TEACHERS' RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NIGERIA CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the field of English language teaching in Nigeria has faced numerous challenges such as limited resources, lack of support from the government and constantly changing curriculum. However, despite these obstacles, teachers have continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience in their efforts to provide quality education to their students. This paper attempts to examine teachers' resilience in the

Introduction

The teaching of English in Nigeria is fraught with challenges such as inadequate teaching resources, large class sizes, unstable education policies, and socio-economic constraints. Despite these obstacles, many English language teachers continue to demonstrate resilience by adapting to difficult conditions, employing creative teaching strategies, and remaining committed to their profession. Resilience, in this context, refers to the ability of teachers to withstand and navigate professional hardships while maintaining their effectiveness in the classroom. Understanding the resilience of English language teachers is critical for improving teacher retention,

face of challenges in English language teaching in Nigeria context. The paper provides insights into how teachers in Nigeria navigate the challenges and maintain their resilience while teaching English in the classroom. The paper will inform future teacher training programs and policy decisions makers to support English language teachers in improving teaching and learning resources in order to improve the quality of English language education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning, Resilience, Teachers' Resilience, Challenges, English Language Teaching.

enhancing student learning outcomes, and informing policies that better support educators.

This paper is a literature review paper that examines existing research on the resilience of English language teachers in Nigeria. It explores the factors that contribute to teacher resilience, including personal coping mechanisms, institutional support systems, professional development opportunities, and community involvement. By analyzing previous studies and relevant academic literature, this paper aims to synthesize current knowledge, highlight common challenges, and identify gaps in research that require further exploration.

As a literature review paper, it adopts a systematic review approach to analyze existing academic research, policy documents, and educational reports related to teacher resilience in Nigeria. Relevant sources are selected from peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and institutional studies to ensure credibility and relevance. The analysis follows a thematic framework, categorizing insights into key themes such as the challenges teachers face, the strategies they employ to cope, and the role of institutional and community support.

By consolidating and evaluating existing knowledge, this literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of teacher resilience in English language teaching in Nigeria. It offers valuable insights into best practices, identifies areas

that need further research, and provides recommendations for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance teacher resilience.

English Language Teaching in Nigeria

English is regarded as a second language in Nigeria because of the many important roles it plays. For example, it is a common language in Nigeria, a language of communication between and among people from different linguistic background. It is also the official language (Lingua Franca) that is, the language of government, the judiciary, of most the mass media, and of commerce. And it is also the language used to interact with the outside world. Perhaps of particular in this discussion is the fact that English is the language of education. Beyond the very elementary level of schooling, English becomes the medium of instruction and a subject in the curriculum.

Language teaching-learning improvement should be of great concern to all those who are responsible for educational planning, administration, and implementation. Indeed, the society in general should be concerned about the quality of language education in schools. One of the fundamental reason for this, is that language is central to learning and to life itself (Boyer, 1996). This may explain why the success of language education is believed to be the success of education generally. And, it is equally true that educational failure is basically a linguistic failure. The point is, the student can learn nothing more valuable in school than a mastery over language (Simmons & Baines, 1998). Language, therefore is not just one of the subjects in the curriculum, it is the essential vehicle for learning all other subjects.

An important implication of all this is that English has to be taught and learned very well. It is important to note that English is not a mother tongue of any ethnic group in Nigeria, and this means that its teaching in schools is not a question of refining a language already known. A significant number of Nigerian children depend on the school to learn English. This has tremendous instructional implications, one of which is the need to give priority attention to the development of oral language competence. Children should be helped to

understand and speak the language first before reading and writing are introduced. In other words, its basic sounds and structures need to be taught. Another important aspect is that emphasis should be placed on teaching the language and not information about the language. This means that practical examples of how the language is used in different contexts have to be provided. That is, situations being taught have to be created to make English learning meaningful and interesting.

Due to its intellectual, emotional, and service-oriented nature, teaching is unquestionably one of the most difficult and complex occupations in the world (Mercer, 2020). As the 'pillars of societies,' teachers must simultaneously be able to 'cope with educational adversities and challenges, know what to teach and how to teach' (Sikma, 2021).This supports the need for a change in focus from the psychology of students to the psychology and emotion of teachers, which gained popularity with the advent of positive psychology (PP), which focused on 'how people flourish' rather than dwelling on 'negative stressors' (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Taking care of teachers' mental health and inner moods is crucial since they bring their own feelings, emotions, and values to the classroom. However, in practice, teaching presents a number of difficulties and setbacks that lead to teacher attrition, demotivation, stress, and burnout. High workloads, a lack of support, a fear of difficulties, poor time management, and an ignorance of how to manage students' behaviour and meet their needs can all contribute to this (Kelly et al., 2018). The reason behind these problems in many countries including Nigeria is the inadequacy of teacher education programs which do not prepare teachers for the reality of their job, its tensions and challenges, and ways to go about such adversities and stay strong. They solely dwell upon developing teachers' pedagogical skills and students' test performance without working on the social and emotional aspects of teaching. That is why, a professional teacher who is technically expert in his/her subject is not able to cope with the emotional stressors of his/her profession efficiently, and hence attrition and burnout occur. Consequently, teacher education programs must take a different approach moving from 'negative stressors' that make problems for teachers to 'positive

factors and emotions' which urge teachers to remain in their profession despite its setbacks. One of the most important constructs that boomed in PP trend is teacher resilience which is defined as a multifaceted, dynamic process comprised of the interaction of personal and contextual resources that permits teachers to bounce back and forth from negative stressors and traumatic events of the field (Mansfield et al., 2016). Resilience generates different positive outcomes for teacher education at the macro level and teachers and students at the micro-level. More specifically, it minimizes teachers' stress and burnout, improves their commitment, job satisfaction, well-being, instructional quality, work enjoyment, motivation, professional identity, retention, self-efficacy, and so forth.

Concept of Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to withstand, adapt and recover from adversity, trauma or stress. Bernshhausen & Cunningham (2001) viewed resilience as one's capability to recover and bounce back when encountered with adversities. In other words, it is the ability to adapt with tough situations and improve one's competence/skill when facing tensions and traumatic experiences (Bobek, 2002). It is a psychological construct in education which can considerably affect teachers and learners (Gu & Day, 2013). It is determined by many factors and influences teachers' attitude, practices, commitment, sense of efficacy, identity, retention, satisfaction and academic performance (Razmjoo & Ayoobiyan, 2019).

Teachers' Resilience

It refers to the ability to cope with, adapt to and recover from the challenges, stresses, and setbacks they face in their professional lives. By fostering resilience, teachers can improve their well-being, job satisfaction and effectiveness in the classroom, ultimately benefitting their students and the education system as a whole. Gu & Day (2013) asserts that teacher resilience is not primarily associated with the capacity to bounce back or recover from highly traumatic experiences and events but, rather, the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers teach. To

perform at their best over an extended period, teachers need to be resilient. Brunetti (2006) defines teacher resilience as an element that helps teachers stay dedicated to teaching, no matter how many obstacles come their way, while Gu and Day (2007) describe it as a teacher's ability to stay in control of challenging circumstances, maintain their dedication to teaching, and also develop professionally. Yonezwa, Jones and Singer (2011) describe teacher resilience as the way in which teachers confront and manage adversity in order to ensure the success of their learners.

Teacher resilience is best illuminated in the positive psychology (PP) trend which highlights how people can thrive and have happier lives (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Instead of negative sides of teaching, PP urges the practitioners to focus on the power of positive emotions like joy, interest, passion, resilience, optimism, and the like to prevent the negative stressors. A resilient teacher, based on this conceptualization, is one who does not fringe when facing tough moments, responds positively to adverse experiences, has more satisfaction with his/her job, has more agency, has a sense of pride and accomplishment, and is competent (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Strategies for Promoting English Language Teachers Resilience

- Professional Development: This offers regular training, workshops, and conferences to enhance teaching skills and knowledge.
- Teacher Wellness: Promote world-life balance, self-care and stress management.
- Positive Feedback: This provides regular, constructive, feedback and recognition
- Collaborative Leadership: It foster a supportive, inclusive and transparent school culture.
- Students-Centred Approach: Emphasize on student-centered learning, empathy and understanding.
- Mental Health Resources: This provides an access to mental health resources, counselling, employees assistance programme.

- Resilience Training: It offers specific on resilience, coping skills and stress management.
- Recognition and Rewards: Celebrate teachers' achievement, milestones and contributions.
- Peer Support: Encourage collaboration, mentoring and peer coaching.
- Reflective Practices: Foster a culture of reflection, self-assessment and growth mind set.
- Autonomy and Ownership: Encourage teachers to take ownership of their teaching practices and curriculum design.

Significance of Teachers' Resilience

Teacher resilience or the ability to stand against the natural stressors and setbacks in teaching as a tough profession is of utmost importance in all educational arenas in that it can generate numerous positive outcomes. More specifically, resiliency produces job satisfaction, responsiveness and effectiveness, self-efficacy, sense of pride, sense of agency, interpersonal relationships, competency, autonomy, optimism, positive interpersonal emotions, empathy and emotionally intelligent teachers (Wang & Derakhshan, 2021). Hence, developing this construct in teachers through rich teacher education programs is a must in academic contexts as teachers are the frontline soldiers in fighting against adversities whose emotional states and readiness makes a great change in educational outcome worldwide (Wang & Derakhshan, 2021).

Challenges Affecting English Language Teaching

There are several challenges affecting English language teaching in Nigeria which include the following:

Shortage of Teachers Training Programs: The teacher is a key factor in the success of English language teaching. Teachers of English at all levels of the educational system need to be professionally and specially trained. It has been observed that there are problems regarding English teachers training (Nunan, 2003). Thus,

teachers might 'find themselves teaching English either without sufficient English training generally or in teaching English to learners particularly and such thing frequently occurs in poor or rural area' (Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011). Since teachers may get only basic preparation in the supportive theory and practical applications, they may then struggle for embodying teaching methods effectively (Bulter, 2005). some issues that occur because of insufficient preparation for teaching: teachers' inabilities to deal with challenges that take place in teaching context because of the lack of training, teachers' poor language ability and teachers whose English is not their subject area are hired to teach it (Emery, 2012). Such challenges take place in a rural area because rural areas lack proper and good teaching and learning tools (Mishra, 2015). Furthermore, English teaching process tends to be challenging when it comes to the teachers' qualifications, language proficiency level, and training since these points can cause teachers' confidence (Emery, 2012). Teachers whose teaching training is not enough might strive to embody teaching methods effectively (Littlewood, 2007). Applying appropriate teaching methods and techniques is tough because the teachers do not merely think of how to transfer four language skills, but also how to remain students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning and practicing English (Ansari, 2012).

Large Class: Emery (2012) stated that one of the most often mentioned problems encountered by English teachers is that of large classes and the effect of such condition can have on teaching and learning. When classes are too large, effective teaching and learning will not occur. The teacher will not be able to pay reasonable attention to every student and the quality of teaching will be affected. Consequently, most aspects of the second language teaching, such as speech work and essay writing cannot be effectively carried out. Likewise, Baker and Westrup (2000) stated several problems of teaching large classes, such as desks and chairs are fixed or difficult to move; students sit close together in rows; little space for the teacher and students to move in the classroom.

Lack of English Exposure: Teaching English as a second language is a challenging task in the places where English has inadequate exposure. Lack of English exposure also serves less opportunity for students to use English. Khan (2011) argues that the lack of English purposes demotivates students to practice and understand English due to students' insufficient background knowledge of English. Moreover, it gets more difficult for teachers to encourage students to be enthusiastic in using English due to the lack of English exposure (Khan, 2011).

Limited Resource Accessibility: Another challenge in English language teaching is the issue of resources. Most of the educational institutions in Nigeria lack basic materials to facilitate effective teaching of English. For instance, our schools are in dire need of textbooks, audio-visual materials such as videos, tape recorders, televisions and functional language laboratories. Furthermore, Ajibola (2010) argues that the inadequacy of resources also constitutes a trial to the English teaching and the larger number of students is the large number of sources is needed. In addition, lack of facilities and equipment hinder teachers to embody an effective teaching process (Fatiloro, 2015). Pande (2013) puts forward that language could only be understood by practicing all the four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Hence, the availability of teaching aids holds vital role and needs to be provided as soon as possible, otherwise teachers will not be able to teach effectively. In other words, to get students familiar with English and to provide them with sufficient exposure of target language, huge amount of learning resources is in dire need.

Linguistic Problems: Mukattash (1983) categorized English teaching challenges that are encountered into two: first, most inaccuracies done regarding the pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and spelling; second, most of students have problems in expressing themselves when using English. The first issue is also strengthened by Khan (2011) that ''specific problem connected to pronunciation, stress, and intonation become problem for students. As a consequence, these

linguistic problems are found in all language skills, which make students demotivated in practicing a target language. Another issue regarding linguistic problem is first language or mother tongue interference. Both teachers and students frequently talk using their mother-tongue language which unconsciously affects their English performance (Fatiloro, 2015). Additionally, Pande (2013) describes when teacher and students speak in their mother-tongue, they sometimes use English words in the midst of the sentences and disremember that every language varies in stress, intonation, and pronunciation.

Psychological Problems: Pande (2013) asserts that it is a common misinterpretation among students that English is the most difficult of all subjects. Similarly, Fatiloro (2015) states that the challenging difficulty in teaching English as a second language is meeting students' awful attitude in practicing English. For instance, students can be fearful to speak in front of their classmates, particularly when it comes to the presence of a competitive student in the classroom. Another example is related to students who enroll in English courses outside schools. According to Khajloo (2013), these students have higher academic level than others and when they "listen to repetitive low-level content for them, they find it unattractive and boring. Such psychological issues can affect students' motivation and learning attitude toward English language.

Prospects to the Challenges Affecting English Teaching/Learning

Adequate Teachers' Training: The English language teacher must be a specialist, well trained and equipped with the necessary qualities that are needed to do the job. Brumfit (1985) posits that a language teacher should be professionally trained and well-informed. To ensure this professional development and efficiency of language teachers, training facilities should be provided. Therefore, language teachers should be sponsored to attend both local and international seminars and workshops on recent teaching methodologies so that their knowledge on contemporary issues in language teaching is updated. In-service and pre-sservice training facilities should also be provided as a way of motivating teachers.

Teaching Facilities Improvement: English teaching will not achieve its objectives if the teaching tools are not backed up. Hence, special effort should be made to ensure that teachers get proper teaching facilities, including space, books, and teaching aids (Pande, 2013). It is necessary to confront facilitation of teaching tools as to empower teaching and learning English (Fatiloro, 2015). Thus, teaching a language needs equipment, particularly for those who teach in the milieu where English exposure is limited.

Students' Level Match: Since students' educational background in learning English, personality, goals, age, and learning style are different, it is imperative to come up with helpful ideas in dealing with such multilevel class. There are several ways to handle such issue, it can begin from the lesson planning, should contain leveled tasks using a variety of groupings and throughout the practice of the lesson, students' assignments should be leveled based on their language skills (Roberts, 2007). He also adds that teacher's own version of textbook can be used to develop leveled task since it is considered effective when it covers various tasks for students whose level is different. It is also suggested by Pande (2013) that teachers should be patient in teaching different ability of students and striving for matching level with students. As a result, since English level of students in classroom might be uneven, teachers have to provide appropriate tasks for meeting and improving students' language level.

Classroom Management: Understanding English and creating English language's exposure for students can be done through managing classroom. For instance, designing a classroom which expresses cultural diversity, considering seating positions for cooperative learning activity, building a classroom library containing age-appropriate books with various reading levels. Those are the ways to manage classroom in order to get students familiar with and use target language.

Teacher's Reflection: Christodoulou (2010) put forward that one of the most important aspects of teaching is self-reflection. Teachers should be all aware of their acting, such as knowing consequence of everything they do as well as finding solutions or suggestion in a teaching and learning situation. Additionally, self-reflection is included in the essential teaching skill. Self-reflection consists of knowing how to act in interaction with pupils, their parents, and colleagues at school (Christodoulou, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper sheds light on the resilience of teachers in the face of challenges in English language in Nigeria context, highlighting their determination and dedication to their profession. The paper will also provide insights into how teachers in Nigeria navigate the challenges and maintain their resilience in the classroom. It also addresses the challenges in English language teaching and came up with some prospects to the challenges in order to build teachers resilience in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that teachers training programs such as online and face-to-face workshops, seminars, conferences and webinar should be organised regularly for teachers so as to update their knowledge and skills.

New practical teaching approach should be employed by teachers through introduction of new skills to encourage teachers in the practical usage of language.

Government should prioritise the teaching and learning of English language by supporting educational programs.

Also, to build teachers resilience, it is imperative to assess their well-being, self-care, mindfulness, positive emotions and their ability to create positive educational contexts that highlights pedagogy, learning and their emotional aspects.

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