IMPACT OF STUDENTS' FAILURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE NIGERIAN FORMAL EDUCATION IN GOKANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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IMPACT OF STUDENTS’ FAILURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE NIGERIAN FORMAL EDUCATION IN GOKANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract
This paper is a systematic study of the 'Impact of students' failure in English Language and the Nigerian Formal Education' over the years in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State especially in WASSCE and NECO. To answer our research questions, the paper adopts the chi-square analysis at 5% level of significance with 6df. Some of the major study findings, causes and impact were identified and recommendations made to reduce students' failure in English Language. Absent of qualified professional English Language teachers, shortcuts for students passing examinations, absent of libraries and modern textbooks were some of the major findings. Education requires the involvement of the various tiers of governments as well as all stake-holders both private and public and should not be politicized.

Background to the Study
The history of formal education in Nigeria is traceable to the Portuguese traders who came to Benin in the early part of the 15th century. However, no meaningful development in formal education took root until late 18th and early 19th century through the activities of the Christian Missionaries which started in 1842. The missions of the early missionaries were to evangelize and convert Nigerians into Christianity. However, they believed this could only be possible through formal education process which would enable the natives to read and write in their language. This was the basis upon which the need for the establishment of mission schools was conceived and pursued vigorously alongside their main objectives.

Research Questions:
It is pertinent at this point to raise certain questions called research questions that will guide our understanding and serve as insight into our study.

Thus, our research questions include:

i) Does lack of English teachers have any significant impact on students' performance in English Language at Gokana LGA of Rivers State?

ii) Does students’ feeling towards teaching and learning of English Language have any significant impact on students performance in English language at Gokana L.G.A. of Rivers State?

iii) Does lack of functional libraries in the schools have any significant impact on students’ performance in English language at Gokana LGA of Rivers State?

iv) Does students’ reading habit have any significant impact on students’ performance in English language at Gokana LGA of Rivers State?

Hypotheses: Our assumption here is to determine to what extent is there causality based on our research questions.
Null Hypothesis
There is no significant relationship between teaching requirements in English language and students' performance in Gokana LGA of Rivers State.

Design of the Study
This study adopts the combination of some elements of descriptive survey design and to a large extent the quasi-experimental design method, it therefore combined both descriptive and quasi experimental design method. The descriptive survey design method was chosen because in social or educational research of this nature, it enables the researcher to transform a concept which is an abstraction of observed event into a construct which has been formulated and can be used, observed and measured in science.

Research Question 1: Do lack of English Teachers have any significant impact on students performance in English Language at Gokana LGA of Rivers State?

Table 1: Lack of Teachers and Students Performance in English

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/NO</th>
<th>QUESTIONNAIRES</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Are English teachers necessary for a good performance in English language?</td>
<td>96 (96.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Does covering WASSCE/NECO syllabus necessary for a good performance in English language examination?</td>
<td>94 (94.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Does giving assignment always necessary in teaching and learning of English language?</td>
<td>88 (88.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Does the use of set texts by WASSCE/NECO in teaching and learning of English language necessary for a good performance in English language?</td>
<td>90 (90.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL RESPONSE</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1 above, 96% of Respondents agreed that for a good performance in English language, English teachers are necessary, while 94% agreed that covering English syllabus is also necessary for a good performance in English language. Again 88% of respondents agreed that assignment is necessary for a good performance in English language. 12% of respondents disagreed. Again 90% of respondents agreed to the use of modern text books in teaching and learning of English language.

Research Question (2): Do students feeling towards teaching and learning English Language have any significant impact on Students' performance in English Language at Gokana LGA of Rivers State.

Table 2: Students Feeling towards Teaching and Learning of English

<table>
<thead>
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Table 3: Lack of Functional Libraries and Students Performance

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<th>S/NO</th>
<th>QUESTIONNAIRES</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Is there no functional library with up to set-texts as required by WASSCE/NECO in your school?</td>
<td>Yes 95 (95.0) NO 5 (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Would student’s performance in English Language be affected without set-texts as required by WASSCE/NECO?</td>
<td>Yes 83 (83.0) NO 17 (17.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Does personal effort of reading harder by a student necessary for a good performance in English?</td>
<td>Yes 85 (85.0) NO 15 (15.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Do societies like literary and debating, dramatic, writers’ club etc have any influence on students’ performance in English Language?</td>
<td>Yes 90 (90.0) NO 10 (10.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL RESPONSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>353</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3, 95% of Respondents agreed that lack of functional library impact students’ performance in English Language and 83% of respondents agreed that a good performance required set-texts as prescribed by WASSCE/NECO. 85% and 90% of respondents agreed that students working harder and the presence of literary societies in the school will influence student’s performance in English respectively.

International Journal of Arts, Physical, Management and Social Sciences Vol. 7, No 1, March 2010
The calculated value of \( X^2 \) = 0.184432

Level of significance = 0.05

Degree of freedom (df) = \( \frac{(\text{Row} - 1) \times (\text{Column} - 1)}{\text{Df}} \)

Df = 6

Critical value \( X^2 \) table value with 6df at 0.05 confidence level = 12.592 Computed value = 0.184

Since our calculated value is less than (<) our table value at 0.05 level of confidence at 6df, we therefore accept our null hypothesis which states thus:

There is no significant relationship between teaching requirements in English language and students' performance in Gokana L.G.A of Rivers State.

On students reading habit, table 4, 87% of respondent agreed that students membership of literary societies will improve their performance, while 96% agreed that students do not read after school. Again 93% of respondents agreed that students who always read are likely to improve their performance. 97% of respondents are not aware of any problem that can stop students from reading after school.

**Application and Analysis of Chi-Square and Decision Rule**

The analysis and application of chi-square and decision rule can be obtained from students response in tables 1 to 4 giving our sum of frequency with our observed frequency the expected frequency is calculated and substituted into the chi-square formula

\[ X^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} \]

The calculated value of \( X^2 \) = 0.184432

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**Summary of Major Findings**

Some of the major findings from the statistical analysis of our study attributed students' poor performance in English language in schools at Gokana L.G.A. to dearth of qualified English language teachers in the formal education system. Students are ignorant about the subject syllabus as well as required texts, not to talk about having a teacher, yet are entered into an International Journal of Arts; Physical, Management and Social Sciences Vol. 7, No 1, March 2010
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examination, they least prepared for by our formal education system. Further findings also show that students' poor performance in English language was as a result of poor attitude and feeling towards the study of English language in the formal system of education. Students preferred their local language and use it freely irrespective of the demand of the formal system of education which recognizes English language as official means of communication in teaching and learning to bring about behavioural change. Many students lack communication skills in English language especially as in grammar, tenses, spelling and expression of one's self. This adversely affected their performance in English language hence the clamour for their local language as an alternative to English language. In addition study also revealed that student poor performance in English language in our formal education system is due largely to the absence of modern libraries as part of the formal education. Most of the students do not have modern and relevant text books in English language, societies such as literary and debating, dramatic, pen club etc that would have improved students' skills and sharpen their mastery of the subject matter are not just there in our formal education system. The study among others have also identified poor attitude to reading culture among students in our formal education system. This often leads to inadequate preparation for the examination resulting into examination malpractice in our formal education system hence the massive failure of students in English language. These views tend to collaborate the views of Ken-Maduako (2004:136) on grammatical categories and second language users, as well as those of chief examiners reports (2002:5), (2003:4), 2004:2) and (2005:2) on candidates weaknesses and reasons for mass failure in English language in WASSCE.

Causes of impact of Students Failure in English Language and the Nigerian Formal Education in Gokana LGA in Rivers State.

From the study, some of the causes of students' failure in English language and the Nigerian Formal Education System in Gokana L.G.A. in Rivers State can be identified to include:-

1) A poor responsive mechanism for the challenges of our formal education system by the authorities and stakeholders of our formal education system. Study shows that for the past ten years schools in Gokana L.G.A. have continued to witness increased failure in English language both in WASSCE and NECO examinations.

2) Failure of our formal education system to internalize the challenges of our local environment as part of our culture that needs to be studied preserved and improved upon including local language.

3) Lack of qualified and professional teachers in our formal education system.

4) Lack of resourcefulness in teaching and learning which has brought about low morale in teaching and learning in our formal education system.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted to identify the impact of student's failure in English language and the Nigerian formal education in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. Our review was a general over-view of existing knowledge and contributions by scholars about Nigeria formal education, the place of English language in our education system, the causes and incidence of mass failure of students in English language and programmes aimed at improving the study of English language in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive survey design with close-ended questionnaires as the main instrument for data gathering and collection from 400 students in 6 schools and presented them in tables and percentages and were further tested using the simple chi-square statistical inference at 0.05 level of significance with six degree of freedom as it is common with educational research of this nature to establish the strength or weakness of our hypothesis. The result of our statistical inference shows that our calculated value is less than our table value; therefore we accepted our null hypothesis which states that; there is no significant relationship between students' performance in English language and teaching requirements'. These include teachers, modern International Journal of Arts, Physical, Management and Social Sciences Vol. 7, No 1, March 2010
libraries, language laboratories, modern text books students' attitude, students reading culture etc in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

**Conclusion:** Some of the major findings in our study on the impact of students failure in English language and the Nigerian formal education in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State put forward the following conclusions.

1) The provision of English language teachers has a significant impact on students' mass failure in English language. It is the teachers who bring about the behavioural transfer in the subject matter; lack of teachers will bring about students' poor performance.

2) Dearth of libraries and absent of modern text-books also impact students' performance. A modern library as part of our formal education system, will update students' knowledge and will also serve as instructional material with far reaching impression on the learner.

3) Students using their language as a major means of communication within themselves in our formal education system has a significant impact on students' performance in English language. This will essentially affect student's communication skills, hence they could not effectively express themselves in English language thereby bringing about students' poor performance.

4) Poor reading culture among student's in the formal education system impact student's performance in English language in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. Students hardly read after school nor do they have text books. Most of the schools have no functional library, students' exhibit poor knowledge of recommended text books, and poor knowledge of rules of grammar which ultimately bring about their poor performance in English Language.

5) Students' poor attitude and preparation towards examination impact significantly student's poor performance in English language in the formal education system in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. Generally, students show apathy and hardly prepared for their examination. They are neither worried by their performance nor disturbed by the school performance in English language. Perhaps, there are other means by which students resort to, in order to pass examination not only in English language but other subjects in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

6) Also, of far reaching impact of students' poor performance in English language are the neglect of our formal education system by the government, private and other stakeholders. By any standard, most schools in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State will not pass any elementary test as a formal education institution. This decay also affects the students who take advantage of this situation and get involved in examination malpractice especially in English language.

**Recommendations:**

Based on our research findings, the following recommendations are made as follows:

1) Government should intensify effort at recruiting qualified and professional English teachers into our formal education system.

2) Government and planners of education should consider an immediate review in English Language syllabus with an aim; of making it work in our formal education system. In the life of our education, English Language subject is one of the longest and most favoured period study subject especially the 6. 3. 3. levels yet students' performance remain poor.

3) The study of indigenous language of school environment should be considered and developed for study and recognized by neither our educational system nor a select few.

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Government and planners of our formal education should be more involved and proactive in the running of our schools than playing politics with education.

(5) Our formal education should be able to provide a functional library in addition to language laboratory where teachers will have access to textbooks to update their lessons content and students for instructional material, reference and so, improved their reading habit.

(6) Government policy on students' promotion or registration for WASSCE/NECO should be revisited to emphasize on academic performance content.

Limitations of the Study:
In carrying out this study, some difficulties were encountered. Such included the low literacy level of some of the respondents into the respondent's language. This may alter the original meaning of such questions. Also, some of the students seek help from their fellow students to answer the questions. This reflects group rather than personal answer to the questionnaire. Again only 100 students were studied instead of the total population. In addition the principal of some of the schools' visited, will not want their school to be studied. These are some of the factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the study.

Suggestion for Further Studies:
This study examines the impact of student’s failure in English Language and the Nigerian formal education, in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State. There is no doubt that the study in spite of its limitation may have contributed to knowledge and an insight into our educational system.

It is however, suggested that further studies are carried out on the following:
(1) Impact of students' failure in English Language and student's performance in other subject areas.
(2) National policy on education in Nigeria: A Myth or Reality.
(3) The Role of Nigerian Formal Education and the Achievements of National Philosophy on Education.

References
Korubo-Solomon, F.G. (2002). Effective Language and Communication Skills Acquisition in English. Port Harcourt: Celwill Nig. Ltd.


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No 1, March 2010