

The Influence of Skills of Teachers of English in Implementation of Integrated English Curriculum in Public Secondary Schools in Kinangop Sub-County, Nyandarua County, Kenya

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Abstract

One of the key challenges facing the implementation of Integrated English Curriculum (IEC) since its introduction in 1985 has been the skills possessed by teachers of English who are vital in its implementation. Therefore, this study sought to examine the impact of skills of teachers of English in implementation of Integrated English Curriculum in public secondary schools in Kinangop sub-county, Nyandarua County. This study was guided by Havelock (1969) Research Development and Diffusion model. A convergent parallel research design was applied for this study. Systematic sampling was applied to select 36 teachers of English; simple random sampling was used to select 19 principals and 19 Heads of Department while purposive sampling was used to select the sub-county Director of Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and sub-county Director of Education. The study used questionnaires, interview schedules and observation check list in data collection. The main findings of the study indicated that teachers of English frequently used the four English skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. On the effect of skills towards implementation of IEC, it was observed that majority of those teachers of English who had good skills in English, successfully implemented Integrated English Curriculum, clearly demonstrating that skills have an impact on implementation of IEC.

Keywords: Skills, Integrated English Curriculum, Teachers, English

INTRODUCTION

According to Mydans (2007), English language has been adopted as a second language in most parts of the globe, reaching to a point where it has become a measure of “being educated”. Crystal (2012) while discussing its impact considers it as a global lingua franca due to its power in the socio-economic, political and education domains. Crystal further highlights the importance of English language that has seen it being adopted in most international gatherings and states that close to 85% of multinational organizations have adopted English as their official language. The need for a common language as a result of globalization has evidenced the adoption of the English language in almost every activity.

The adoption of English language in sub-Saharan Africa is evidenced in 26 countries that use English either as an exclusive official language (for instance, Nigeria and Ghana) or as an official language accompanying another native African language (as the case of Kenya and South Africa) (Negash, 2011). In addition, approximately 53 countries in Africa have adopted English for communication purposes (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). This is further demonstrated in Negash, (2011) who states that it is the official language of the African Union and thus critical for the continent. Ongong’a, Okwara and Nyangara, (2010) stated that English language was introduced

in Africa by the colonial powers and has been taught in most African countries since colonization.

A number of researchers on integrated curriculum state that students in schools focusing on integrated curriculum achieve better results on standardized tests and state exams as compared to schools that do not (Shriner, Schlee&Libler, 2010; Campbell & Henning, 2010; Hindeet *al.*, 2007). While citing Jacobs (1989), Wafula, (2012) views learning and teaching as holistic and defines integration as organizing education in such a way that several subject matter lines are addressed and various aspects of the curriculum are brought into meaningful association which focuses on extensive study areas. While supporting integration, Sadeghi (2007) demonstrates how literature is a powerful tool for any English teacher as a second or foreign language especially because language learning (including literature) is above all educational undertaking, a view that is echoed by secondary school syllabus in page 3 stating that the exposure of the learner to literature improves his/her language skills” (Kenya Institute of Education, 2012).

The integrated English Curriculum (IEC) has drawn a lot of praise from researchers, scholars and educationists while at the same time facing a lot of challenges in equal measure. For example, IEC syllabus as evaluated by Macharia (2011) has been found to be too wide for coverage in the time allocated.

Other challenges as highlighted further by the report include inadequate teachers’ skills, unsupportive attitude and government policy that are unfavorable to languages and social sciences as compared to the science subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. Researchers such as Lumala (2007), Moraa (2012) and Wafula (2012) have studied the challenges that implementation of IEC continues to face in Kenya and conclude that inadequate training on application of integrated method, burdened curriculum, teachers’ attitude, unclear concepts and unfavorable teacher to student ratios as the main challenges. Eshiwani (1993) highlights the rush in implementing the IEC without piloting, inadequate preparation of English teachers and poor consultations within stakeholders as other challenges.

Trends on the standards of written and spoken English notes are on the decline in the standards. As KNEC (2013) data indicates, the desired achievement level is 70% with the minimum being 50%. However, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) indicates otherwise. For instance, the KCSE results released in 2015 indicated that English was one of the subjects that was poorly performed in the country with a mean of 40.29%. In addition, 2014 results equally reported an even lower mean score of 38.84% countrywide. The dismal performance was also echoed in Kinangop sub-county. For instance, year 2013 had students with a mean score of 4.962 with the largest proportion of candidates (877) attaining a D+ and below.

Basweti (2014) examined factors influencing implementation of IEC in Transmara West District, Kenya and noted that inadequate training of English teachers posed a greater threat towards the poor implementation of IEC in public secondary schools. These findings support the views of Eshiwani (1993) who found that implementation was done with inadequate piloting, inadequate preparation of teachers and inadequate consultation with stakeholders. This is an indication that teachers of English experience a lot of challenges in implementation of IEC. Thus, this study seeks to examine how

skills of English teachers affect the implementation of IEC in public secondary schools in Kinangop Sub-County, Nyandarua County.

Problem statement

Integrated English approach to teaching of English was established in secondary schools in 1985 and one of the key obstacles has been the skills possessed by teachers of English who are key in its implementation. In most cases, teachers of English lack adequate preparation and training on the implementation of IEC and thus possess inadequate skills towards integrated English curriculum and thus affect the implementation (Okwara, Shiundu& Indoshi, 2009).

Major parts of the country see teachers of English possess diverse interpretation of the IEC to an extent that some do not use it at all while those that do are ill-informed. Thus, this affects the whole procedure in teaching English in secondary schools in Kenya. This study therefore sought to assess the effect of skills of teachers of English towards the implementation of IEC in public secondary schools in Kinangop Sub-County, Nyandarua County.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of skills of teachers of English in implementation of Integrated English Curriculum in public secondary schools in Kinangop Sub-County, Nyandarua County, Kenya.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Skills teachers of English should have in implementation of IEC

The Ministry of Education (2006) established the reorganization of the English syllabus in order to address the four language skills and grammar of Listening (L), Speaking (S), Reading (R), and Writing (W). For successful implementation, teachers of English are therefore required to possess the four skills for them to successfully stimulate English language and Literature integration in English in the classroom.

Speaking Skills

According to Hornby (2005), speaking refers to the act of partaking a conversation with somebody. Hadfield (2008) cites that speaking skills are an ingredient for interaction among individuals and involves putting together a message and provision of adequate feedback by the listener. Hadfield (2008) proposes the need for teachers to develop students' speaking skills through practical ideas such as requesting them to read a script on a topic of discussion and in the end manage several vocabularies about it. Other practical ideas as proposed in Hadfield (2008) involve use of role cards giving suggestions to students on what to say.

Listening skills

Smith (2005) defines listening as paying attention to something or somebody that you can hear. Thus listening implies understanding the message heard so as to develop a response and interact with the speaker. Listening skill is considered to be one of the most difficult skills to develop a mastery in a second language. The argument behind this is because, spoken language differs from written script as speakers may miss a verb or may keep on breaking their sentences in the course of a conversation so as to think on the next word to speak. In addition, speakers may insert words, phrases or ideas that are unnecessary (Hadfield, 2008).

Reading skills

Teachers should possess reading skills as it is essential component in helping the learners master English concepts and boosts performance in other subjects offered in the school curriculum. English teachers should therefore apply their reading skills in creating opportunities for learners to perform intensive, extensive and comprehension reading. Various reading skills strategies exist. As noted by Hadfield (2008), reading for a gist entails reading with a purpose in mind. Similarly, reading for detail is a strategy that requires learners to carefully read while paying attention to all details so as to get the meaning of the whole text.

Kenya Institute of Education (2006) demonstrates the spiral approach that present the reading skills content in the syllabus. KIE states that comprehension skills are covered from Form one to Form Four. Form one skills entail recall, comprehension and application, form two introduces analyses while form three covers synthesis and evaluation. The argument has therefore been to integrate reading skills with other language skills and grammar which can be done via writing of tasks from literary works or debates.

Writing skills

Hornby (2005) defines writing as making numbers or letters on a surface using a pencil or pen. English teachers should possess writing skills which can be transferred to the students as it trains them to be organized and develop critical thinking skills and creativity as they respond to real life issues. Writing skills advances both language and literature and thus is very essential in integration. To think critically and creatively as they respond to situations which are real. It is therefore crucial for classroom strategies necessary in developing writing skills follow specified principles and procedures that can enhance integration. Several issues are discussed by authors as instrumental in developing writing skills. One such skill is genre as discussed by Harmer (2007), which represents the norms of diverse kinds of writing. It aids in advertisement, poetry format and formal letter recognition.

Why speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening Should Be Integrated

Jing (2006) discusses the need to integrate all the skills due to the fact that real communication problems require more than one skill, a prerequisite provided in the integrated approach. Hungyo and Kijai (2009) highlights the advantage of applying the integrated approach as the creation of freedom of organizing a lesson plan or a topic as per the students' interests thus making learning more dynamic and engaging. Oomen and Postma (2001) cite that language activities command an integration of diverse skills and states that segregation never makes a lesson holistic.

Another advantage of integration as discussed in Oxford (2001) is its ability to expose students to realistic language and challenges them to intermingle naturally in the language. In addition, it exposes them to communicative scenarios necessary in creating a picture of richness and complexity of the English language.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Havelock (1969) Research Development and Diffusion model as discussed in Anaele (2008). Anaele (2008) states that this model is molded in accordance with the empirical rational strategy whose sub-stages are: basic research;

applied research; development and testing of prototypes; mass production and packaging; planned mass dissemination and receipt by the user. According to Ivowi (2008), the innovation idea is cornered at the center of the model. According to him, this center may be a representation of curriculum development such like Nigerian Educational Research and Development council (NERDC) where innovation research takes place, is developed and diffused into the system. The model is effective in situations where there is large scale curriculum development whose ideas canvass a wide geographical locality and diverse users.

The theory is applicable in this study because innovation development in the education sector is initiated by the KICD and later diffused and adopted by other stakeholders. Thus, KICD needs to be innovative on how to integrate the four skills in the teaching of integrated English and the model should guide on how these innovations are diffused and adopted by stakeholders such as the teachers. In addition, the centralized system of education in Kenya controlled and regulated by the Ministry of Education implies that the Departmental Heads at the Ministry play a vital role in the execution of any innovation. This model can be summarized as follows:

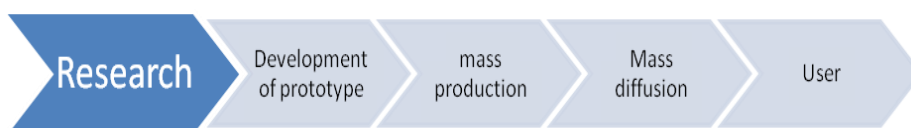


Figure 1: Research Diffusion and Development Model

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A convergent parallel research design was applied for this study. The applicability of this design enabled the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously and blend the overall results in interpretation as explained in Creswell (2012).

Sampling procedure and sample size

The study adopted systematic, simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Systematic sampling was applied to select 36 teachers of English, simple random sampling was used to select 19 principals and 19 Heads of Department while purposive sampling was applied to select the sub-county Director of Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and sub-county Director of Education.

Data collection instruments

The study used questionnaires, interview schedules and observation check list in data collection. Questionnaires were applied to collect data from principals and teachers of English, the interview guides were applied to collect data from the Quality Assurance Standards Officer, Sub-county Director of Education and Heads of Department (Languages) while the observation check list were applied to collect information from

form ones and twos in the selected public secondary schools and were used to record the observed interaction between teachers of English and students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Skills of teachers of English in the implementation of IEC

The second research question in our study read: Do teachers of English in Kinangop sub-county have any skills in implementation of integrated English curriculum?

Frequency of speaking English

Table 4: Teachers' response frequency of speaking english

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	26	89.7	89.7
Often	2	6.9	96.6
Weekly	1	3.4	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2017)

Responding to frequency of speaking English 26 (89.7%) of teachers of English speak English Daily, which forms a majority of the sample frame, 2 (6.9 %) often while 1 (3.4%) weekly as summarized in Table 1 above.

Frequency of Reading English

According to Figure 2 below, majority (55.2%) of teachers of English read English daily, (31.0%) often while (13.8%) weekly. This showed that the frequency of reading was questionable as not all teachers used this skill on a daily basis as analyzed in Figure 2 below.

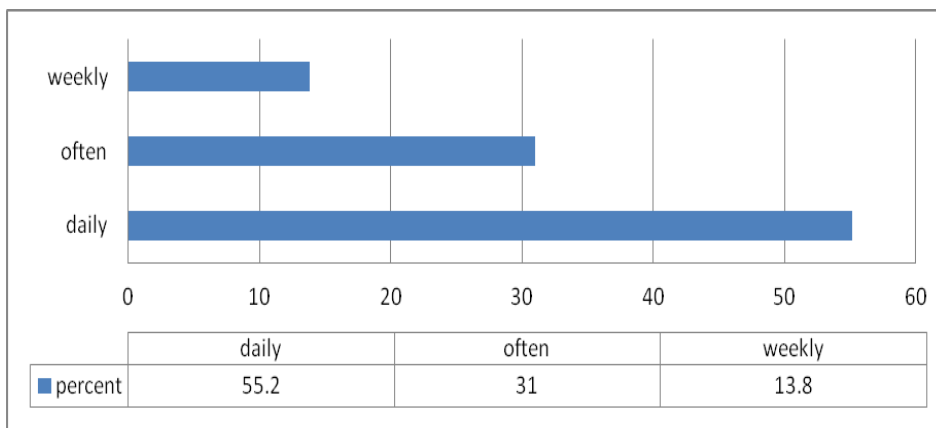


Figure 2: Teachers' frequency of reading English

Source:Field Data (2017)

Frequency of Listening to English

On frequency of listening to English, (86.2%) of teachers of English said that they listened to English daily and (13.8%) weekly. This is shown in Figure 3 below.

Though listening and speaking go together a few teachers did not use this skill on a daily basis.

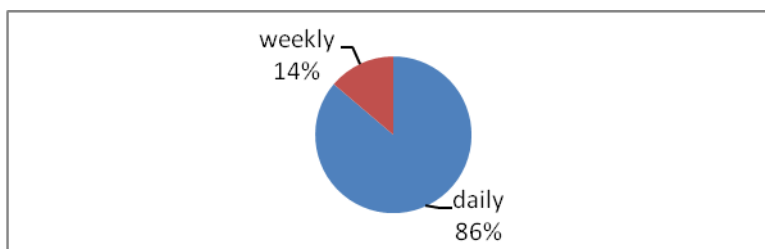


Figure 3: Teachers' frequency of listening to English

Source: Field Data (2017)

Frequency of Writing English

From Table 2 below, a majority (55.2%) of teachers of English write English daily, (27.6%) often and (13.9%) weekly as seen in Table 2. Writing employs all other skills in an integrated approach.

Table 5: Teacher's frequency of writing english

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	16	55.2	55.2
Often	8	27.6	82.8
Weekly	4	13.8	96.6
Monthly	1	3.4	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2017)

Teachers' skills and implementation of IEC

Overall Teachers' of English rank on English skills

Depending on the performance on the four skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening), each teacher of English was given an overall rank on English skills. The ranks were divided into three; good skills, average skills and poor skills. The results for this analysis were as follows:

Table 3: Overall teachers' skills in IEC

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
possess good skills	19	65.5	65.5
average skills	7	24.1	89.7
poor skills	3	10.3	100.0
Total	29	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2017)

It can be seen in Table 3 that majority (65.5%) of the teachers of English possess the necessary skills in English, 24.1% possess average skills while 10.3% possess poor skills in English.

Influence of Skills and Implementation of IEC

This was also achieved by running a cross tabulation between skills possessed and implementation of IEC. The results are as tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Influence of skills on implementation of IEC

		Overall skills			Total
		possess good skills	average skills	poor skills	
Implementation of curriculum	not successfully implemented	7 (36.8%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (66.7%)	10
	successfully implemented	12 (63.2%)	6 (85.7%)	1(33.3%)	19
Total		19 (100.0%)	7(100.0%)	3 (100.0%)	29

Source: Field Data (2017)

It can be observed that of those teachers of English who had good skills, 63.2% had successfully implemented IEC while 36.8% had not successfully integrated IEC. In addition, those who possessed average skills had 85.7% successfully implemented the IEC while 14.3% had not successfully implemented the IEC. Finally, those who had poor skills had a proportion of 66.7% not successfully implementing the IEC and 33.3% successfully implementing the IEC. A close physical analysis of these results indicates that skills influence the implementation of IEC in Kinangop Sub-County.

Results from an Observation Check List

An observation check list was applied on collecting information from form ones and twos in the selected public secondary schools and was used to record the observed interaction between teachers and students. The researcher sought to observe whether the four skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading were integrated in the topics being taught and the findings are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Skills integrated in the topic

Skills	f	%
Listening, reading, speaking and writing	1	5.3
Reading, listening, speaking and writing	2	10.5
Speaking, listening and writing	7	36.8
speaking, writing and listening	1	5.3
Speaking, writing and listening	1	5.3
Speaking, writing, listening	1	5.3
Writing and listening	1	5.3
Writing, listening and speaking	1	5.3
Writing, speaking, listening and speaking	3	15.8
Total	19	100.0

Source: Field Data (2017)

The researcher observed that, a majority (7 or 36.8%) of teachers of English only integrated speaking, listening and writing while a few (3 or 15.8%) integrated the four skills in their teaching as summarized in Table 5 above.

Results from the Interview Schedules

Interviews were conducted on Sub-County Education Director and Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Responding to skills teachers of English should have in implementation of integrated English curriculum, Sub-County Director of Education reported that “*Teachers of English should have writing and communication skills.*”

On the other hand, the Quality Assurance and standards officer reported that *“Teachers should have basic pedagogical skills, techniques of teaching and a mastery of subject content.”*

DISCUSSION

Su (2007) considers that the language learning process has listening, speaking, reading, and writing as the critical skills which should be treated as integrated, interdependent, and inseparable elements of language. In this study, the teachers frequently used the four English skills on a daily basis as reported by 89.7% who speak, 55.2 % who read, 86.2% who listen and 55.2% who write English on a daily basis as seen in Table 4. This clearly demonstrated that teachers possess the four critical skills that are necessary in IEC. This is in agreement with Oommen (n.d.), who stated language tasks involved more than one skill and so segregated skill approach never quite completes a lesson. The observations however indicated that, a majority 36.8% of teachers of English only integrated speaking, listening and writing while a few 15.8% integrated the four skills in their teaching simultaneously. Overall, majority (65.5%) of the teachers possess the necessary skills in English, 24.1% possess average skills while 10.3% possess poor skills in English as seen in Table 3.

As Harmer (2007) states, any of the four skills of English language is rarely done in isolation, when people are engaged in a conversation, they are listening as well as speaking. In order to interact with the person, they are talking to in the case of teachers for instance, they read set texts, in the same situation; learners listening to teachers are also taking their own notes. The later is an activity that could even provoke a conversation or at least a comment among learners attending the lesson, for this reason, “if skill is multi layered in this way, it would make no sense to teach each skill in isolation.” (p. 12).

On the effect of skills towards implementation of IEC, it can be seen that of those teachers of English who have good skills, 63.2% have successfully implemented IEC while 36.8% have not successfully integrated IEC; those who possess average skills have 85.7% successfully implemented the IEC while 14.3% have not successfully implemented the IEC while those who have poor skills have a proportion of 66.7% not successfully implemented the IEC and 33.3% successfully implemented the IEC. This clearly demonstrates that skills have an impact on implementation of IEC.

The research findings are in line with Hungyo & Kijai, (2009), who stated that the integrated approach is a whole language approach where if a course deals with reading skills, it will also deal with listening, speaking, and writing skills. In addition, Boyle and Peregoy (2001) conclude in Su (2007) that the teacher should incorporate opportunities throughout the reading for students to develop their own learning by responding verbally as they read, write and learn English. This is because the integrated use of oral and written language for functional and meaningful purposes that best promotes the full development of second language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Overall, majority (65.5%) of the teachers of English possess the necessary skills in English, 24.1% possess average skills while 10.3% possess poor skills in English. According to this study, skills have an impact on implementation of IEC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For policy makers

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations;

- i) Institutions of higher learning such as universities should review their curriculum in order to enhance the development of the four essential skills in IE, which are, reading, writing, listening and speaking;
- ii) Educators and facilitators of teachers' pre-service training in colleges and universities should ensure that English and Literature is taught using the integrated Approach to enable teachers of English implement in the classroom.

For further studies

In view of the delimitations of the study, the researcher suggests further research in the following areas.

- i) Since the study was carried out in Kinangop sub-county, Nyandarua County which might have unique characteristics, a similar research should be carried out in other public secondary schools in the rest of the country.
- ii) The study targeted public secondary schools leaving out private schools which also use IEC. Therefore a similar study should be carried out incorporating these schools.

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