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Challenges of the basic school English syllabus to practising teachers of St. Teresa's college of education and their mentors

Samuel Bruce Kpeglo and Gideon Kofi Akorli

Abstract

This paper explored the components of the Basic School English Language Syllabus and identified the challenging topics that posed and continue to pose problems to both the pre-service Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) student-teachers on teaching internship and the in-service professionally-trained teachers at the basic schools in Ghana. The problem identified was that pre-service student-teachers often have difficulties in teaching some of the components of the English language syllabus, when they are given these topics in both on-campus and off-campus teaching practice. On occasions when they are asked to pick topics on their own during On-Campus Teaching Practice (OCTP), student-teachers tend to focus on only few topics – all in one component. One hundred and thirty-four (134) student-teachers and sixty-six (66) fully fledged, professionally trained teachers who were mentoring these student-teachers, making a total of 200 respondents constituted the sample size of the study who responded to questionnaire that sought to tap the views of pre-service student-teachers (mentees) and the in-service teachers (mentors) about their challenging topics in the English language syllabus. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered, 174 representing 87% were retrieved. They were asked to list their preferred topics in the English Language Syllabus in order of pedagogical comfort ability. All the six (6) major components of the English syllabus were listed in the questionnaire to enable respondents to choose their preferred topics that they could effectively handle. It became evident in the study that only 5.2%, 5.7% and 7.5% of both the in-service teachers (mentors) and student-teachers (mentees) can effectively and comfortably teach literature, grammar and library respectively. The majority group was comfortable in teaching the reading, oral work and writing components in the syllabus; representing 54.6%, 15% and 12% respectively. Few of them (thus 28.20%) were confident of handling all the five (5) components of the English language syllabus without difficulty in content knowledge while 71.80% of both mentors and mentees admitted that they could not effectively handle all the components in the English Language syllabus. It is therefore recommended that tutors of English in the colleges of education (CoEs) emphasize the methodology of grammar and literature to student-teachers to be able to handle these components with ease.

Keywords: pedagogical knowledge; content knowledge, student-teachers, in-service training, comfort ability

1. Introduction

Background to the Study

English today has become a global language. The increasing importance of English in today's business world is widely recognized. English in the contemporary world has, somewhat retained its pre-eminent position as the language anybody must know if he is seeking a job in the civil and public sectors of the economy. Success in any form of education and training and in all fields of human endeavour worldwide depends largely on the ability of the individual to understand and use English language effectively. In Ghana, English language is the official language of government, administration and the learned professions. This has made English to become the language across curriculum at all levels of education in Ghana. This means that it is the language that is used to teach all other subjects with the exception of the Ghanaian languages in the curriculum. It is for this reason that English is one of the major subjects in Ghanaian schools.

The Concept of School Curriculum

Various interpretations have been given to the concept “curriculum”. In the school setting, teachers and learners use the curriculum as a means to achieve set targets. The curriculum is thus a complete plan of action which is used in the instructional process. Wheeler (1967) ^[12] defines curriculum as ‘planned learning experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school’. Neagly & Evans (1967) describe curriculum as ‘the planned experiences provided by the school to assist pupils in attaining the designated learning outcome to the best of their ability’.

The definitions above point to the fact that curriculum encompasses all the learning experiences provided by the school in and out of the classroom, the purpose of which is to bring about desirable changes in the behaviours of the pupils. Activities such as sport, games, free play, crafts and singing form part of the curriculum and must be seen as such. These definitions tend to reflect the three major areas of curriculum or rather the content of the curriculum, which are cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Other definitions are as follow:

A curriculum is a written statement of the educational experiences which the school proposes to provide or create for children and the aims, materials and procedures of such experiences, (Balogun *et al*, 1981 p83) ^[4]. The focus of this definition is learning experiences, aims, materials and methods. This definition is all-embracing because it covers all the important elements of the curriculum. That the curriculum consists of contents, teaching methods and purpose may in its rough and ready way be a sufficient definition with which to start. These three dimensions interacting are the operational curriculum. The definition emphasizes the importance of contents, teaching methods and purpose or objective.

The term curriculum is therefore excessively broad and should be taken to mean a programme of activities designed so that pupils will attain, as far as possible, certain educational ends or objectives. Here, emphasis is placed on the subjects to be studied. By curriculum, it is meant all the experiences a pupil undergoes; (Bishop, 1985 p.4). This encompasses planned and unplanned activities carried on in the school. Curriculum is seen as a specification of content and principles to be investigated within classroom realities; (Stenhouse, 1975) ^[10]. The focus here is on content and principles.

Curriculum is after all, a way of preparing young people to participate as productive members of our culture; (Taba, 1962, p.10, cited by Tamakloe in Abosi *et al*, 1992, p.128) ^[11, 2]. This definition links curriculum directly to culture.

It is worth noting from the above definitions that curriculum is a broad term. It is therefore meant to include all the experiences of the pupil or student while he/she is under the guidance of the school.

The General Aims of the English Language Curriculum

Ministry of Education (2002) ^[9] outlines the general aims of the English Language Curriculum at the Basic Level as follows:

- To help the pupils to develop the habit of reading.
- To help the pupils to understand and derive information from materials read
- To help the pupils to communicate effectively in speech and in writing.

- To help the pupils to develop the desire to create literary materials.

The English Language Syllabus and its Importance

The English Language Syllabus specifies the content of the English curriculum; the methods to be used to enable students get this content, the organization of learning experience, and the procedures involved in evaluating the extent of students’ achievement in the teaching and learning process. The general aims of the English language syllabus are three-fold, namely to lay effective foundation that will facilitate learning the language at higher levels; to help pupils to develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and finally to help pupils communicate effectively in English.

In this regard, it is imperative for the basic school teacher to study the scope and content of the English syllabus to be equipped with the general objective of the English course. This will also enable him to know the different areas / components of the English Language which the learners are to learn at each level. Similarly, knowledge of the scope and content of the English syllabus will help the basic school teacher to know the total time allocated to the course in order to give useful advice in planning the school timetable and also make the teacher aware of core ideas that need to be emphasized during the teaching and learning process.

The relevance of the basic school English syllabus can therefore not be over-emphasized. In the first place, it consists of topics to be taught. It consists of specific objectives for the topics. The syllabus not only guides the teacher to prepare his/her lesson but also helps him or her to present his/her lessons systematically. Again, the syllabus is helpful in the preparation of his scheme of work. This provides both teacher and learner activities for the delivery of the lesson. Apart from providing some exercises for evaluating the lessons taught in the classroom, the English syllabus also serves as a means of standardizing the teaching of English in the country.

Components of the English Language Syllabus (Primary)

According to the Ministry of Education, (2002) ^[9] as contained in the Primary School Syllabus for English Language, the child who leaves primary six must be able to develop a solid foundation in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). This is to enable such a child to continue education at the Junior High School and beyond. The Primary School Syllabus is also expected to provide pupils with opportunities for learning and using English in the society as a whole where English is a second language and the official language of the nation.

Components/Segments

The Primary School Curriculum is composed of five areas. The areas are Oral Work, Grammar, Reading, Writing and composition, and Library. Each of these five areas also has their own divisions. Oral Work has five divisions which are speech practice, conversation, stories, poetry and drama. Language Study has to do with the study of grammar and is thus made up of language items. Reading has two divisions, namely Reading Aloud and Reading Comprehension. Writing and composition are divided into three areas which are penmanship or handwriting, mechanical writing or

punctuations, and essays. Finally, the library component of the curriculum is made up of extensive reading.

Professional Development

Professional development generally refers to ongoing learning opportunities available to teachers and other education personnel through their schools and districts. Effective professional development is often seen as vital to school success and teacher satisfaction, but it has also been criticized for its cost, often vaguely determined goals, and for the lack of data on resulting teacher and school improvement that characterizes many efforts.

With Ghanaian schools today facing an array of complex challenges—from working with an increasingly diverse population of students, to integrating new technology in the classroom, to meeting rigorous academic standards and goals—observers continue to stress the need for teachers to be able to enhance and build on their instructional knowledge. Parsing the strengths and weaknesses of the vast array of programs that purport to invest in teachers' knowledge and skills continues to be a challenge. Today, professional development activities include formal teacher induction, the credits or degrees teachers earn as part of recertification or to receive salary boosts, the national-board-certification process, and participation in subject-matter associations or informal networks. (Sawchuk, Nov. 10, 2010a).

Historically, administrators have favoured the workshop approach, in which a district or school brings in an outside consultant or curriculum expert on a staff-development day to give teachers a one-time training seminar on a variety of pedagogic or subject-area topic. Criticized for their lack of continuity and coherence, workshops have at least in theory fallen out of favour. Even so, very few teachers in Ghana still appear to receive much of their professional development through some form of the one-shot workshop. Beginning in the 1990s, qualitative literature began to support a roughly consistent alternative to the workshop model of professional development. This preferred approach holds that for teacher education to truly matter, it needs to take place in a more active and coherent intellectual environment—one in which ideas can be exchanged and an explicit connection to the bigger picture of school improvement is made. This vision holds that professional development should be sustained, coherent, take place during the school day and become part of a teacher's professional responsibilities, and focus on student results (Wei, *et al*, 2009).

In Ghana, it is obvious to state that the intensity of other types of professional development decreased between 2001 and 2012, a period spanning for over ten (10) years. On-the-job training of staff at all levels of pre-tertiary education institutions was relegated to the backdrop for all these periods. At least nine to 16 hours on the use of computers for instruction, reading instruction, and student discipline all declined notably, while training of up to eight hours in those areas increased. Training in content, however, increased during that period as well.

Hard data on which professional-development models lead to better teaching are difficult to come by. In essence, professional development relies on a two-part transfer of knowledge: It must inculcate in teachers new knowledge and skills such that they change their behaviour, and those changes must subsequently result in improved student

mastery of subject matter. Unsurprisingly, the complex nature of those transactions renders the field of professional development a challenging one to study.

Teacher Preparation

The best teacher-preparation programs emphasize subject-matter mastery and provide many opportunities for student teachers to spend time in real classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor. This is what we want in Ghana, especially at the initial pre-service teacher institutions. Just as professionals in medicine, architecture, and law have opportunities to learn through examining case studies, learning best practices, and participating in internships, exemplary teacher-preparation programs allow teacher candidates the time to apply their learning theory in the context of teaching in a real classroom. Many colleges and universities are revamping their education schools to include an emphasis on content knowledge, increased use of educational technologies, creation of professional-development schools, and innovative training programs aimed at career switchers and students who prefer to earn a degree online.

Teacher-Induction Programs

Support for beginning teachers is often uneven and inadequate. Even if well prepared, new teachers often are assigned to the most challenging schools and classes with little supervision and support. Nearly half of all teachers leave the profession in their first five years, (Aboagye, 2003) ^[1]. If this is so, more attention must be paid to providing them with early and adequate support, especially if they are assigned to demanding school environments. Mentoring and coaching from veteran colleagues is critical to the successful development of a new teacher. Great induction programs create opportunities for novice teachers to learn from best practices and analyze and reflect on their teaching.

Ongoing Professional Development

It is critical for veteran teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn from each other. Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how children learn, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and more. The best professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. Great teachers help create great students. In fact, research shows that an inspiring and informed teacher is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement, so it is critical to pay close attention to how we train and support both new and experienced educators.

Why Is Teacher Development Important?

Staff development in all stages of a teacher's career is vital to the success of her students and her job satisfaction, as well as movement on the continuum. In essence, teacher-preparation programmes equip educators with the tools, mentors, and hands-on experience they will need once they begin their career. As a third-year teacher, graduate student, and mentor to an undergraduate student, staff development must certainly be in the forefront of your thinking.

Perhaps a teacher's greatest allies in a school setting are your colleagues. Many of you may be blessed with having formal

mentors; others will be assigned buddies, but all of you will have peers who are ready and willing to help you. They were in your shoes once, and like most of us, they remember vividly the first years of novice teaching. These professionals are the first line of assistance, support, and problem solving.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, there is persistent cry over poor performance of students in English language at the basic school level. Each year, reports from the Chief Examiner on students' performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) are often not encouraging in terms of students' proficiency in the use of the English language. Since students are examined on all components and aspects of the English Language syllabus, there is the tendency of their teachers not fully exhausting some of the topics in the syllabus.

In this researcher's field of teaching English language in a college of education, he observed that pre-service student-teachers, during their teaching practice on campus (and even off-campus where they were supposed to be receiving mentoring from in-service teachers), often preferred to handle some topics in the English Language syllables to the detriment of some other topics. In most cases where they were given the chance to select their own topics during On-Campus Teaching Practice, majority of student-teachers found it comfortable to teach only some selected topics in the syllabus to the detriment of other topics. This situation mostly rendered their English lesson monotonous and repetitive, since same topics continued to be repeated in lessons taught at teaching practice. This situation, when carried to their field of teaching after graduation is likely to affect pupils who will be entrusted into their care, since these teachers are likely to skip or dodge some topics that pose pedagogical discomfort to them on the field. Based on the above, the study sought to find out why student-teachers run away from some topics in the English language syllabus to focus only on selected few.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are therefore to:

1. Find out how often basic school teachers receive on-the-job (in-service) training to update their content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching English.
2. Find out the topics that basic school teachers find comfortable teaching.
3. Find out the challenging topics and aspects of the English Language syllabus to the basic school teacher.
4. Find out how basic school teachers can improve their content knowledge of the topics that pose challenges in the English Language syllabus

Research Questions

1. How often do basic school teachers receive on-the-job (in-service) training to update their content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching English?
2. What are the challenging topics and aspects of the English Language syllabus to the basic school teacher?
3. What topics do basic school teachers find comfortable teaching?
4. How can content knowledge of the topics that pose challenges in the English Language syllabus be improved in the basic school teacher?

Relevance of the Study

The end result of this study is to improve practice among basic school teachers in their teaching of all topics in the English Language syllabus at the basic school. The study also intends to give policy direction and guidance to the Ghana Education Service and other stakeholders on the needs to regularly organize in-service training to update both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of basic school teachers.

Methodology

Study Area

This study took its catchment area in the dispersed settlement of three (3) districts where student-teachers of St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe had their teaching internship for the 2017/2018 academic year. The districts include Hohoe Municipality, Ho-West District and Afadjato South District – all of the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. Hohoe ranked the 35th most populous settlement in Ghana with beautiful climate, and many tourist attractions such as the Wli Waterfall, the Afadjato Mountain, Tafi Monkey Sanctuary and the Aflagbo Fall. The population of the Hohoe Municipality where St. Teresa's College of Education is located is 184,743, according to 2010 National Population & Housing Census. These districts which made up the study area share boundaries and lie along the middle belt of the Volta Region. The middle belt of the Region is mountainous tropical zone with bimodal rain pattern where majority of the people are predominantly farmers. Cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, and palm plantation are cultivated with few people engaging in subsistence farming such as cassava, maize, plantain and vegetables.

Research Design

The study was structured basically within the framework of the descriptive research design. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2006) ^[3], descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information, which concerns the current status of phenomenon. The use of descriptive research enabled the researcher bring to light the various components and topics contained in the English Language syllabus and those that pose challenges to the basic school teacher. This type of design is preferred because the extent to which the topics in the basic school English syllabus are handled by the teachers in the classroom deals with attitudes and content knowledge. The descriptive design will, therefore, provide the picture of the pedagogical processes in the classroom regarding the teaching of English Language topics and also expose the attitudes of teachers towards the topics. Furthermore, it can be used with greater confidence with regard to particular questions of special interest or value to the researcher. Also in-depth follow-up questions can be asked and items that are unclear can be explained using descriptive design (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) ^[6]. Notwithstanding the advantages associated with descriptive survey, Creswell (2003) ^[7] contends that errors and inadequacies of survey research in education appear at many points from the way problems are initially chosen and defined through selection of population and sample to items construction and analysis of resulting data. This will also be seen in the way teachers at the basic school level approach their lessons in English as well as pave direction for identifying the problem topics that confront them in the classroom.

Accordingly, Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) ^[8] postulate that descriptive statistical analysis limits generalization to the particular group of individuals observed and that no conclusions are extended beyond this group. Descriptive research surveys therefore focus on ascertaining the status of a defined population in relation to certain variables. Cohen, *et al.* (2007) ^[6] are of the view that there is the difficulty of ensuring that the questions to be answered by respondents when using the descriptive survey results can vary greatly depending on the exact wording of questions or statements. One other disadvantage of the descriptive survey worth noting is that it may produce untrustworthy result because they may delve into private and emotional matters that respondents may not be completely truthful about. In spite of these disadvantages, the descriptive survey design is what Kpeglo and Akorli considered the most appropriate for carrying out the study on challenges of the basic school English syllabus to both the pre-service DBE student-teachers and their mentors. This is because the effects of the classroom teaching of these topics by both mentees and their mentors have a far reaching repercussion on their pupils as a whole.

Population

The population of the study constituted all third year student-teachers (mentees) of 2017/2018 academic year from St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe, and their selected mentors from the schools of attachment. The essence of this structure is to collect detailed and objective information as far as possible from these groups on the challenges they face in the use of the basic school English language syllabus. The selection of teachers is based on the fact that they are the implementers (i.e., they put the content of the syllabus into real use in the classroom by impacting these contents into their pupils). The choice of third year mentees is also based on the fact that they have experienced practical teaching of these contents of the English language syllabus while doing on-campus teaching practice, (thus beginning teaching, extending teaching and consolidating teaching) right from their first year of admission into the colleges and were then extending the practical teaching to the neighbouring communities with these professionally trained teachers (their mentors) on the field. Finally, mentors are necessary for the study since they guide the mentees throughout the one-year period of attachment. The total population therefore stands at 570 respondents (thus, 380 student-teachers from St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe and 190 in-service teachers (mentors)).

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Simple Random Sampling, often referred to as the probability sampling technique was employed by the researchers to arrive at the total sample size of two hundred (200). This included 66 in-service teachers (mentors) who had been in the teaching service for more than three (3) years and 134 student-teachers who constituted the total sample for the study.

In statistics, a simple random sample is a subset of individuals (a sample) chosen from a larger set (a population). Each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process, and each subset of one individual has the same probability of being chosen for the sample as any other

subset of another individual. A simple random sample is an unbiased surveying technique.

In an attempt to obtain a representative sample of the colleges from the three (3) districts where student-teachers practised, the researchers met each zone at cluster meetings to select the sample. The proportionate number of mentees from each zone required to make up the sample was determined.

Finally, simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents from each sample group for the study. In this method, pieces of paper were cut using the same measurement and 'yes' and 'no' were written on each piece of paper. Each piece of paper was rolled and mixed together. The pieces of paper were then kept in a container and tossed so that they were thoroughly mixed. Student-teachers were called on school-by-school bases to pick; after which those who picked 'yes' were listed to be traced later to respond to the questionnaire. The rolled papers were picked one by one without the selector seeing through the pool. Later, the researchers embarked on the field work, to visit the selected student-teachers and their mentors in their schools to administer the instruments.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire was the main tool employed to obtain the necessary data and to address the research questions. Documents that furnished secondary data were the English Language syllabus and observation from tutors who visited student-teachers on the field to supervise their teaching.

Data Collection Procedure

The instruments were personally administered by the researchers to respondents in their various schools of attachment, and places of work in the case of their mentors. With the permission of the school authorities visited, the researchers met the selected mentors at their respective classrooms, gave out the questionnaire and explained to them each item of the questionnaire. Respondents were then allowed to respond to the items on the questionnaire. In each school, the respondents were informed that the completed questionnaires would be collected back in a week's time. This was to give them enough time to respond to all the items on the questionnaire since they were many. The first visit to each school was used for the administration of the instrument, while the second and subsequent visits were used for retrieval of the completed instruments from the respondents. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered, 174 representing 87% were retrieved. In the case of the student-teachers, the researchers administered the questionnaire in the same manner as was done for the mentors.

Data Analyses Plan

Data was collected in selected basic schools in the three (3) different districts of the Volta Region thus Hohoe Municipality, Ho West, and Afadjato South Districts where student-teachers received their internship. Data were then categorized into the various components of the English Language syllabus (Oral Work, Grammar, Reading, Writing & Composition and Literature). Each component listed by the respondents was then analyzed using tables and simple percentages and later represented graphically.

Findings and discussion

Table 1: Academic Qualification of Mentors

Qualification	Number	Percentage (%)
Cert 'A'	11	16.70
DBE	35	53.03
1 st Degree	17	25.77
Masters	03	4.50
Total	66	100

The focus of this table was to find the level of educational qualification of basic school teachers who mentor student-teachers from St. Teresa’s College of Education. Data collected revealed that majority of teachers in the partner schools attained the basic qualification of Diploma in Basic Education, representing 53.03%. The implication is that more than half of the mentors have the requisite qualification to mentor student-teachers on internship. There is also a significant number of the mentors who had attained their First Degree in Education, which is encouraging. This information is further illustrated in a bar chart below.

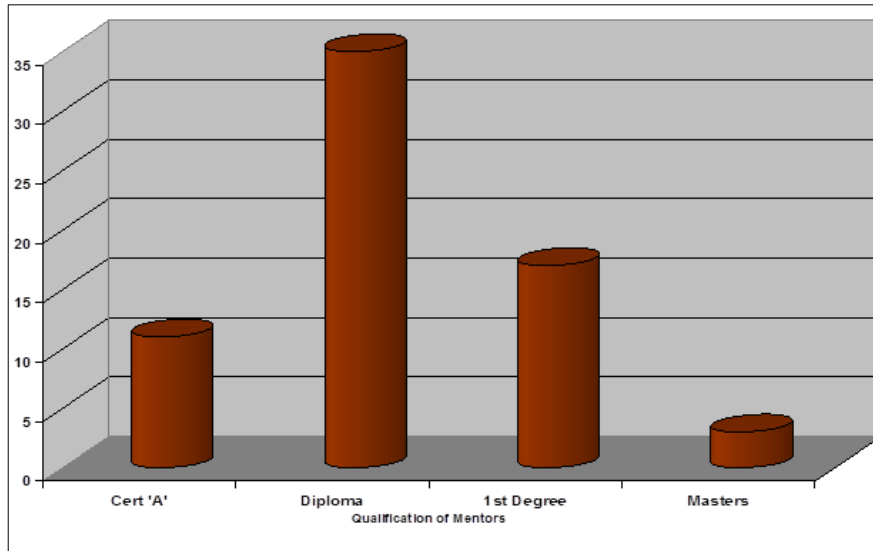


Table 2: Teaching Experience of Mentors

Years in Service	Number of Mentors	Percentage
3 – 5	06	9.10
6 – 10	18	27.27
11 – 15	22	33.33
16 – 20	14	21.21
21 – 25	04	6.06
26 – 30	02	3.03
31 Above	00	00
Total	66	100

Majority of mentors in the partner schools where student-teachers from St. Teresa’s College of Education, Hohoe practiced, have been in the teaching service between 11 to 15 years. This numbers constitute 33.33% of the total number of mentors who are believed to have ample experience in their job. A close look at the table also indicates that, out of the total number of mentors, 54 of them had been in the service between 6 to 20 years; constituting a percentage of 81%. This is very encouraging for student-teachers to receive effective mentoring from these experienced teachers.

Table 3: Professional Development (PD) Sessions of Mentors

No: of PD Sessions	No: of Mentors	Percentage (%)
None	32	48.50
1 – 5	22	33.33
6 – 10	08	12.12
11 – 15	03	4.54
16 – 20	01	1.51
21 Above	00	00
Total	66	100

From the data above, close to half of the mentors; constituting 48.50% said that they had never, since joining the service, attended any professional development session. Mentors who said they had ever had on-the-job training since joining the service constitute 51.50%. However, one-third of these mentors had had only between 1 – 5 of this on-the-job training, constituting 33.33%.

Table 4: Are you comfortable teaching all components in the English Language Syllabus?

Responses	No: of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	28.20
No	125	71.80
Total	174	100

Data in table 4 indicates that majority of both mentors and their mentees find it difficult to handle or teach all the components in the English Language Syllabus for basic schools. This number represents 71.80%, a situation which is likely to negatively affect pupils’ performance in these components. This information is further illustrated on a bar graph below.

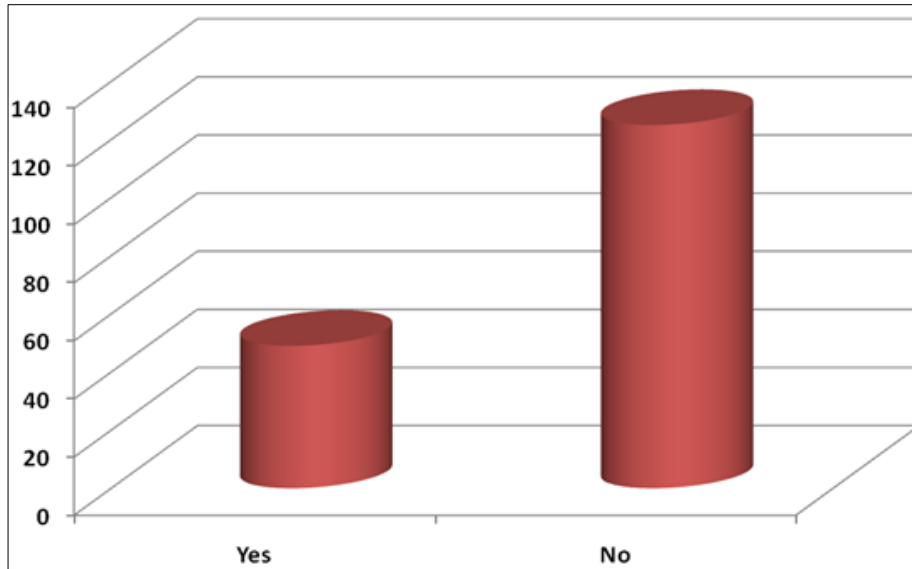
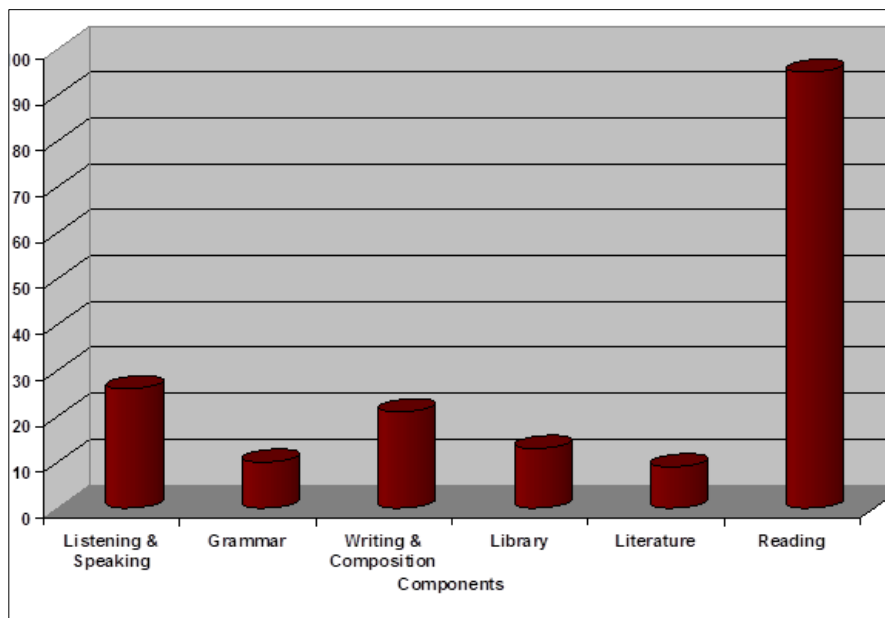


Table 5: Comfortable Components in the English Language Syllabus for both Mentors & Mentees

Component	No: of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Listening & Speaking	26	15.00
Grammar	10	5.70
Reading	95	54.60
Writing & Composition	21	12.00
Library	13	7.50
Literature	9	5.20
Total	174	100

In the data above, more than half of the respondents find it comfortable teaching the reading component of the English Language Syllabus over the other components. This number constitutes 95; thus 54.60%. Pupils' performance is likely to

be low in the components that receive less attention from the teachers. This information is further illustrated on a bar chart below



Ways of Improving Teachers Content Knowledge of the Difficult Components in the English Syllabus

On the issue of how to improve the content and pedagogical knowledge of both mentors and their mentees, respondents suggested the following:

- Regular In-service Training for teachers to update their knowledge. This is in line with the majority of respondents who admitted earlier of not having enough professional development sessions.

- Synchronizing Basic School Syllabus with that of Colleges of Education. Respondent were of the view that what is learnt at the pre-service teacher education institutions does not reflect what pertains on the field when they join the service. There is need therefore to synchronize the two curricular so that what is learnt at college is at par with what is on the field.
- Specialism in Basic Schools: Respondents were of the view that student-teachers should specialize in their

preferred subject areas instead of all-inclusive curriculum that is taught at the basic school. They suggested subject teaching to replace class teaching in order to effectively deliver the content to the learners.

- Material supports from stakeholders. Respondents mentioned that inadequate materials to support teaching and learning in these challenging components is a source of worry to them.

Summary of Findings

From the foregoing analyses of the data collected, it is worth noting that majority of teachers in the partner basic schools of St. Teresa's College of Education attained the basic qualification of Diploma in Basic Education, representing 53.03%. The implication is that more than half of the mentors have the requisite qualification to mentor student-teachers on internship. Regarding their teaching experience, data also revealed that, out of the total number of 66 mentors who responded to the instrument, 54 of them had been in the service between 6 to 20 years; constituting a percentage of 81%. This duration of service is worth giving the teachers enough experience on both content and pedagogical knowledge to be able to effectively handle the basic school English syllabus. However, respondents were of the view that increased number of professional development sessions like seminars, subject-based workshops and in-service training sessions within and outside the school environment will go a long way to help them be more grounded in their teaching. This is because data revealed that, close to half of the mentors; constituting 48.50% had never, since joining the service, attended any professional development session. It is also interesting to note that 71.80% of both mentors and mentees admitted their inability to effectively handle all the components of the English Language syllabus. This means that, in these components where teachers are ineffective and weak to deliver, the situation is likely to negatively affect pupils' performance in the affected topics. On comfort ability of the components of the English Language syllabus, it emerged that reading was the most convenient component that teachers find easier to teach. This was followed by listening & speaking (thus oral work), writing & composition, library, grammar and literature in that order.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The findings from the study necessitated the following suggestions and recommendations to improve practice in the Ghanaian basic school classroom.

- Heads of basic schools must integrate internal professional development sessions in their school calendar and must make it a routine on the school timetable. This will enable teachers to learn from one another and also have the opportunity to practice and reflect together to iron out their weaknesses in their lessons before giving them to learners.
- Teachers themselves must see the need to update their knowledge and skills and take initiative to learn on the job. They must understand that professional development is an ongoing process in their profession.
- Since student-teachers and mentors find it challenging to handle literature and grammar (as revealed in the data), it is imperative for these aspects to be given particular attention by English tutors at the college level to equip student-teachers well in these aspects to be

able to effectively handle them (literature and grammar) at the basic level.

- Teacher preparation institutions must increase their material support to student-teachers both in college and off-campus teaching practice.
- The researchers also recommend the synchronization of Basic School Syllabus with that of Colleges of Education to have a direct impact on student-teachers' practical teaching. It is prudent to synch what is learnt at the pre-service teacher education institutions to reflect what pertains on the field when these student-teachers join the service.
- Going forward, teacher education institutions such as colleges of education and the universities must consider training specialists for the basic schools. If student-teachers are allowed to specialize in their preferred subject areas instead of all-inclusive curriculum that is taught at the basic school, they will have ample time to effectively deliver the content to the learners.

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