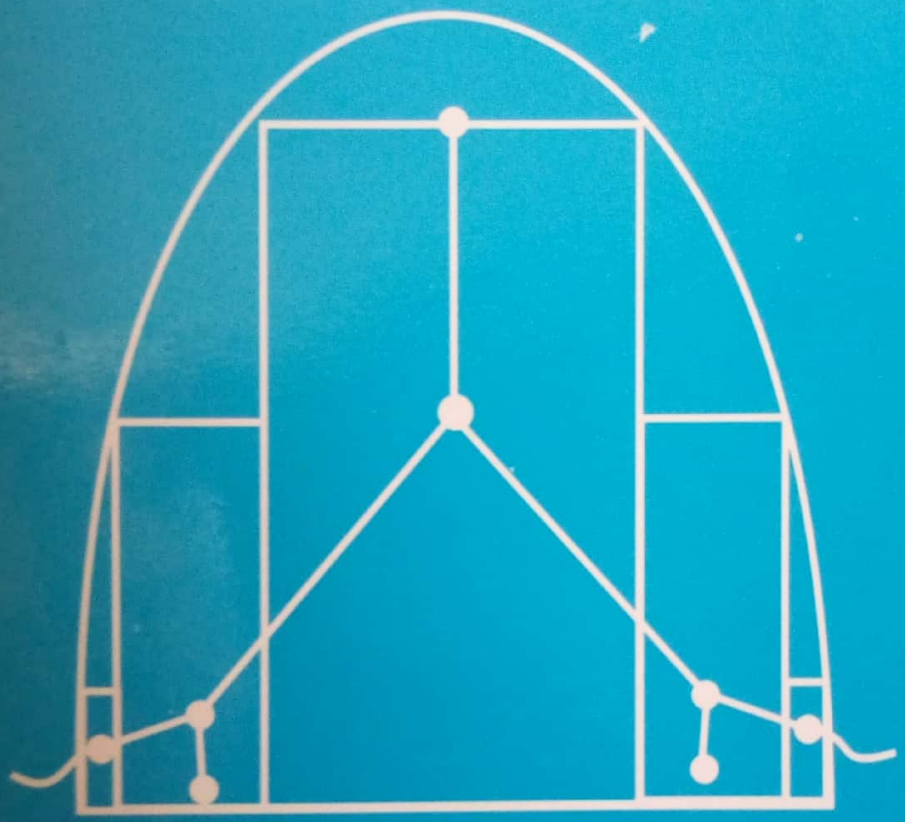
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (IJEM)



VOLUME 12 No. 1, 2014

Published by

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

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VOLUME12 No. 1, 2014

ISSN: 079447684

Published by
Department of Educational Management,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (IJEM)

Department of Educational Management,
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Printed in Nigeria by

Adesesan Graphic Press Ltd.
Off Asa Dam Road, (Behind NNPC Mega Station),
P. O. Box 4692, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
Tel: 0805-675-3560

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (IJEM) VOLUME12 No. 1, 2014

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Teachers' Perception of the Content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum in Ọ̀yọ́ North Senatorial District, Nigeria

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Abstract

The introduction of Upper Basic Education Curricula to replace the existing Junior Secondary School ones brought about some innovations into the contents of these curricula, Yoruba language inclusive. This paper, therefore, investigated "Teachers' Perceptions of the Upper Basic Education (UBE) Yorùbá Language Curriculum Content in the North Senatorial District of Ọ̀yọ́ State, Nigeria". A 15-item researcher-designed questionnaire was used to sample the opinions of the Yorùbá Language teachers on the attainability of the curriculum content. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages to answer research question 1, while t-test statistic was employed to answer research questions 2 and 3, and to test their corresponding null hypotheses at a level of significance of 0.05. All the 246 Yorùbá language teachers in the 184 Upper Basic Schools in Ọ̀yọ́ North Senatorial District were purposively sampled for this study. The results indicated that the content is relevant to the curriculum objectives; appropriate to the 13-15 years age range of the learners; covers adequately the literature component of the language learning and three domains of the learners. The arrangement of the content is not sequential. Also, there were no differences in the assessment of male and female teachers, but differences exist in the perception of qualified and unqualified teachers. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the language skills component of the curriculum content be maintained and sustained; the literature and culture components of the curriculum content be maintained and improved upon; the curriculum content be re-arranged sequentially; and the content of curriculum be executed only by qualified Yoruba language teachers.

Keywords: Yoruba language; curriculum, upper basic education; teachers' perception

Introduction

Curriculum is the organising and coordinating subjects of study to achieve a definite goal. It is a course or body of courses offered in an educational system.

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In other words, curriculum is the learning experiences offered to students under the direction of the school. Curriculum could also be seen as a package of the objectives, contents, suggested methods, suggested materials, and the evaluation devices of a subject. The content aspect of a curriculum may be referred to as a syllabus, because syllabus does not normally include statement of objectives, methods and materials except in scanty form.

Curriculum content can be defined as the topics that might or might not be taught, tested or included in content standards. Teachers make content decisions about: how much time to spend on a school subject; what content to cover within that time; which students to teach what content; and to what standards of achievement. Knowing and understanding the content of a curriculum is important, because what students are taught is a powerful predictor of students' achievement at the end of a course.

Abdulrahaman (2000) defines curriculum as a document in which learning activities and/or experiences are sequentially arranged to bring about permanent but desirable behaviour and to make learning easier for the learners. The challenges of our time are considered in the determination of the educational experiences which will be included in the curriculum that will lead to self-sufficiency and at the same time, help solve our national problems. Therefore, for a classroom teacher to implement a curriculum package successfully, he has to understand every step of its development, and should be able to adopt the most appropriate methods, materials and learning experience, to its contribution to effective curriculum implementation.

In order to preserve the culture of the people, the Government of Nigeria encourages the learning of at least one major Nigerian language in addition to English Language, which is the official language. Students are also encouraged to learn the French language as a matter of policy. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004) states that:

> In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá (p8).

Despite the significant role the Mother Tongue plays in the education of a child and its recognition by the government, there are still some factors militating against its implementation in education. These factors include the linguistic situation; the government's policy; colonial mentality; unavailability of qualified teachers and; inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials (Bámidélé, 2005).

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A curriculum is a rounded programme of learning and living with its vital purposes to be found in individual and group needs, interest and abilities of children as well as the requirement of a particular society for the transmission, renewal and improvement of that society (Awóníyì, 1978). Dàda (2003) defines curriculum as the totality of the experiences which the learner has acquired under the direction of the school for the purpose of effecting desirable patterns of behaviour. It is the meeting point for the programme of teaching and learning. Also, Kọ́láwọ́lé (1998) defines curriculum as the totality of planned learning experiences an individual encounters under the auspices of the school. A curriculum plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process. It is a guide to what is to be taught, how it should be taught and to whom it should be taught. It has been observed that an effective school curriculum should be relevant, viable, practicable at the classroom pedagogical situation, and capable of bringing about the intended result (Ughamadu, 1998).

The Nigerian language curriculum was designed for learners whose Mother Tongue is any of the three main Nigerian languages i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá. Unlike the language curriculum of 1985 which covers both the junior and senior secondary schools, the new language curriculum for the junior secondary school i.e. upper basic, which the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2007) provided, covers three years.

Assessment can be defined as the means of making judgment on the merit, value and worth of educational programme. It is the process of organising test data into interpretable forms. Data are obtained using a wide variety of instruments, such as tests, questionnaires and observations (NTI, 2007). Assessment, according to Ajagun (1993), is the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programmes attempted for the purpose of improving teaching-learning and the entire educational development. Moreover, Adérintọ́ (2008) regards assessment as a method of collecting information about individual's behaviour, aptitude, abilities, general mental function, personality, and other related areas of a being. He further states that, assessment is dynamic in nature, which develops and changes as the need arises.

Gender has been considered as an important factor in human life and thedichotomy is an important factor in human experiences. Gender can influence the lives and aspirations of individuals, their perceptions in life, their responses to certain thoughts, and their ability to use certain materials (Ẹlẹ́gbẹ́lẹ́yẹ, 1995). However, Kọ́láwọ́lé (1998) considers the influence of teachers' academic and professional qualifications as a major determinant of students' performance.

Basic education is a process which encourages articulation of formal, non-formal and informal approaches to education and structure for the awakening of all round development of human capital and potentials (Awolọ́lá, 2007). The specific goals for basic education are the same as the goals of the levels of

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education to which it applies (i.e. primary education, junior secondary education and adult and non-formal education). Basic education is a 9-year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education, and it shall be free and compulsory.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out:

i. teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum;

ii. whether there are differences in the teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum based on gender; and

iii. whether there are differences in the assessment of the teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum based on qualification.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

i. What is the teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum?

ii. What is the difference between male and female teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yoruba Language Curriculum?

iii. What is the difference between qualified and unqualified teachers' perception of the content of Upper Basic Education Yoruba Language Curriculum?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

HO_1: There is no significant difference between the male and female teachers' perception of the content of UBE Yorùbá Language Curriculum.

HO_2: There is no significant difference between the qualified and unqualified teachers' perception of the content of UBE Yorùbá Language Curriculum.

Literature Review

The teacher, according to Mkpa (2002), is the heart and soul of the educational enterprise, indeed the life wire of the school system. In essence, no matter how a nation's educational curriculum is planned and prepared, it is bound to fail, if the nation fails in producing highly equipped, dedicated and professional oriented teachers. This is so because they are the pivot for the successful implementation of any curriculum anywhere in the world. Stressing

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the importance of the teachers in the educational sector, the FRN (2004) maintains that, no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The strategic role of the teachers in the educative process, as Fabainmine (2007) observes, is even much more pronounced particularly in the third World countries like Nigeria where there are no close substitutes for their role in the form of teaching machines with programmed instruction as found in the advanced countries.

Teachers are the managers of knowledge and an indispensable factor in the successful implementation, assessment and evaluation of a curriculum. Nwagwu (1976) also stresses the importance of teacher in the educative process and equally argues that education can heal or kill, build or deprave much depending on how the basic issues of teachers among others are handled. Stressing the importance of teachers in the educational process, Lassa (1999) submits that, teachers are the main determinant of quality in education. If they are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated, immoral andanti-social, the whole nation is doomed. If they are ignorant of their disciplines and impart wrong information, they are not only useless but also dangerous. The kind of teachers trained and posted to schools may as well determine what the next generation will be. Curriculum assessment, on the other hand, is a process of making judgment on the merit, value and worth of the curriculum components.

Evaluation is viewed as a process by which relevant data are collected and transformed into information for decision making. So, evaluation is a process rather than product. Also, Ughamadu (1998) sees evaluation as a systematic process of determining the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved by pupils.

However, curriculum evaluation deals with the systematic process of examining all the components of curriculum. Therefore, evaluation of curriculum is undertaken when the curriculum is being developed and also when it has been developed, adopted and implemented. As Ughamadu (1998) submits, curriculum assessment and evaluation is very important in teaching-learning process because it makes it possible to ascertain if the public money invested in education is being well and sensibly utilized or not.

In curriculum assessment, teachers' factor is a vital one since they form the pivot around which the whole educational system revolves. Teachers remain the real elements in order to effect a change. This is why FRN (2004) recognizes that teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning, because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Ọdẹdiran (2001) observes that teachers' role as assessors and monitors of evaluation of the school curriculum should source for an enabling environment that would afford them the opportunity to identify the problems and challenges of the school curriculum. Teachers, therefore, have a role to play

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in coordinating, monitoring, assessing, and evaluating the school curriculum. The UBE Yoruba language curriculum centres on language, literature and culture. Specifically, the content includes the following: creation and symbolism in Yoruba kingdom; Yoruba oral and written literature; the Yoruba tribe; relationship among language, culture and literature; orthography; phrases and clauses; reading comprehension; essay writing; counting; sentence structure; chants and sound system; and word formation. Others includes, marriage, ante-natal and naming; good character; personal and environmental hygiene; parts of speech; slaves and servants; and Yoruba thoughts and beliefs about God and gods.

The following are the overall objectives of teaching Yoruba at the upper basic level. The learners should be able to:

i) express himself correctly in the appropriate Yoruba language, employing appropriate lexis and figures (vocabulary, idioms, proverbs, witticism, metaphor);

ii) demonstrate familiarity and acquaintances with an ability to discuss and explain the elements oral tradition of language (folktales, riddles, games, songs, etc);

iii) read and appreciate literature written in Yoruba language without difficulty and at a reasonable speed;

iv) carry out continuous writing in Yoruba, employing correct usage of grammar, idiomatic expressions, orthography, punctuations and other mechanics of the language;

v) manifest creativity in Yoruba through composition of short-stories, plays, news-sheets, word games, etc; and

vi) acquire the necessary tools to cope with further studies in Yoruba, if so desired.

Besides the above overall objectives, there are specific objectives for the teaching of each of the contents of curriculum.

Various researches have been carried out on teachers' assessment of curriculum. Oyèdèjì (2005) researched on teachers' assessment of Biology Curriculum and submitted that, the curriculum is viable and practicable, and that the recommended text-books were adequate and suitable but not affordable. Also, Adavirikun (1988), who investigated on teachers' assessment of the N.C.E. Home Economics Curriculum, submitted that the curriculum was adequate and suitable and that it was accredited by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (N.C.C.E.).

Although, teachers form the strings around which the bead of curriculum assessment and evaluation is tied, nevertheless, they should work hand-in-hand

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with other stakeholders in education industries to ensure total success in curriculum assessment and evaluation. Curriculum assessment and evaluation should be a joint venture that involves policy makers and managers of knowledge in the school system. This would afford the teachers the opportunity to identify problems and challenges of assessment and curriculum evaluation.

Gender is a broad and dynamic concept which describes those characteristics of men and women which are socially determined. Oreh (2005) compares gender with age and socio-economic status when she describes it as an aspect of social organization that reflects and circumscribed by the surrounding of culture. Naturally, human beings are divided into two: male and female, and facts revealed in the research on gender showed that it can influence the life and aspiration of each of the sexes, their perception in life, their responses to certain thoughts, and ability to use certain materials. However, the way the two dress, talk, choose or participate in social activities must be in line with their gender class.

As Oreh (2005) observes, there is a remarkable difference in the behaviour of male and female teachers in their performance, achievement and capability due to gender difference as a result of responsibilities rested on females in the society which might have been affecting their performance in some situations. However, Ẹlẹ́gbẹ́lẹ́yẹ (1995) asserts that there is no difference in mental capability of male and female, and that women are not mentally inferior to men. He concludes that female teachers do not produce lower grade students than men, while Obanya (2002) believes that female teachers are affected by family and house chores problems in the implementation of curriculum due to less devotion of time to seek wider knowledge on some topics of their areas of specialization.

Dàda (2003) believes that, teacher's qualification and experience play significant roles in curriculum assessment and evaluation. He stressed that, they are very pertinent in curriculum implementation. Also, Jimoh (2002) opines that only the experienced and qualified teachers can determine the quality of any curriculum content. According to him, teaching is a profession of experience and quality which are the main yardsticks in the assessment, evaluation and implementation of any curriculum. Therefore, teacher's gender, qualification and experience could have a significant influence on curriculum assessment and evaluation. . This is because, quality teachers are the determinants of the quality in education. Nearly all issues, whether related to goals, learning, achievement, organization of programme or performance of the education system involves an analysis of the role of the teachers (Lassa, 1999).

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature. A descriptive research in education involves the collection of data for the purpose of describing existing educational

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phenomenon. A descriptive research describes present happenings and events and ensures the determination of opinions, attitudes, preferences and perception of subjects involved (Fájẹmidàgbà, 1995). This study therefore, analyses teachers' assessment of the content of upper basic education Yorùbá language curriculum with a view to identifying the lapses, strengthen the curriculum and correct the weaknesses of the existing Yorùbá Curriculum content.

The population for this study consisted of all teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Òyọ́ North Senatorial District of Òyọ́ State. All the Yorùbá language teachers in public Upper Basic Schools in all the thirteen local government areas constituted the target population. There are 184 public Upper Basic Schools and 246 Yorùbá language teachers in these thirteen LGAs. All the 246 Public Upper Basic Yorùbá language teachers in these LGAs were purposively sampled for the study. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for gathering data for this study.

The reliability of the instrument was established using Kuder-Richardson 21 (KR-21). The result stood at 0.41, this shows that the instrument is reliable and good enough for this study. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and the t-test statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were used to answer research question 1, while t-test statistic was employed to answer research questions 2 and 3, and test their corresponding hypotheses at the significance level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the Teachers' Perception of the Content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum?

Based on the data analysed in Table 1, it was observed that 50.41% of the respondents strongly agreed that the curriculum content is relevant in attaining the stated objectives of the curriculum, while 28.05% agreed and 21.54 hold a contrary opinion. This was further corroborated by 54.53% and 28.05% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively that, the curriculum content is appropriate to the 13-15 years age-range of the learners, 17.48% of the respondents opposed this. In addition to the above, 52.03% of the respondents perceived that, before the curriculum content could be effectively implemented, it needs services of resource persons, while 47.97% of the respondents were of a contrary opinion. In the same vein, 77.23% of the respondents perceived that the literature component is adequately incorporated in the content of the curriculum, while only 22.77% of the respondents had a contrary perception.

Also, 69.59% of the respondents shared the opinion that the curriculum content incorporates the culture component of language learning adequately, while 30.41% of the respondents shared a contrary opinion. In addition, 57.32% of the respondents were of the opinion that the curriculum content covers adequately the language structure, grammar and lexis, while 42.68% of the respondents disagreed with this. Before the curriculum content could be effectively implemented, 58.94% of the respondents share the opinion that

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technological hardware are needed, while 41.06% do not see technological hardware as important. However, 55.69% of the respondents share the opinion that the curriculum content is not sequentially arranged, while 44.31% of the respondents hold a contrary opinion.

Table 1

Teachers' Perception of the Content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1	The content of the curriculum is relevant in attaining the stated objectives of the curriculum.	124 (50.41%)	69 (28.05%)	38 (15.45%)	15 6.09(%)
2	The content of the curriculum is appropriate to the 13-15 years of age range of learners.	112 (54.53%)	91 (36.99%)	32 (13.01%)	11 (04.47%)
3	The content of the curriculum covers adequately the four basic language skills.	97 (39.43%)	66 (26.83%)	51 (20.73%)	32 (13.01%)
4	The content of the curriculum provides adequately for learners' required entry behaviour into the senior secondary language skills.	107 43.50%	55 22.36%	62 25.20%	22 08.94%
5	The content of the curriculum promote communicative tasks and activities such as debates, excursions and symposium that facilitate learning.	69 (28.05%)	77 (31.30%)	72 (29.27%)	28 (11.38%)
6	The curriculum content covers adequately the three behavioural domains of the learners.	111 (45.12%)	73 (29.67%)	34 (13.82%)	28 (11.38%)
7	The curriculum content needs resources persons such as farmers, poet, playwright, novelist, etc. to be successfully implemented.	53 21.54%	75 30.49%	74 30.08%	44 17.89%
8	The curriculum content needs the use of technological hardware such as radio, tape-recorder, film slides, projectors, etc. for its effective implementation.	66 26.83%	79 32.11%	57 23.17%	44 17.89%
9	The content of the curriculum is arranged to allow the learners to learn from known the unknown.	40 (16.26%)	69 (28.05%)	75 (30.49%)	62 (25.20%)
10	The content of the curriculum can only be fully implemented by professionally trained Yoruba language teachers.	113 (45.93%)	87 (35.37%)	34 (13.82%)	12 (04.88%)
11	The curriculum content incorporates learners' linguistics background.	90 (36.59%)	82 (33.33%)	39 (15.85%)	35 (14.23%)
12	The content curriculum can be fully implemented within 3-years duration of upper basic education.	73 (29.67%)	89 (36.18%)	48 (19.51%)	36 (14.63%)
13	The curriculum content covers adequately the language structure, grammar, lexis, etc.	63 (25.61%)	78 (31.71%)	51 (20.73%)	54 (21.95%)
14	The curriculum content incorporate adequately, the literature component of language learning	102 (41.46%)	88 (35.77%)	26 (13.82%)	30 (08.94%)
15	The curriculum content covers adequately the culture component of language learning	98 (37.56%)	92 (32.03%)	34 (18.40%)	22 (12.01%)

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Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were postulated for this study and they were all tested with the use of t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the Male and Female Teachers' Perceptions of the Content UBE Yorùbá Language Curriculum

Table 2

Difference between the Perceptions of Male and Female Teachers of Yorùbá on the Curriculum Content

Variable (Gender)	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	111	47.38	2.43				
				244	0.114	0.909	Accepted
Female	135	49.32	2..31				

Table 2 shows a t-value of 0.114 and a significant value of 0.909 with 244 degree of freedom. Since the significant value (0.909) is greater than the t-value (0.114), the null hypothesis is thus, accepted. This implies that, there is no significant difference between the male and female teachers' assessment of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum.

Hypothesis 2: There is no Significant Difference between the Qualified and Unqualified Teachers' Perception of the Content UBE Yorùbá Language Curriculum

Table 3

Difference between the Perceptions of Qualified and Unqualified Teachers of Yorùbá on Curriculum Content

Variable (Qualification)	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Qualified	233	47.69	2.13				Rejected
				244	4.57	0.000	
Unqualified	13	48.97	2.06				

Table 3 shows a t-value of 4.57 and a significant value of 0.000 with 244 degree of freedom. Since the t-value (4.57) is greater than the significant value (0.000), the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between the qualified and unqualified teachers' assessment of the content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum.

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Conclusions

The finding of this study revealed that the content of the Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum is relevant to the stated objectives of the curriculum. The content is centred on the learners. Also, it covers the four basic language skills. The content serves as a solid foundation for senior secondary classes, but it needs activities such as debate, excursion, field trip, symposium, among others, in order to arouse the interest of the leaners. This finding is in line with Bloom's (1956) theory which stated that it is important for the curriculum content to be appropriate to the stated age-range and the environment of the learners. Curriculum should consider the learners' needs, characteristics, mental, and emotional states. It was also found that the arrangement of content of the curriculum is not all that sequential.

Another finding revealed that there is no significant difference between the male and female teachers' assessment. This shows that gender does not influence teachers' perceptions of the content of UBE Yoruba language curriculum. This finding is similar to the finding of Oyedeji (1995). He found that, there is no difference in male and female teachers' assessment of senior secondary school Biology curriculum content.

Also, the finding revealed that there is a significant difference between the qualified and unqualified teachers' perceptions of the Content of Upper Basic Education Yorùbá Language Curriculum. This could be attributed to the fact that Yorùbá language, in some cases is taught by unqualified teachers, who do not possess the required professional qualification.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to various stakeholders in the teaching/learning and implementation of Yorùbá Language Curriculum at the Upper Basic Education level:

1. the language skills component of the curriculum content should maintained and sustained;
2. the literature component of the curriculum content should be maintained and improved upon;
3. the culture component of the curriculum content should be maintained and improved upon;
4. the curriculum content should be re-arranged sequentially, in order to allow learners to learn from known to unknown; and
5. the content of the curriculum should be executed only by qualified Yoruba language teachers.

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