

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING READING SKILLS AND PUPILS' READING EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EKEREMOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the challenges of teaching reading skills and pupil's reading effectiveness in public primary schools in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised of 744 teachers in 92 public primary schools. The researcher used stratified sampling technique to select 20 schools out of 92 public primary schools from three (3) constituencies. A sample size of 60 teachers from the selected schools in primary three, four and five were drawn using simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used for data collection was Challenges of Teaching Reading Skills Questionnaire (CTRSQ) with 20 items to answer four (4) research questions; developed to guide the study. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings from the study revealed that inadequate facilities, large class size, making choice of methods in teaching reading and provision of instructional materials are challenges teachers encountered in teaching reading skills that influence pupil's reading effectiveness. Based on the findings, it was recommended that schools head teachers' should align with ministry of education, stakeholders, parents and NGOs to provide adequate facilities and instructional materials for all public primary schools. Government and stakeholder should also build more classrooms to reduce class size. In-service training such as workshop and seminar should be consistently organised for training and retraining of teachers in public primary schools.

Keywords: Teaching, Reading, Skills, Effectiveness, Instructional Materials, Primary Schools

Citation: Nanah, E. Y., Ekpo, S. S., Inyon, A. U. and Koroye, T. (2018). Challenges of Teaching Reading Skills and Pupils' Reading Effectiveness in Public Primary Schools in Ekeremor Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. *Equatorial Journal of Education and Curriculum Studies*, 3 (1): 15 – 22.

Introduction

“Reading” in formal education has been an essential skill the child learns to develop on his entry into the world of communication. The term reading is an indispensable skill every child needs to acquire in primary school before entering into junior secondary school. Unfortunately, majority of our children in primary schools cannot read effectively before proceeding to junior secondary school. Due to the importance attached to reading, the National Policy on Education stipulates that

permanent literacy and numeracy be inculcated in children at the primary school level, but this laudable objective is yet to be achieved (FRN, 2013; Effiong, Ekpo and Udo, 2016). Children inability to read in primary schools can be traced to several factors, but this study intends to investigate the challenges teachers encounter in teaching reading skills and its influence on pupils' reading effectiveness.

Reading skill is the bedrock of almost all process of learning which necessitated learners not

only to acquire language and study literature, but also to learn other subjects. If pupils have low reading skill, it automatically results to difficulty in the acquisition of knowledge in several other subjects and this consequently affects the learners educational achievement. Indeed, studies have established that a significant number of learners complete the primary school cycle without having achieved the basic levels of reading and comprehension (Commeyras and Iyenga, 2007 Asukwo, 2018). According to Ikoh (2004), reading refers to a meaningful interpretation of printed or verbal symbols. He further sees reading as a constructive thinking process which includes the comprehension of the explicit and implicit meaning of passage.

Children in primary schools encounter problems that result to ineffectiveness in reading which is attributed to certain factors, amongst which are poor vocabulary or word power, poor word recognition, poor comprehension skills and poor linguistic background (Mcintyre, Halan, Layer, 2011). McIntyre *et al* (2011) stated that many of our children struggled with reading difficulties due to lack of phonological awareness. Teachers encounter myriad of challenges in teaching reading skills that affects pupils' reading effectiveness, amongst which are: inadequate facilities is a challenge teachers encounter in teaching reading skills which greatly affects the reading effectiveness of pupils.

According to Unoh (1983), most Nigerian primary schools lack facilities in teaching reading such as library, conducive classrooms, local developed instructional packages, materials for programmed and individualized reading instructions; well-graded teaching aids; locally developed materials of appropriate readability levels in both English and local Nigerian languages. Ayodele (2004) also pointed out that the availability of adequate chairs, desks and other classroom facilities are necessary for the accomplishment of any educational goals and objectives. Ikoh (2004) opined that schools that have good libraries with various types of reading materials and audio-visual equipment are big assets since the children with the help of the teachers will interact with these materials thereby learning to read earlier and effectively.

Ayoo (2002) asserted that school environment; such as classroom, desk and books have direct impact on good performance of pupils in

developing countries. Ikoh (2004), also asserts that classroom conditions such as class size, classroom resources (materials) and facilities are factors that influence reading ability of children. He further stressed that teachers who teach above 30 pupils in a class may not be able to attend to each of them, instead the teacher will resort to chorus reading as a way of teaching thereby hampering effective reading.

Teachers who teach reading are bedeviled with the challenge of provision of instructional materials. Children ought to be provided with all types of books, materials such as visual and audio-visual aids that can stimulate them to have interest in reading.

Agosiobo (2007) opined that the use of teaching resources are important because they motivate learners to learn as they offer stimulus variation and attention throughout the lesson. Inadequate provisions of instructional materials to be used in teaching reading skills have a great impact on pupils' reading effectiveness in primary schools.

According to Bascia (2003), large class size makes monitoring of pupils attendance very difficult thus encouraging learners' absenteeism, and the quality of feedback to pupils become very low, thus making the teaching and learning process ineffective. UNICEF (1997), pointed out that parents should see the problem of high pupil-teacher ratio from the perspective of teachers not being able to control the class; teachers being overloaded and so unable to give individual attention to a class of over 100 pupils or more. Based on this viewpoint, it can be deduced that teacher-pupil ration is a great challenge teachers face in the process of teaching reading skills in primary school.

UNICEF (1997), also asserted that the rise of pupils per class due to the implementation of UPE affected the discipline of pupils in class. The also reiterated that the teachers in such class spend much time on class control and consequently become slow in completing the syllabus. This implies that teachers in large class spend good part of their period in controlling the class and undoubtedly affect teaching reading and consequently hamper pupils reading effectiveness.

Teachers are confused in making choice of methods in teaching reading skills as a result of the multifaceted methods which posed a great challenge

on them. Ikoh (2004), asserts that majority of the teachers in our schools do not know the methods of teaching reading to children. He identified five methods of teaching reading skills, they are:

- i. The look and say method or whole method
- ii. The Phonic method
- iii. Language experience approach
- iv. The alphabetical method
- v. The eclectic method

According to Samuel and Myrtle (2013), all methods have shown some successes, a number of which are summarized below:

- i. Phonic method
- ii. The look and say or whole word method
- iii. The whole language method
- iv. Combining phonic and whole language

Farrant (2000) cited in Samuel and Myrtle (2013), asserts that bad methods that teachers use causes learning blockage that are difficult to unlearn and overcome later. The co-existence and numerous methods or approaches call for each of which having its strong advocates and opponents and this pose a serious problem of making choice of methods in teaching reading skills (Unoh, 1983).

Children in primary school who are bedeviled with reading ineffectiveness or difficulty always associated with frustration in class and consequently prone to academic failure, low self-esteem, absenteeism and school drop-out. Teaching reading anchors on the teachers who are with the learners in the class. These teachers face a lot of challenges in teaching reading skills. It is on this basis, this study is focused on investigating the challenges teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State..

Statement of the Problem

Reading forms the basis for all other area of learning and it is expected that all children succeed in the process of learning from primary to tertiary institution through reading. It is sad to note that most of the children who complete their primary school cannot read effectively and begin to encounter problems in secondary schools. More so, the learning of other subjects in both primary and secondary is anchored on reading effectiveness. It is observed that children who experience reading difficulty to upper primary are placed at frustration

level and these results to academic failure and drop-out of school. Ikoh (2004), asserts that majority of the children in Nigerian schools cannot read English language.

The reading problem has grown worse and fiercer and blame has been put on everyone who is associated with reading, including teachers, learners, parents and even the government. The teacher who is at the center of teaching reading should be apportioned more blame. However, it is observed that teachers are enveloped with numerous challenges in teaching reading skills which directly influence the reading effectiveness of pupils.

Based on the fore-going, the researchers are of the view that there is need to investigate the challenges of teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges of teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

Specifically, the objectives that guided this study sought to:

- i. Identify the challenges of inadequate facilities teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.
- ii. Find out the challenges of large class size teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influences pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.
- iii. Find out the challenges of making choice of method teachers' encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.
- iv. Identify the challenges of provision of instructional materials teaches encounter in teaching reading skill that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the challenges of inadequate facilities teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

- ii. What are the challenges of large class size teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools?
- iii. What are the challenges of making choice of methods teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools?
- iv. What are the challenges of provision of instructional materials teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

Methodology

The design used for this study is descriptive survey. The population of this study comprised of 744 teachers in 92 public primary schools in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The sample size for the study was sixty (60) teachers. The researchers used stratified sampling technique to select twenty (20) schools out of ninety-two (92) public primary schools, from three (3) constituencies. The simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) teachers in class three, four and five from each of the selected schools.

The instrument used for the study is a researcher made instrument titled “Challenges of Teaching Reading Skills Questionnaire (CTRSQ). The questionnaire was divided into two sections.

Section A had to do with demographic data of the respondents while section B elicited information in relation to the research questions posed for the study. The structured instrument (CTRSQ) had twenty (20) items which is in line with modified four point likertscale of ratings, such Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D). The instrument was validated by three (3) experts in the Department of Early Childhood Education and measurement and evaluation. All inputs and corrections were effected in drafting the final questionnaire. The instrument was trial tested on 12 teachers in other four schools and the data collected were analysed using Cronbach alpha. The reliability coefficients of the instrument obtained were 0.82, 0.90, 0.68 and 0.72 respectively.

The CTRSQ was administered on the respondents (teachers) with the aid of two (2) research assistants. The data collected were analysed with descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The decision was based on cut-off point mean score of 2.50 and above as mean score were accepted while those items that scored below 2.50 as mean score were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of inadequate facilities teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

Table 1: Teachers mean responses on the challenges of inadequate facilities they encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

S/N	Item statement	N	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1.	Lack of school library.	60	3.08	1.54	Accepted
2.	Lack of literature books, magazines, periodicals and story books in the library.	60	2.93	1.47	Accepted
3.	Inadequate provision of chalkboard or whiteboard.	60	2.12	1.06	Rejected
4.	Inadequate provision of desks, chairs and tables.	60	2.97	1.48	Accepted
5.	Lack of conducive classroom with ventilation and lighting.	60	3.17	1.58	Accepted
Grand total mean			2.85		Accepted

The data presented in table 1 revealed that only item 3 has a mean score of 2.12 which is below the cut-off point of 2.50. the other 4 items have their mean value ranged from 2.93 to 3.17 and a total mean of 2.85 which is above 2.50 indicating that inadequate facilities are challenges teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence

pupils’ reading effectiveness in Ekeremor Local Government of Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of large size teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils’ reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

Table 2: Teachers mean responses on the challenges of large class size they encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

S/N	Item statement	N	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
6	Excessive noise making and rowdiness in the class	60	3.03	1.52	Accepted
7	Teachers use part of their period in controlling the class	60	2.90	1.45	Accepted
8	Children have difficulty in paying attention and concentration in a large class.	60	2.85	1.43	Accepted
9	Teachers have difficulty in giving children individual attention	60	2.95	1.48	Accepted
10	Learners frequent absenteeism in class.	60	2.87	1.43	Accepted
Grand total mean			2.92		Accepted

The result in table 2 revealed that all the items from 6-10 had mean scores ranged from 2.85 to 3.03 and a grand total mean score of 2.92 which is above the cut-off point of 2.50. this result has shown that large class size is a challenge teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges of making choice of methods teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

Table 3: Teachers mean responses on the challenges of making choice of methods they encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

S/N	Item statement	N	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
11.	I am familiar and make use of the following methods in teaching reading skills.				
I.	Look and say method or whole word method	60	3.17	1.59	Accepted
II.	Phonic method	60	1.15	0.58	Rejected
III.	Language experience approach	60	1.22	0.61	Rejected
IV.	Initial teaching alphabet	60	3.24	1.62	Accepted
V.	Eclectic Method	60	1.12	0.56	Rejected
VI.	Semantic Mapping	60	2.11	1.05	Rejected
VII.	Programmed instruction approach	60	1.84	0.91	Rejected
VIII.	The whole language method	60	2.98	1.49	Accepted
IX.	Pupils' read aloud in turns while others repeat	60	3.39	1.70	Accepted
12.	I also teach reading with vernacular sounds	60	2.18	1.09	Rejected
13.	I am knowledgeable in making use of only three to four methods.	60	3.65	1.83	Accepted
14.	I am sometimes confused in making choice of methods in teaching reading skills.	60	3.35	1.68	Accepted
15.	I lack deep knowledge in most of the methods in teaching reading skills.	60	3.28	1.64	Accepted
Grand total mean			2.68		Accepted

The result in table 3 revealed that in item 11, only I, IV, VIII and IX had mean range of 2.98 to 3.39 which is above the cut-off point mean of 2.50 and the others had mean scores ranged from 1.12 to

2.11 below the cut-off mean of 2.50. This indicated that teachers only make use of look and say method, initial teaching alphabet, the whole language method and pupils' reading aloud and others repeat

method. In the same table, it also revealed that item 13 to 15 had mean range of 3.35 to 3.65 except item 12 that had mean score of 2.18. Based on the grand total mean score of 2.68 which is above the cut-off point mean of 2.50, it is shown that teachers have challenges of making choice of methods in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness.

Table 4: Teachers mean responses on the challenges of provision of instructional materials they encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools.

S/N	Item statement	N	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
16.	Lack of print materials, i.e books, journals, newspapers, story books, magazines etc.	60	3.17	1.58	Accepted
17.	Lack of audio materials, i.e radio, telephone, audio tape, language laboratory etc.	60	4.18	2.09	Accepted
18.	Lack of audio visual materials, i.e video tape, films, television etc.	60	4.52	2.26	Accepted
19.	Lack of visual materials, i.e chalks, graphs, pictures, objects	60	3.68	1.84	Accepted
20.	Lack of projected and non-projected materials, i.e overhead projectors slide, projectors, models etc.	60	3.28	1.64	Accepted
Grand total mean			4.04		Accepted

The result in table 4 revealed that all the items had mean range of 3.17 to 4.61. This range is above the minimum cut-off point which is 2.50 therefore, all the items stand accepted. With a grand total mean of 4.04 which is also above the cut-off point mean score of 2.50, it indicates that all the teachers are of the view that provision of instructional materials are challenges they face in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study revealed that inadequate facilities in public primary schools such as lack of library, literature books, magazine, story books, desks, tables, are major challenges teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness. It could be deduced from the findings that most public primary schools in Bayelsa State do not have library and other facilities that make teaching and learning of reading effective. This finding is in consonance with the view of Unoh (1983) that most Nigerian primary schools lack facilities in teaching reading especially library and conducive classrooms. Otong (2002), views in line with the findings that only few schools effectively introduce their pupils to school library. It is based on these challenges teachers encounter in

Research Question 4: What are the challenges of provision of instructional materials teachers encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools?

teaching reading that negatively influence pupils' reading effectiveness.

This study further revealed that large class size is a major challenge confronting teachers in teaching reading skills that negatively influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools. The findings also showed that teachers always encounter excessive noise making and rowdiness in class; uses part of their lesson period in controlling the class; children have difficulty to pay attention and concentrate in class and children are frequently absent in class. The findings is in line with the view of Bascia (2003) that large class size make monitoring of pupils attendance very difficult, thus encouraging learners' absenteeism, and the quality of feedback to pupils' become very low, thus making teaching and learning process ineffective.

This study also revealed that making choice of methods is a challenge in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness. From the finding, it was deduced that teachers are familiar and make use of few methods in teaching reading skills such as look-and-say method, initial teaching alphabets, the whole language method and pupils' read aloud and others. It also revealed that teachers do not have deep knowledge of the methods and are also confused in making choice of methods to teach reading skills. These findings also corroborate with

the findings of Samuel and Myrtle (2013) which revealed that teachers used the look-and-say sentence method, look-and-say-whole-word method, phonic method, making pupils' to read aloud in turns while others repeat. The view of Ikoh (2004) is in line with the findings too, stating that majority of the teachers in our schools do not know the methods of teaching reading skills to children.

The findings of this study also revealed that lack of provision of instructional materials is a challenge teachers' encounter in teaching reading skills that influence pupils' reading effectiveness in public primary schools in Bayelsa State. This finding is in line with the finding of Chepkuru (2004) and Onchera (2013) cited in Omuna, Onchera and Kimutai (2016), that may schools are not able to provide a variety of instructional resources needed for English reading skills. This implies that lack of instructional materials in schools is a great challenge encountered by teachers and this deficiency negatively influences the reading effectiveness of pupils' in public primary schools.

Conclusion

Reading is the bedrock of learning in which the learning of every other subject evolves. It is the fundamental of acquiring knowledge. When a child has deficiency in reading, that child becomes frustrated in school. Teaching reading is an herculean task of the teacher. Teachers are bedeviled with myriad of challenges which makes teaching reading skills difficult and consequently, have negative effects on pupils' ability to read effectively. Some of the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching reading skills ranged from lack of facilities, problem of making choice of methods, large class size, lack of instructional materials and so on.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of the study, the researchers recommend that:

1. The over-admission of pupils by school head teachers should be curtailed to reduce class size.
2. Head teachers should align with ministry of education, parents and NGOs to provide adequate facilities and instructional materials for all public schools.
3. Government and stakeholders should equip all public primary schools with adequate facilities and libraries.
4. Government and stakeholders should provide instructional materials in teaching reading skills and also create enabling environment for improvisation.
5. Teachers should endeavor to improvise instructional materials.
6. In-service training should be organized for all teachers in public primary schools in form of workshops, conferences and seminars as regards methods of teaching reading skills.
7. Parent, Teachers' Association (PTA) should also assist in providing books, reading materials for children.
8. State government and stakeholders should make provision for funding public primary schools in every yearly budget in Bayelsa State.
9. Government, stakeholders and proprietors should employ more teachers and build more classrooms to reduce class sizes.

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