

Comparative Assessment of Public-Private Universities' Computer Literacy Contents of English Language Teacher Preparation Curricula in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigerian stakeholders have frequently bemoaned the mass failure of students in English language in communication situations and as a qualifying subject. Computer-Assisted Language Learning has been proved to be a sure panacea to the problem. But studies have revealed language teachers' gross lack of knowledge of computer literacy. This study, therefore, examined the adequacy of computer literacy contents of the curricula of the university departments training English language teachers. Since it has been generally acknowledged in Nigeria that privately owned establishments provide higher quality services than their publicly owned counterparts, the study also examined computer in language teacher training from the angle of public-private ownership dichotomy. Copies of a self-constructed nineteen-item questionnaire were administered after obtaining a validity of 0.85 Cronbach alpha. The data collected from a total of two hundred and eleven pre-service English language teachers from two public universities and two private ones through stratified random sampling were analysed with the statistical tools of frequency counts, simple percentages and chi-square. The findings revealed that: (i) a Nigerian pre-service English language teachers is offered at least a computer course (ii) private universities offer more computer literacy courses to their pre-service English language teachers than public universities (iii) the computer literacy courses offered to them in Nigerian universities lack pedagogical contents (iv) private universities provide more computer facilities for their pre-service English language teachers than the public ones do (v) those in private universities rate their institutions' computer literacy programmes higher than their counterparts in public ones rate theirs.

Keywords: Student performance, teacher training, teacher efficiency

Background to the Problem

The fact that the English language is so important that it cannot be replaced in the Nigerian system in the nearest future has been severally emphasised by scholars (Okedara, 1997; Olatunji, 2000; Osisanwo, 2005; Kolawole and Olatunji, 2006; Olatunji and Kolawole 2008). It is the only functional of Nigeria's two official languages because the second, French, maintains official status only as a

policy statement about which successive governments have done virtually nothing to actually implement (Olatunji, 2000).

English language's intimidating global influence, functions and advantages have also been acknowledged widely (Ajani, 2007; Grandlin, 2008; Sudiargo and Junining, 2008). As a school subject in which any Nigerian must obtain a credit pass before securing admission to read any course in a university (Iroegbu, 1997; Olatunji, 2000; Osisanwo, 2005), one would expect all stakeholders in the education industry to make concerted efforts to ensure that most, if not all, of the candidates from our secondary schools do not only become eligible for university admission but also efficient users of the language for proper functioning within and outside the country. It should be noted that since English is the language of school instruction, the mass failure being recorded in other school subjects culminating in the much-talked-about falling standard of education (Duliyemi, 2005) is a fall-out from the generally poor mastery of English by the students. This means that significant improvement in the quality of English language instruction would have significant positive effect on not only the candidates' performance in the language but also in other school subjects. The negative trend of falling standard of education in the country could be arrested and reversed.

Olatunji (2010) has observed that a consideration of WAEC Annual Reports from years 2000 to 2009 would reveal that in every one of the years covered, over 65% of the candidates failed to make credit passes in English language. For example, according to WAEC's Head of National Office, up to 75% of the candidates for the May/June 2009 edition of the examination failed English and Mathematics. Out of 1,373,009 candidates, only 356,981 candidates (representing 25.99%) made credit and above in English and Mathematics and at least three other subjects (*Saturday Punch*, September 19, 2009, Vol. 617, No. 1447, p.18).

The application of information and communication technologies to language teaching and learning, among other measures, has been recommended as solution to the worrisome problem (Kolawole and Olatunji, 2006; Lai, 2004). This is based on the findings of scholars who have reported tremendous success using ICTs to facilitate language teaching and learning. For example, Lai (2004) employed electronic mail to teach a class of students appropriate diction for correspondence with different categories of professionals. Taff (1997) and Kees (2007) taught students how to hold dialogues using particular target languages by making their students engage in telephone conversations in real communication situations.

Ogbodo's (2007) assertion that no technology education, plan, policy or network of institutions will work without qualified personnel, supported by the much quoted statement that "no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers" (FGN, 2004:33) prompted Kolawole and Olatunji (2006) to investigate English language teachers' knowledge of and attitude to ICTs application to teaching and learning in Ibadan city. They found gross lack of knowledge of ICTs in the teachers. In another study, Olatunji and Kolawole (2008), deeming it fit to investigate the English language teacher preparation programmes of selected universities in southwestern Nigeria, conducted a survey which reveals gross inadequacies in the computer skills contents of the universities' curricula for pre-service English language teachers. It is noteworthy that the computer is said to be the bedrock of ICT so much so that the two are sometimes used interchangeably (Ibode, 1997; Olusanya and Oloyede, 2003; and Akubuilu, 2007).

The current study shall be concerned with the comparison of Nigerian private universities' levels of exposure of pre-service English language teachers to computer use for language teaching with their publicly owned counterparts. This is based on the disparity between the qualities of the two types of institutions at all levels of education that has been recorded in extant literature. For example, Trickett, Trickett, Castro, and Scaffner (1982) observe that the independent or private schools are usually better than public ones because the former generally have classrooms that are more involving, better organized and less rigid than public ones. Adebayo (2007) reports persistent and widespread loss of confidence in public educational institutions which makes parents to have preference for private

ones. Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008) also state that it is a fact that private schools are better managed than public schools. Utulu (2001) too attributes the poor quality of graduates to lack of physical facilities (of which computers are inclusive), a problem which private universities are meant to help solve by absorbing many of the prospective undergraduates, and making required learning resources available from the fees charged. Omoregie (2006) acknowledges that the 2003 and 2004 National Universities Commission's reports on state of private universities show that the universities are toeing in the right direction, but she is apt to observe slow development of infrastructures and lower packages for their packages for their lecturers than what federal and state universities provide for their own lecturers, even those who possess the same qualifications and produce similar outputs.

Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008) caution that private university owners may, in a bid to make big returns from their investment, sacrifice quality for profit. If the proprietors are over-ambitious about profit-making, the universities may lack necessary equipment. This may be the appropriate explanation for the meagre salaries being paid to their staff members, as observed by Omoregie (2008). If the lecturers in most private universities are not adequately motivated, they may not put their best into the discharge of their duties, even in the presence of abundance of facilities.

It is thus appropriate to compare public universities with their private counterparts in terms of the adequacy of the computer courses offered their pre-service English language teachers and the provision of infrastructures to facilitate the pre-service teachers' masterly handling of the facilities.

Statement of the Problem

Mass failure of Nigerian secondary school students in English language examinations has become a perennial problem. English language teachers' reported inefficiency in the use of computers for language teaching makes the remediation of the problem almost impossible. It is noteworthy that the teachers are products of various universities. Submissions in extant literature about better equipment and higher quality service in Nigerian private universities are inconclusive. This study thus seeks to compare the computer skills contents of the English language preparation programmes in certain public universities in Nigeria with their private counterparts in order to contribute solution to the problem of inadequate empirical facts on reported disparities between private universities' computer education programmes for their teachers-in-the-making and those of public universities in Nigeria.

Research Question

Do Nigerian universities offer computer courses specifically tailored to language teaching pedagogy to their pre-service English language teachers?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in the provision of facilities for training pre-service teachers to use computer packages to teach English language.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in the quantity of their computer training courses for English language teaching.

Ho3: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in their students' perception of the quality of their computer training for English language teaching.

Methodology

Population

All public and private universities in southwestern Nigeria as well as all their pre-service English language teachers constitute the study population.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Two public and two private universities that have departments for preparing English language teachers were randomly sampled. The enrolment in the four hundred level (final year) of pre-service English language teachers in each university was requested. Thirty percent of the total enrolment in each institution was randomly sampled for participation in the study. A total of one hundred and twenty-nine (129) undergraduates were sampled randomly from both public universities while ninety-one (91) were selected from the private universities. The sample comprised a total of two hundred and twenty pre-service English language teachers.

Instrumentation

A self-constructed twelve-item questionnaire titled **Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Computer Skills Questionnaire (PSELTCSQ)** was used to collect data. The questionnaire has three sections. Section A introduces the questionnaire. Section B is made of three items requesting personal information about each respondent. Section C is made up of nine items that request information and personal judgment on the ICT skills content of their training.

The instrument was pilot-tested on thirty pre-service English language teachers in universities not included in the study population. The validity test run on the pilot subjects yielded 0.87 Cronbach alphas. Copies of the instrument were then taken to each of the selected universities to administer to the concerned teachers. The copies of the filled instrument were collected immediately to prevent loss. However, only two hundred and eleven copies of the instrument were found valid for use in the study.

Oral interview was also employed in getting additional facts, opinions and clarifications from some of the respondents.

Data Analysis

The statistical tools of frequency counts, percentages and chi-square were used in analyzing the collected data to answer the research questions raised and test the hypotheses.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Demographic Description of the Respondents

School Ownership	Males	Females	Total
Public	52	74	126
Private	35	50	85
Total	87	124	211

Table 1 shows that in both the public and private universities, there are more females among those being trained to teach English, thus lending credence to the age-long belief that teaching is a female dominated domain. It could also be a further proof of research findings that females dominate arts and social sciences fields while the sciences are seen as masculine in nature. Arigbabu and Mji (2004) found this in extant literature, but then concluded that the gender bias could be disappearing.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
15-25YRS	114	54.03	54.03	54.03
26-35YRS	65	30.81	30.81	30.81
36-45YRS	23	12.9	10.9	10.90
46-55YRS	7	3.32	3.32	3.32
56-65YRS	2	0.94	0.94	0.94
66-75YRS				100.0
Total	249	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that most of the undergraduate pre-service English teachers (114 or 54.03%) were from age 15 to 25 years, followed by those from ages 26 to 35 years (65 or 30.81%), the ones aged 36 to 45 years (23 or 12.9%), 46 to 55 years (7 or 7 or 3.2%), and 56 to 65 years (2 or 0.95%) respectively. This shows that most of the respondents were still youths.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by School Type

School Type	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Public	126	59.7	59.7	59.7
Private	85	40.3	40.3	100.0
Total	211	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 3, more of the respondents were from public universities than the private ones. This is because the public universities generally have greater enrolments because their carrying capacities are normally greater than the private universities that are much newer.

Question 1: *Do Nigerian universities offer computer courses specifically tailored to language teaching pedagogy to their pre-service English language teachers?*

Table 4: Responses Indicating the Universities' Courses in Computer Application to Language Pedagogy

Response Type	Frequency
No Response	26 (12.32%)
Negative	185 (87.68%)
Total	211 (100%)

Table 2 shows that none of the four sampled universities, according to their students' responses, offers any course solely for application of computer to language teaching and learning. Face-to-face interactions with some of the respondents revealed that some of their lecturers, especially in English Teaching Methods courses, have mentioned the applicability of some ICT equipment to language teaching and learning generally. This is, however, part of a topic in the course. The best that their lecturers have ever done is to explain one way in which particular ICT equipment, like the computer, could be used in facilitating learning without actually demonstrating such to the students. Apart from this, they have only been exposed to one or two general courses in computer operations which they took together with students from various other departments and faculties as part(s) of their general studies programmes. So, the issue of computer application to teaching generally does not arise, not to talk of language teaching with its peculiarities.

This situation is not good at all and it indicates that we have along way to go if we are to make our English language teachers efficient at home and marketable in the highly competitive international community. The answer to Research Question 1 is that private and public universities in Nigeria do not offer courses solely meant to teach the skills for applying computer to language teaching and learning.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in provision of computer facilities for training pre-service English language teachers.

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Rating of Computer Facilities Provision in Public and Private Universities

Stimulus	School type	Yes	No	Neutral	Total	X ²	df	P	Remarks
Do you have enough computer systems for adequate personalized practice session?	Public	6 (4.76)	108 (85.71)	2 (9.52)	126 (100%)	61.01	1	.000	
	Private	48 (56.47)	23 (27.06)	14 (16.47)	85 (100%)				

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Rating of Computer Facilities Provision in Public and Private Universities :
- continued

Does your department/faculty have a computer pool for practical learning sessions?	Public	6 (4.76)	108 (85.71)	12 (9.52)	126 (100%)				
	Private	48 (56.47)	23 (27.06)	14 (16.47)	85 (100%)				
Is the computer pool adequately equipped?	Public	3 (2.38)	123 (97.62)	-	126 (100%)				
	Private	42 (49.41)	43 (50.59)	-	85 (100%)				

Since $p(0.000)$ is less than .005, as shown in Table 5, the difference between Nigerian private and public universities in terms of the provision of computers for training their pre-service English language teachers is significant. It is clear that the difference is in favour of private schools because the percentage of their students that rate their provision high outweighs the percentage of those from public universities who gave their own universities similar rating. This is attributable to the fact that the private universities, being relatively new and consciously striving to be seen to be committed to serving the nation better than the government-owned ones, thereby justifying their establishment, would want to impress people with abundance of physical facilities.

Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between public and private universities in provision of computer facilities for training pre-service English language teachers is rejected. This, however, is not an indication that the private universities have enough computer facilities to go round all their pre-service English language teachers.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in the quantity of their computer training courses for their pre-service English language teachers.

Table 6: Comparative Analysis of Quantities of Computer Literacy Courses Offered by Public and Private Universities

Stimulus	School type	Yes	No	Neutral	Total	χ^2	df	P	Remark
Have you been offered any computer training as part of your university programme?	Public	72 (57.14%)	54 (42.86%)	-	126 (100%)	15.10	2	.002	Significant
	Private	65 (76.47%)	20 (23.53%)		85 (100%)				
	Public	1 (43.65%)	2 (9.52%)	59 (46.83%)	126 (100%)				
How many such courses have you been exposed to by the university?	Private	1 (56.47%)	2 (23.53%)	17 (20%)	85 (100%)				

Table 6 shows that $p(0.002)$ is less than .005, thereby meaning that there is a significant difference between Nigerian private and public universities' quantities of computer courses for their pre-service English language teachers. This difference favours the private universities as the percentage their students that claimed that their universities offered them up to two computer courses (20 or 23.53%) is higher than those from public universities (12 or 9.52%).

Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference between public and private universities in the quantities of their computer training courses for their pre-service English

language teachers is rejected. It is, however, a big disadvantage that none of such computer courses is customised for the peculiar pedagogical needs of the pre-service English language teachers. In order to cater for the peculiarities, special computer courses for language pedagogy may have to be introduced as additional to or replacement of perhaps one of the current ones.

Ho3: There is no significant difference between public and private universities in their students' perceived quality of their computer training for English language teaching.

Table 7: Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Universities' Pre-Service English Teachers' Perceived Qualities of their Universities' Computer Literacy Provision

Stimulus	School type	Yes	No	Neutral	Total	X ²	df	P	Remark
Are you confident that the computer training has adequately equipped you for efficient use of the computer?	Public	7 (5.56)	109 (86.51)	10 (7.94%)	126 (100%)	29.542	1.5	.000	
	Private	34 (40%)	45 (52.94)	6 (7.06%)	85 (100%)				
Apart from any general computer course(s), have you ever been taught how to use various computer packages to teach different aspects of English language?	Public	5 (3.97)	121 (96.03)	-	126 (100%)				
	Private	21 (24.71)	64 (75.29)	-	85 (100%)				

Table 7 shows that p (.000) is less than .005, thereby meaning that there is a significant difference between Nigerian private and public universities' pre-service English language teachers' perceptions of the qualities of the computer courses offered them by their respective universities. The difference is in favour of the private universities as more of their students (34 or 40%) expressed their sense of confidence in computer operation than their counterparts from public universities (7 or 5.56%).

The common inadequacy in pre-service English language teachers' preparation to use computers for language teaching across types of universities in Nigeria becomes one again pronounced as greater percentages of the respondents from both public (121 or 96.03%) and private universities (64 or 75.29%) confessed that their exposure to computer literacy did not include how to use the facility to teach various topics in English language.

Summary of Findings

1. Public universities train more English language teachers than the private ones;
2. There are more female pre-service English language teachers than males;
3. A Nigerian pre-service English language teachers is offered at least a computer course;
4. Private universities generally offer more computer literacy courses to their pre-service English language teachers than public universities;
5. The computer literacy courses offered to pre-service English language teachers in Nigerian universities, both private and public, do not include the pedagogy of computer use in language teaching and learning;
6. Private universities provide more computer facilities for their pre-service English language teachers than the public ones do; and
7. Pre-service English language teachers in private universities rate their institutions' computer literacy programmes higher than their counterparts in public ones rate their own.

Conclusion

The study has shown some inadequacies in the English language teacher preparation efforts of both private and public universities in Nigeria, showing that the guiltier are the public ones. The Nigerian pre-service English language teachers are found not to be trained to make effective and efficient use of the computer to facilitate language teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The following recommendations could place the nation on the right path of maximal exploitation of the benefits of computer-assisted language learning:

1. The National Universities Commission should set a benchmark of a ratio of computer systems to students in every language teacher preparation department;
2. The commission should also ensure that more language teaching methods courses are introduced in the universities, with some them specifically designed for training in the use of modern technologies in language teaching. Any university found wanting in these conditions should have its English language teacher preparation programmes discredited.
3. The Nigerian ministries of education should ensure that computers and other modern technologies are provided in the secondary schools where the teachers-in-training are being prepared to teach. This would assure them that the computer training is not going to be useless when they eventually get into service.

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