

**EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING USE OF ENGLISH/
TECHNICAL ENGLISH AMONG NATIONAL DIPLOMA AND HIGHER NATIONAL
DIPLOMA STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS**

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Abstract

In the bid to set Nigeria on a sound footing for technological advancement, government has enunciated policies and established science and technology based institutions one of such is the polytechnics. The polytechnic is strategic to government's desire to lurch and sustain Nigeria on the technological platform. This feat cannot be achieved without appropriately structuring events in the classroom towards meeting the goals for which the polytechnics were established which is the teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English respectively which is taught as a cognate course with the aim of equipping students with English language skills that they can use in their professions and daily interaction with the society at large. This paper, explores strategies such as pedagogical strategy and affective strategy as approaches that could be employed by the Use of English /Technical English teacher to effectively teach Use of English/Technical as a service course to students at the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels in Nigeria polytechnics; and also management strategy which could be used by the school management or government to ensure that the right structures are put in place to provide for quality delivery. The paper concludes that when the right strategies and structures are put in place students' performance in general will improve and recommends that the Use of English/Technical English teachers, the government and NBTE should each play their role in improving the polytechnic system.

Keywords: Pedagogical strategy, Affective strategy, Educational Management strategy, Technological advancement, Use of English/Technical English

Introduction

The world has become a global village through the instrument of technology. Therefore the drive for national development is powered by technology. To this effect, every nation tries to situate or build its education around technology. In the light of this development, Nigeria's quest for technological advancement has seen it enunciate policies and establish institutions to meet its technological needs. The polytechnic is indeed one of such institutions established to cater for Nigeria's technological needs. In establishing the polytechnics and other technical or vocational and technology institutions, the National Policy on Education (2014) (which is the nation's policy guideline regulating education in Nigeria) clearly spelt out among their goals in articles 10 (a) that "Government appreciate the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion..." It should be noted that the language the policy intended to promote were Nigeria's indigenous languages. However, because of Nigeria's ethnic plurality and its attendant consequences, which are the constant feud it generates among Nigerians essentially owing to their allegiance to their ethnic groups, English emerged to dominate every aspect of Nigeria's national life.

English language serves as the medium of instruction in the polytechnics and it is the only major language used for reading, writing and speaking. Use of English/Technical English, is taught as a cognate course in the polytechnics. The objective of teaching General or Technical English as contained in the General Studies Course Specification for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) Use of English Language 1 (National Board for Technical Education [NBTE], 2017), programs is:

"To provide the student with the necessary language skills which will enable him cope effectively with the challenges of his course, to use English effectively in the practice of his chosen profession as well as interact with others in the society...." (p.8)

Thus, to achieve this stated goal or objective, this paper aims to highlight some methods or strategies to be employed to achieve effective teaching and learning. According to Dorgu (as cited in Moses et al., 2018) method of teaching denotes:

Strategy of which a teacher delivers his/her subject matter to the learner based on Some predetermined instructional objectives in order to promote learning in the students. For a teacher to effectively adopt any teaching method, some factors must be

considered the implementation of any curriculum depends on to a large extent on the availability of various method of teaching. (p.5)

From the quotation above, it is clear that a lot is expected of the teachers teaching Use of English/Technical English in the polytechnics in Nigeria.

Effective Strategies for Teaching and Learning of General English or Technical English among National Diploma and Higher Diploma Students in Nigerian Polytechnics

The curriculum for Use of English/Technical English was carefully designed with topics which embody Grammar, Lexis and Structure, Communication and Literature. These topics are spread over two semesters for departments taking General English and one semester in the case of departments taking Technical English. The first semester is essentially designed to keep students abreast with the nature of the English words and the implications of its use in context, as well as acquaint them with the grammatical/syntactic rules governing the various combinational possibilities of words to form sentences, etc. The second semester on the other hand, is designed to bring students to terms with the diverse forms or strategies of written communication and help them to perfect each of these strategies for the overall benefit of improved communication. In addition, Literature is also taught in either of the semester for both National and Higher National Diploma Programs which aim is to encourage students to “appreciate literary works in English” (NBTE,2017, p.14).This will help the students to develop critical and analytical minds necessary to make sound judgment in their professional callings and interaction. All these have no doubt placed English language in a strategic position as a major driver of the general polytechnic curriculum.

Hence, to effectively achieve success in teaching and learning Use of English/Technical English, certain strategies could be employed by the teachers. The term learning strategy according to Weinstein and Mayer (1986) ‘denotes thoughts and behaviours the learner employs with the intension of acquiring knowledge and improving task performance.’ This means that the learner has to position him/herself both emotionally and physically to acquire knowledge. In their article, *Creative strategies for effective English language teaching in large classes*, Shehu & Tafda (2016, p.74) discussed three strategies which they adopted from Locastro (2001). These strategies are, the pedagogical strategy, affective strategy and Educational management strategy. They categorized the problems of teaching in large classes into three: those that are pedagogical in nature, those that are caused by affective factors and those that are management related. This categorization has been adopted in this work and

will be discussed in the following paragraphs based on the context of teaching Use of English/ Technical English to students in Nigerian polytechnics.

A. Pedagogical Strategies

The first strategy they considered in their work was the pedagogical strategy. According to their work, pedagogical strategy are those methods or technics a teacher employs in his class to be able to organize his/her class and gain control. They explained that due to the peculiarity of large classes in Nigeria higher institutions, which polytechnics not an exception, the general assumption is that teaching a topic like reading in such context will be a herculean task but teachers can work out strategies that will aid them overcome this challenge and still organize their class (es) and teach well. According to Wang (as cited in Shehu & Tafida, 2016, p. 74) in handling the challenges associated with “teaching English reading in a large a class, [attention should be geared towards] strengthening communication and cooperation between teachers and learners, and also by promoting creative teaching, organizing learner centered activities...”. The pedagogical strategy is all about the teacher’s role in ensuring that teaching and learning is effectively and efficiently carried out. The following strategies could be employed by the teacher:

i. The Setting of Class Rules

In discussing strategies of teaching in large classes, Shehu & Tafida (2016, p.75) suggested that the first thing a teacher should do is to ensure that rules are set of acceptable group behaviour as it relates to speaking in class, how students come in and go out of the class, how papers and materials are to be handled and distributed in the class, the time the lecture starts and ends etc. When these rules are established it will go a long in ensuring class control and concentration from the students which will enhance learning.

ii. Cordial Teacher/Student Relationship

Secondly, they also stated that it is imperative to take note of the relationship between the teacher and the students as it can either affect the teaching and learning positively by facilitating learning or negatively by hindering learning. The Use of English/Technical English teacher should ensure that he/she exhibits confidence and technical know-how in the course as this will earn him/her respect from the students. The teacher should also make efforts to get know the names of some of the students, establish eye contact with the students while teaching, move in the space available and walk towards the students while talking (Shehu & Tafida 2016, p. 75). According to Xu (2007) in his article *Problems and strategies of teaching English in large classes in the people’s Republic of China*, mentioned that in a

survey carried out by Senior (as cited in Xu, 200, para.3), a lot of teachers held that a good language class should comprise of “an atmosphere of warmth, mutual support, an absence of fear, mutual respect, a feeling of trust” amongst others. He concluded that the teachers considered a class “good”, irrespective of the students’ performance, if it had a positive atmosphere. This clearly shows that the atmosphere the Use of English/ Technical English teacher creates in his/ her class (es) will either motivate or discourage the students from having interest in learning the course. The success of the teaching and learning sessions rests a lot on the atmosphere the teacher creates. If the teacher creates a fearful and threatening environment where the students sees him/her as a traitor, surely effective teaching will not take place.

iii. Engage Students’ Early on the Material/Topic of Discussion

The third thing they suggested to do after the issue of class management and control has been addressed, is to ensure that within the first fifteen to twenty minutes of a class, students are engaged with material or the topic of the day. To achieve this, they suggested that the lecture could be segmented and organized into sequence that will be clear to the students. The teacher should also ensure that when important points are made oral and written signals should be used in such a way that the students will understand that it is an emphasis on important information, key concepts, or a change of topic the topic. The teacher should be able to involve some creative ways in making his/her class interesting at the same time engaging to guide against non-stop lecturing and loss of interest by the students. Another way to ensure students learning and active participation in class, is to encourage them to work out information and answer questions. (Shehu&Tafida, 2016, p.75).

B. Affective Strategies

The next strategy Shehu and Tafida (2016, p.76) discussed in their article is the affective strategies. According to them, “Students’ attitudes and ways of thinking can deeply influence language acquisition because internal barriers are erected when learners are poorly motivated, bored, or anxious.” This shows that students’ behaviour and thoughts plays a major role in their learning process. Students who are confident and motivated will tend to learn better than students who have low self-esteem, are fearful or less motivated. According to British council (2020), “Affective strategies are learning strategies concerned with managing emotions, both negative and positive.’ They further explain that ‘a positive affective environment helps learning in general.’ This definition has clearly shown that emotions have a role to play in the teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English in Nigeria polytechnics. Citing Stevick in their work, Shehu & Tafida, (2016) posits

that "...language learning success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes inside and between people in the classroom" (p76) they further buttressed this point by stating that "anxiety about their academic work may make some students strive harder but in other cases it could lead less confident students to avoid classes altogether." They concluded that it is needful to pay close attention to the way students think and behave whether positively or negatively when acquiring knowledge. In the same vein, in teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English among ND and HND students in Nigerian Polytechnics, the students' thoughts and behaviours should also be put into consideration when they are acquiring knowledge through the following affective strategies:

- i. Students should be given Pastoral Support as they need to feel Belonging

For students to learn effectively and efficiently according to Shehu and Tafida (2016, p.76), they need to feel supported, safe and secured in their learning environment. The teachers of Use of English/Technical English should be willing to provide the needed academic support to students who need their assistance. It is common for students in a large class to feel they are not being noticed which could affect them psychologically by making them unserious or even become truants. Teachers of Use of English/Technical English should take class attendance seriously as this could checkmate such students. They should also ensure that they assess the students frequently. As earlier mentioned under pedagogical strategies, the atmosphere a teacher creates in his class will either motive learning or discourage it. Teachers of Use of English /Technical English should try and develop a healthy rapport with their students.

- ii. Students should be assured of Safety and Security

Secondly, students need to be assured of the safety and security of their lives and properties while in school. When there is insecurity within the school or its environs the minds of the student will not be stable for effective learning. In the case of the recent insecurity caused by Boko Haram insurgency which has threatened educational institutions and has caused a lot of unrest and instability thereby affecting the quality of learning as the assurance of support and safety is compromised (Shehu and Tafida, 2016, p. 76). The school management should ensure they employ competent security outfits for their school. This will give both the teachers and students a sense of security.

- iii. Teachers should intentionally involve/ engage students in their class

According to Shehu and Tafida (2016) “students are more motivated when they are made to feel part of a learning community. When they see learning as a team effort rather than a competitive solo race they are engaged in.”(76) The feeling the students have of being taken along by the teacher when he/she engages them in in-class group work, debates and discussions on issues that they can relate with which helps to enhance their learning, thereby affecting their learning positively. In teaching the literature aspect of the course Use of English /Technical English, the teacher could pick some students to act out some parts of a play or assign students to read out passages in a novel. By doing these not only will the students have a sense of belonging, especially if the teacher selects those who like to sit at the back of the class or those who are not outspoken, but they will also enjoy the class.

C. Educational Management Strategies

The third strategy discussed by Shehu and Tafida (2016, p.77) is the Educational Management Strategies. They stated that in planning educational management strategies, factors such as “well trained teachers, adequate structures, curricular alignment, improved instructional materials and innovative technologies” that enhance teaching and learning must be considered. We shall be looking at some of these factors as follows:

i. There should be Adequate Classrooms /Lecture halls

The first point they considered in their article is the classroom or lecture hall which is the physical structure where learning takes place. They are of the opinion that this should be the first point to consider because an adequate and conducive learning environment will enhance teaching and learning. Unfortunately, what is obtained in most higher institutions in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. According to Oribor (as cited in Shehu and Tafida, 2016)

Fewer than half of universities use public address systems in overcrowded lecture halls and when available the epileptic power supply makes them redundant. Both in terms of the quality and quantity, a lot needs to be done to tackle the problem of inadequate learning resources such as classroom space, desks, textbooks and other materials.(p.77)

The above quotation depicts the inadequacy of resources and structures that needs to be set up to have a successful teaching and learning in higher institutions in Nigeria which the polytechnic is not an exception. Although there is improvement in the construction of more structures in higher institutions in Nigeria, with polytechnics not an exception, through the

intervention of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), such structures needs to be supervised to ensure that quality and standard materials are used to ensure long lasting structures; and renovations of such structures should be made from time to time. Also other educational resource materials such as chairs and tables for classrooms, good and standard seats for lecture halls, white boards and overhead projectors and public address system should be adequately provided.

ii. Availability of well-trained teaching staff

After setting up the physical structures and ensuring that educational resources needed for the smooth running of higher institutions are put in place, the next important aspect they considered in their article is the availability of well trained teachers for effective teaching and learning to take place. They explained that the need for more trained teachers in higher institutions in Nigeria has been necessitated by the rapid increase in the population of students which has led some institutions into hiring part-time and under qualified teachers (Shehu and Tafida, 2016, p. 77). The polytechnics management should ensure that qualified teachers and enough number of teachers are employed to service the Use of English/Technical English. The problem currently in most polytechnics is not the well trained staff but lack of enough teachers to cater for the large number of students in the departments Use of English/Technical teachers are servicing. Based on a Needs assessment carried out by the Nigerian government in 2012 on universities, as stated by Shehu and Tafida (2016, p.77) the result showed a great disparity in the ratio of teaching staff to students ranging from 1:100 to 1:144. In the case of Use of English courses the said the ratio could rise up to 1:500 or more. Due to the nature of large classes in Nigerian higher institutions, a ratio of 1:300 up to 1:500 or more is what is obtainable in our polytechnics. They concluded that in looking at Educational management strategies, the needs to pay attention on the recruitment, retention, development, and proper remuneration of talented teachers in adequate number to meet demand is essential.

iii. The curricular alignment

After the issues of adequate structures and well-trained teaching staff has been addressed, the next area to consider is the curriculum. The Use of English/Technical English curriculum should be tailored towards meeting the students' needs based on their course of study. It is also important that the curriculum be reviewed periodically to align students with current realities and emerging technological advancement.

The Values of Teaching and Learning of Use of English/Technical English in the Polytechnic

The effective teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English in the polytechnic is of immense benefit not only to the individual student but to the government as well. Therefore, this paper distinguishes between the benefits to the government (which is tagged **extrinsic benefits**) and that to the individual (which is tagged **intrinsic benefits**).

Extrinsic Benefits

From the extrinsic standpoint, government has enunciated several policies aimed at positioning the polytechnic sector towards realizing the goals for which it was established. For instance in articulating the philosophy and goals of education, article 6 of the National Policy on Education (4th edition) states that:

“For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria’s national goals, education has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.”

Similarly in emphasizing the importance of education, article 9 (a) of the national Policy on Education (4th edition) states that:

“Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; and fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an education revolution.”

In both article 6 and 9, government recognizes the importance of education in transforming the citizenry and indeed the nation at large. Consequently, education has to be the hub around which the nation’s development and survival is anchored. Government also takes cognizance of the role of science and technology as the pivot of Nigeria’s development.

Therefore, the establishment of polytechnics was a direct reaction to meeting the nation’s technological needs. Consequently government captured the goals of polytechnic education in article 80 (a-e) of the National Policy on Education (4th Edition). These goals are:

- a) Provide full or part-time course of instruction and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management, leading to the production of trained manpower;
- b) Provide the technological knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria;
- c) Give training and impart the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self-reliant;

- d) Train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man; and
- e) Give exposure on professional studies in the technologies.

These goals no doubt encapsulate government's desire to set Nigeria on a sound technological platform in order to meet her developmental needs. Overall, these are the laudable policies and proof of government's intention (perhaps not commitment) to use education as the basis for achieving national cohesion and technological transformation.

However, the success of these policies is determined by the events in the classroom. That means the quality of teaching and learning enhances the realization of the policies. It is perhaps in recognition of this claim that the goal of teaching English in the polytechnic, as contained in the General Studies Course Specification for ND and HND as cited earlier, is tailored.

Therefore, English Language is a very important instrument in the shaping and realization of government's policies in education in general and polytechnic education in particular. To this effect, its effective teaching and learning in the polytechnic is of immeasurable benefit to the government.

Intrinsic Benefits

From the intrinsic perspective, the effective teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English is also of immense benefit to the individual. In discussing this, it is perhaps instructive to refer to the goal of teaching language General or Technical in the polytechnic as contained in the General Studies Course Specification for ND and HND, cited in page 1 of this paper. The goal has streamlined three critical areas; "to provide the student with the necessary language skills which enable him cope effectively with:

- i. The challenges of his course;
- ii. To use English effectively in the practice of his chosen profession;
- iii. As well as interact with others in the society.

These three critical areas underscore the importance of English in the lives of the polytechnic students and therefore the need for its effective teaching and learning. From these three critical areas, it is obvious that the polytechnic student needs it first and foremost to understand the demands of his course. The instruction in his course is being delivered in English and where he does not have sufficient knowledge of the rudiment and functions or

use of the language, he might not be able to cope with the challenges of his course. At this point it is important to share practical experience in the classroom. For about fifteen years of service in the polytechnic, teaching Use of English; Communication in English and Literary Appreciation, when the best students in English as a course is compare with those of others courses, it has been observed that all students who scored higher grades in English also had top grades in their various courses of study. The implication is that their understanding of English has helped or influenced their overall understanding or assimilation of their various courses. To this effect, the teaching and learning of English is of huge value to the polytechnic student.

In the second critical area which is “to use English effectively in the practice of his chosen profession”, the word “effectively” underlines efficiency. That means using English efficiently (not partially) in the practice of his chosen profession. This part does not only project English as being useful to the student within the four walls of the classroom but outside of it as well (especially upon graduation). The implication is that upon graduation the student becomes an applicant or employee (in public or private sector, or self-employed) and therefore fully integrated into the society. In the society the official language of transaction is English. If the student is not proficient in English, he might not be able to effectively practice his profession, hence the need for effective teaching and learning of English.

The third critical area, “interact with others in the society” is broader and encompasses the other two. Fundamentally, it sees English as an agent of interaction or communication. That means for student to effectively survive in the society and the world at large, the knowledge of English is vital. This according to Adegbite (2010, p.18) is because;

English is the major official language of the country. Apart from administration and education, English is the dominant language of the mass media, business transactions, politics, advertising, the courts, science and technology and so on. It serves intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic and international functions within the nation.

Furthermore, English is an international language that has been spreading rapidly across the globe in the last four centuries. It is indeed the language of access. (Awonusi in Dadzie & Awonusi, 2014, p.32). Because of its growing influence across the globe, one is tempted to ascribe to it the world’s “super language”. Therefore, English plays a fundamental role within and outside the country. As a result the student has to be proficient in English in order to survive.

From the various governmental policies and goals documented above, it is obvious that the polytechnic student is not only being trained to become a local entrepreneur or figure but a national and also international figure. As such he needs the full complement of a language that encapsulates his thoughts and allows him to express himself effectively and efficiently, and be understood. However, one factor that stands in the way of the realization of these policy objectives to make the polytechnic an institution for training technocrats and its students are the events in the classroom. The classroom remains the only place where policies could be incubated and hatched. So, it is the place where appropriate structure needs to be put in place. Structure, in terms of curriculum development, employment of the right personnel, admission of the right students, and provision of the right teaching/learning facilitates and so on. Therefore, the teaching and learning of English in the polytechnics can be hampered by certain structural defects, such as mentioned above.

Challenges to Teaching and Learning of English in the Polytechnic

In the preceding paragraph we have been told that sound as governmental policies and goals concerning the polytechnic education are, they cannot be achieved unless events in the classroom are appropriately structured to guarantee its success. Such events are built around the curriculum, personnel and facilities. This paper sees these events as impediments and grouped them into two categories, which it tagged: Core and Peripheral factors.

The Core Factor

This factor is essentially a curriculum based factor. The curriculum forms an aggregate of courses to be offered by an educational institutions and how they (the courses) should be studied. The curriculum of the polytechnic is designed and regulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). As the regulatory body for the polytechnics, the NBTE designed the English curriculum to meet the objective or goal for the teaching of English in the polytechnic (cited in page 1 of this paper). However, the curriculum for English as it is today is fraught with what this paper refers to as; Operational Void and Administrative Dysfunction.

Operational Void

English along with service or cognate courses like Geography, Economics, Citizenship and so on are in the General Studies Department. So the NBTE compiled their curricular in one booklet titled General Studies Course Specification. In a nutshell, the English Curriculum for Pre-National Diploma (PND), National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND)

are contained in the General Studies Course Specification. As a result it is expected that no English curriculum should appear in any other form or in any other curriculum for other courses in the polytechnics. Unfortunately that is not the case.

English courses are either duplicated or reformatted in other courses curricular. For instance in the curriculum of the Office Technology Management Department, courses like Business Communication and Technical English exist. These courses are also reflected in the curriculum for English in the General Studies Department but not in the form and order in which they appeared in other curricular. The striking point or the point of contention is not the duplication or reformatting of English courses in other curricular but the manner in which it is done.

Therefore, in cases where two curricular exist on the same subject, the NBTE as a regulatory body should have included a proviso or provisos to clarify any form of ambiguity that might rise, in order to eliminate any form of operational gap such ambiguity might create. For instance we do not know for sure whether the various English curricular are supposed to operate independently (in which case all are applicable and valid therefore to be operated concurrently) or that the existence of one nullifies the other (in which case one can be operational and other should not). It is this kind of lacuna in the curriculum that creates the kind of confusion that exists in the system today. For instance, some departments within the same school have different approaches to English. Some offer it in all the semester of both the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma programs, some others offer in the three semester at the National Diploma level and all the four semesters of the Higher National Diploma while others offer English in two semesters in ND and two in HND.

Another problem created by the gap or void in the curriculum is in the area of credit hour allocation. While the General Studies English curriculum has two credit hour load for both the ND and HND programs, English in the other curricular have between three and four credits hours. in fact none has two credit hours like the General Studies English curriculum. Although this disparity in credit hour allocation compels one to believe that the entire curricular of English are meant to be taking concurrently. That means the departments that have additional curriculum of English are supposed to offer GNS English in addition to that which appeared in their curriculum but there are no provisos to that effect and that leaves the various Head of Departments with the decision to offer GNS English or not; the decision that is most of the time subject to abuse.

Administrative Dysfunctions

While operational void relates to the lacuna or void created by the curriculum to the extent at the smooth operation of such curriculum is impeded, administrative dysfunction relates to the bureaucratic malfunction that challenges the validity and reliability of the curriculum. The curriculum is a highly valid document in any teaching and learning process. Since the human society is dynamic, teaching and learning are supposed to be structured to cope with such dynamism. Consequently, the curriculum as a guiding document should undergo periodic review to constantly bring in turn with the dynamism of the society so that teaching and learning can be more adaptive to the needs of the society. Sadly, the regulatory body of the curriculum in the polytechnic (NBTE) has failed to live up to its responsibility in terms of ensuring constant review. Specifically, the NBTE has not carried out a review of the General Studies Curriculum since 1999. This situation no doubt has made the teaching and learning of English in the polytechnic very cumbersome. It leaves the English teacher not only with the task of selecting the appropriate methodology for his teaching and adapting his instructions to the needs of his students but also tinkering with the curriculum in a manner that makes teaching and learning more meaningful. This brings so much pressure to bear on the English teacher, a pressure he certainly does not need if the teaching and learning of English in the polytechnic is to remain meaningful.

It is therefore incumbent on the NBTE as the regulatory body to ensure that the curriculum is reviewed periodically to meet the needs or demands of the contemporary society or world. The review is important in order to ensure that our students are taught knowledge that are already outdated and at variance with the demands of the contemporary society. Teaching and learning can only be meaningful where the guide (which is the curriculum is designed to accommodate the needs of the students in a modern society. We must not loose track of the fact that students are products of the society and will return to the society upon the completion of their course of study. Therefore if knowledge is not adapted to cater for their needs, the desired changes in behaviour (which is what education is supposed to create) will be elusive and the students will in turn be burdens on the society. So if the teacher is to deliver instructions that are up to date and the students learn issues that are contemporary in the modern society or world, the curriculum must undergo the desired review as and at when due.

Peripheral Factor

The peripheral factors affecting the teaching and learning of English in the polytechnic deal with issues that are outside the curriculum. Such issues relates to the operators or manager of the curriculum on one hand and the target of the curriculum on the other.

Operators/Managers of the Curriculum

The core operators of the curriculum are the managers of the various departments or heads of departments. As heads, they interpret the various policy frameworks for their department and students. As managers they determine what subjects their students offer and how they are offered based on the guides provided by the curriculum. In reviewing the curriculum for English in the polytechnic, voids, gaps or lacuna created in it (the curriculum) were discovered. Such gaps are usually exploited by especially the managers of the system to abuse the system. Most Heads of Departments are already antagonistic towards English, which they see as burdens to their students and will spare no effort to have it expunged from their curriculum or have the number of times taken reduced to the barest minimum. In fact, many of these heads have never hidden their disgust for English which they perceive as avenue to “fail” their students. They have consistently demonized English lecturers as if they (English lecturers) employed themselves or included English in the curriculum of the polytechnics.

The presence of various English curricular and their inherent contradictions create perfect excuses for the heads of departments contrary about the teaching and learning of English. For instance, some departments offer English only at the Diploma level while others within the same school offer it both at the National and Higher National Diploma levels. For such departments who do not offer it at the Higher National level, their heads are quick to point out that it is not reflected in their departmental curricular. However, what we find irreconcilable is for certain departments within the same school to offer English and some others refusing to. Should there be different or varying requirements or standards (concerning English) for students of the same school? These are clarifications the regulators of the polytechnic sector should make in order to clear these grey areas and save the system from systematic abuse from operators.

Another notable abuse observed is quite a brazen one. Some head of departments go as far as allocating English courses to their staff that do not have any form of qualification in English. In their arguments, such head of departments always claimed that the course taken by their staff is titled “Business Communication? However, the content of the “Business Communication” are “correspondence, writing memos, essays and other forms of written communication”. Perhaps these heads of departments perceived that these aspects of written communication are not technical enough to attract technical personnel to handle. Or that they are blinded by their desires for economic benefits to “shortchange” their students. Usually

those who handle “Business Communication” at the regular program are given the course in the part-time program. Since the part-time program attracts extra-financial benefit, the heads of departments will prefer to keep the course in their departments rather than release them to some “gullible” English lecturers. In the whole of this their thoughts are never with the students who they claim to be protecting.

The Students’ in Nigeria polytechnics

Students of the polytechnic are targets or beneficiaries of the curriculum. As beneficiaries, the teaching and learning of English is invaluable to them (the students). The objective of teaching English as contained in the General Studies Course Specification for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs (cited in page 1 of this paper) is indeed a testimony to the benefit of English to the polytechnic student. Additionally, the goal of General Studies as contained in the same document (General Studies Course Specification for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs) also alludes to the importance of teaching and learning of English. The goal is; to produce a citizenry of its role in a wider world, produce of its antecedents and prepared for effective leadership role in diversified fields in the society, thereby ensuring a positive contribution to national integration and greatness.

Therefore, the teaching and learning of English creates students who are not only technically proficient (able to relate and interact with people within and outside their communities or country, promote their invention(s) as well as challenge authorities whom they doubt) but students who are able to effectively manage or direct the affairs of others.

Hence, English is such an important language that Olaoye (2009, p.80) describes in the following terms:

Today, English is the lamp which the youths need in order to travel the educational tunnel. Government reaches out to its teeming multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population through the English medium. It is the language of crisis management, be it political, religious or ethnic crisis.

Owing to the importance of English in the life of the individual and nation, the polytechnic students cannot but pay attention to its teaching and learning. However, like their lecturers, the students are themselves antagonistic to the teaching and learning of the English language. In fact they perceive English as a borrowed course which they do not need (yet has been prescribed by the curriculum). Their attitude towards English is so abysmal that they barely attend English lectures (except the lecturer insists) and when they are given exercises or tasks

in the English course, they always complain of insufficient time to attend to the needs of their main courses. If the polytechnic students had their ways, they would have the English course expunged from their curricular (yet their general use of it is pathetically appalling).

In fairness to the students, their apathy towards English is perhaps the product of some kind of brainwash by their departmental lecturers who make them believe that English is a burden. The situation is not also helped by the English language lecturers themselves. Most at times the English lecturers fail to make the students see the benefits of teaching the course by not linking the objectives of the course to their various course(s) of study. Once the students cannot see the connection or link between their various course(s) of study and English, they become disinterested. Personal experiences in the classroom have shown that, initially there is the apathy towards English as soon as the English lecturer enters a class for the first time but once the lecturer establishes the connection between the topics in the English course outline with the students' course(s) of study, their interest in English as a course is rekindled. Therefore, in most cases the students' attitude towards English is usually borne out of ignorance; ignorance not helped by the attitude of their departmental lecturers as well as the English language lecturers themselves.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that the polytechnics play a very dominant role in Nigeria's quest for technological advancement. It is equally undeniable that Use of English/Technical English plays a fundamental role in positioning the polytechnics towards meeting the various policy frameworks by government in order to meet its technological needs. This is on account of the fact that English is the only medium of instruction in Nigerian schools, it is the language of government, intra and inter-ethnic communication, trade and commerce, judiciary and so on.. Therefore proficiency in it is an important criterion for the polytechnic student. In the same vein, its teaching and learning in the polytechnics is equally vital if the polytechnic student is to achieve general success in all the courses they are undertaken. When strategies such as pedagogical strategies and affective strategies are employed by their Use of English/Technical English teachers, they are sure to attain all round success in their studies; and with Educational management strategies in place, the whole system will be well structured to enable both the teaching and learning to flow effortlessly. However, the teaching and learning of English in the polytechnics is currently mired by certain constraints of the curriculum and its operators. It therefore requires concerted efforts on the part of the curriculum regulators of the polytechnic (NBTE), the government, and the operators of the curriculum including the Use of English/Technical teachers themselves to strengthen the

teaching and learning of Use of English /Technical English and ultimately, the polytechnic sector.

Recommendations

Having identified the various challenges militating against the effective teaching and learning of Use of English/Technical English in the polytechnic sector, the following recommendations were made to remedy the situation.

1. The National Board for Technical Education (the only body regulating the polytechnic education in Nigeria) is too large because it is also in charge of all technical institutions in the country. If the polytechnic sector is given a commission, the commission will be able to effectively manage the sector such that some of the problems identified in this paper, will be checked or reduced to the barest minimum. For instance, it will be able to review its various curricular as and at when due, monitor compliance and so forth.
In the absence of a commission, the NBTE as the regulatory body should set up feedback mechanisms, to elicit the responses of lecturers towards the curriculum or any other matter that might improve the sector.
2. The heads of departments should set aside their personal interest for the overall development of the system. They should realize that as manager of their departments, it is their duty to ensure compliance with the curriculum and where there are anomalies they should work towards correcting (and not exploit) them.
3. The Use of English/Technical English teacher should realize that he/she shares in the success or failure of the teaching and learning of the course. He/she should therefore adapt his/her instruction to suit the demands of the department(s) he/she teaches. He/she should let the students see the need for the course and motivate them towards learning and paying attention to it.
4. The NBTE should radically overhaul the Use of English/Technical English curriculum or compress it such that it is reduced to at least two semesters at the National Diploma level and two semesters at the Higher National Diploma level. This way it will address the complaints that General or Technical English is more dominating than other departmental courses.

5. Lastly, the government should supervise and ensure that funds released for intervention in higher institutions through the TETFund is used appropriately and standard structures are constructed and renovated periodically; quality resources are ensured and materials bought.

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