------|----------|
| 24. | Lack of computers for teaching English language | 4.1 | 1.1 | Agree |
| 25. | Lack of softwares | 3.76 | 1.33 | Agree |
| 26. | English language teachers not competent in the use of ICT facilities. | 3.48 | 0.81 | Agree |
| 27. | Lack of ICT technician/teacher | 3.80 | 1.35 | Agree |
| 28. | No access to internet in the schools. | 2.73 | 0.73 | Agree |
| 29. | Inadequate power-supply | 3.38 | 0.81 | Agree |
| 30. | Lack of language laboratory | 2.56 | 0.96 | Agree |
| 31. | Over-populated classrooms make the use of ICTs difficult. | 3.43 | 1.34 | Disagree |
| 32. | Inadequate time for English language teaching hinders the use of ICTs. | 1.44 | 0.63 | Disagree |
| 33. | Lack of ICT personnel to train teachers. | 2.85 | 1.34 | Agree |
| 35. | Lack of interest on ICT by English language teachers. | 1.63 | 0.77 | Disagree |

The results in Table 3 above indicate that the respondents agree that eight (8) items constitute the constraints to the utilization of ICT in the teaching of English language. These are: lack of computer, lack of software, incompetence amongst English teachers in the use of ICT, lack of ICT technicians, no access to internet, inadequate power-supply, lack of language laboratory and lack of ICT personnel to train teachers on the use of ICT. The respondents however disagree that over-populated classrooms and inadequate time for English language teaching constitute constraints to the use of ICT in teaching and learning of English language.

Discussion of Results

The responses of the teachers in Table 1 indicated gross inadequacy of ICT facilities for the teaching and learning of English Language. This finding agrees with Ololube (2006) who equally found that unavailability of ICT facilities is one of the major challenges facing their use in teaching-learning process. This study also confirms Osadolar (2008) which indicates that public schools lack most of the ICT facilities needed for classroom interaction. This finding indicates that the teaching and learning of English language in public secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone is far behind what is required in current ICT driven world. Products of such schools could not compete favourably with their counterparts that were widely exposed to ICT facilities. This finding also shows that the English Language teachers are handicapped in offering qualitative instruction through the use of ICT. This

study also agrees with Nwosu (2010) who, in a study found that teachers can, to a very low extent utilize ICT resources for service delivery.

The results in Table 2 revealed that the English Language teachers can utilize only two out of the 11 ICT facilities. The two indicated as being utilized to a great extent are the only ones available in the schools. Hence the teachers can only utilize what is available. This finding agrees with Osadolor (2006) who asserts that public institutions are always ill-prepared in meeting the ever changing institutional needs of the students and the society. This situation is regrettable as it could cause the teachers to loose interest in ICT by rendering them incompetent in the use of ICT facilities in teaching and learning process.

Findings on the constraints to the utilization of ICT in the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone as shown in table 3 indicate the following: lack of ICT facilities, incompetence amongst English Language teachers on the use of ICT, inadequate power supply, and lack of ICT technician/teacher to train the teachers. This finding agrees with Udchukwu and Nwizu (2008) who also found same factors as constraints in creating ICT environment in public schools. Contrary to researcher's expectation, this study revealed that over-populated classrooms, inadequate time for English Language teaching, and lack of interest on ICT by English language teachers do not constitute constraints to the utilization of ICT in teaching and learning of English Language.

Conclusion

ICT facilities are indispensable tools for effective and efficient service delivery in the teaching profession. Students should have access to ICT so as to become resourceful, active and independent learners. The teachers and students need to be ICT Compliant in order to meet the challenges of the contemporary ICT driven world. Unfortunately, this study reveals that most ICT facilities for teaching and learning are not available for the teaching and learning of English Language. The extent of utilization of those ICTs is therefore very minimal. Constraints to the use of ICT facilities in the teaching and learning of English Language hinged on: non-availability of ICT materials, incompetence amongst teachers on the use of ICT, inadequate power supply and lack of ICT technicians and teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following are recommended:

- The government should build adequately equipped ICT laboratories in secondary schools.
- ICT teachers and technicians should be employed in secondary schools.
- School administrators should ensure that teachers and students make use of ICT facilities when provided.

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