

INVESTIGATING ENGLISH EDUCATION QUALITY: TEACHER FACTORS IN CAPE COAST SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on teacher-related factors influencing the quality of English language education in senior high schools in Ghana's Cape Coast Metropolis. It employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and lesson observations. The research, guided by Input Evaluation Theory, gathered data from headmasters/mistresses and final-year students through a questionnaire to ensure unbiased responses. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with English teachers, and their lessons were observed. The findings revealed shortcomings in the quality of English education, with many English teachers lacking specialized training and showing deficiencies in content and pedagogical knowledge. The study recommends implementing professional development programs to equip teachers with essential skills and knowledge for effective instruction. English teachers are encouraged to create supportive, interactive learning environments that promote positive attitudes and enhance language learning experiences. These measures aim to address the identified challenges and ultimately improve the quality of English language education in senior high schools.

Keywords: English curriculum; quality education; English language; teacher variables, Input Evaluation Model

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, teachers are the cornerstone of the learning process. They are the

vital human resources responsible for shaping the quality of education within our school systems. As highlighted by Wilkins (2017) and Barber and Mourshed (2007), teachers play a pivotal role in determining the standard of education, and the quality of an educational system hinges upon the competence and dedication of its teachers. Teachers serve as facilitators who interpret educational programs, adapt them to the classroom environment, and orchestrate an effective learning experience (Chapman 2019). Thus, the successful execution of any curriculum is contingent upon the teacher's knowledge, skills, and organizational abilities (Bongco and Adonis 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every student benefits from teachers who foster autonomous learning (Rigelman and Ruben 2012). The guidance provided by teachers goes beyond simply conveying information. As Grossman (2011) suggests, teachers meticulously plan and enhance their teaching methods to inspire and engage students effectively (Ball and Cohen 1999). While the concept of quality teaching remains multifaceted, it is widely acknowledged that teachers and their actions in the classroom are pivotal to ensuring quality education (Fine et al. 2013; Liaw 2012). Teachers serve as catalysts for quality improvement and should be at the forefront when introducing new curricula.

At the heart of curriculum implementation are teachers who act as change agents. They are the conduits through which curriculum designers' concepts and goals are translated into classroom activities (Kwon et al., 2018). Teachers play a crucial role in interpreting and bringing to life the curriculum requirements set forth by governments and ministries (Okello and Kagoire 2013). Consequently, the success of a curriculum heavily relies on the competence, values, and behaviours of teachers (Whitaker and Valtierra 2019).

Teachers must possess various types of knowledge to be effective educators. Hashweh (2013) categorizes these into three types: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curriculum knowledge. Content knowledge encompasses a deep understanding of the subject matter, while pedagogical content knowledge combines subject matter expertise with teaching methods. Curriculum knowledge involves designing and developing curricula aligned with educational objectives. These types of knowledge empower teachers to provide students with effective instruction (Darling-Hammond 2010).

Teacher competence, rooted in their educational qualifications and on-going professional development, significantly influences the quality of education (Arnott 2017). Inadequate teacher training can hinder the implementation process, as teachers may struggle to meet curriculum requirements (Mitchell 2016). Teachers' competence is especially critical in

managing learners' diverse needs, content delivery, and instructional strategies (Rice 2013; Chuunga 2013). Research indicates that experienced teachers are better equipped to handle these challenges and effectively engage students (Johnson, Hayter and Broadfoot 2000).

Teachers' attitudes also play a substantial role in curriculum implementation. Positive attitudes towards an educational program can facilitate its successful execution, while negative attitudes can hinder progress (Shiundu and Omulando 1992). A teacher's disposition towards their subject matter and students can profoundly affect students' motivation and learning outcomes (Debbarma 2015; Bozdogan, Aydin and Yildirim 2007). A positive attitude towards the profession fosters creativity and inspires learners (Chakraborty and Mondal 2014; Üner and Aslan 2023).

The quality of teachers can be improved through continuous in-service training and collaboration among subject teachers. In-service training provides teachers with the tools and knowledge needed to adapt to changing curricular demands (Amadi 2013). It is essential to acknowledge that teacher competence evolves over time, requiring ongoing support and professional development (Tehseen and Hadi 2015). Regular seminars and workshops help teachers stay updated with the latest educational practices and maintain their enthusiasm for teaching (Hirsh 2005, 2009).

Teachers are essential for quality education within our school systems. Their competence, knowledge, attitudes, and ongoing professional development significantly impact the successful execution of curricula. Effective teaching is not a static concept but an evolving practice that requires continuous improvement and adaptation. To achieve quality education, we must invest in our teachers, provide them with the necessary training and support, and recognize their pivotal role in shaping the future of our students and our society. Teachers should never be taken for granted when striving for excellence in education. This article aims to explore the teacher variables that influence the quality of English language education in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. Answers to the following research questions were sought.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What teacher variables influence the quality of English language education in senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana?
- How do teacher-student interactions and classroom management practices influence the quality of English language education?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Input Evaluation Model

The study was guided by the Input Evaluation model, a component of the CIPP model of curriculum evaluation proposed by Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) and Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017). This model was used to assess the quality of English language education by examining teacher-related factors. Input evaluation, the second phase of the CIPP model, focuses on how resources are allocated to achieve the programme's objectives.

The purpose of this evaluation is to gather data on the resources needed to achieve the programme's objectives, such as time, human resources, physical resources, facilities, curriculum, and content. This information is then used to make decisions regarding resource allocation. Input evaluators assess the school's capabilities, consider the methods proposed to achieve the objectives, and find ways to execute a chosen strategy. They also test the basic elements of the curriculum plan and answer questions regarding the goals, priorities, content, and teaching methods of the programme.

An essential component of this evaluation is the detection of obstacles or limitations that may affect or hinder the programme's execution. Input evaluation aims to assist clients in evaluating various alternatives based on their specific needs and circumstances, enabling them to develop a viable strategy. Inputs refer to the resources, materials, and instructional components that shape teaching and learning. Input evaluation plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of educational resources, allowing educators to make informed decisions and optimise student learning outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used was a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in two successive stages. In the quantitative segment, a descriptive survey design was employed, and a questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument for headmasters/mistresses, assistant heads (academic) and final-year students. For comprehensive data to be obtained, the qualitative aspect, a case study design was adopted, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and instructional observations to help validate the questionnaire responses given by headmasters/mistresses, assistant heads (academic) and students.

The study focused on three primary stakeholders: headmasters/mistresses and assistant headmasters/mistresses (academic), English language teachers, and final-year students in senior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolitan area. These stakeholders were considered the most relevant for evaluating English language instruction.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 389 participants from a population of 5,633, including final-year students (356), English teachers (11), and headmasters/mistresses and assistant heads (academic) (22). Proportional stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation of each sub-population, and a census survey was conducted to collect data from all 22 headmasters/mistresses and assistant headmasters/mistresses (academic) from the 11 selected schools.

Descriptive statistical analysis techniques, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were applied to summarize and present the quantitative data from the questionnaire. For the qualitative data, responses were organized into themes, and emerging themes were thoroughly discussed. Additionally, narrative analysis was used to analyse the lesson observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussions are presented in segments to address research question per the context of the study. Table 3.1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants

Table 3.1: Characteristics of participants

Personal Information	Headmasters/mistresses (N=22)		Students (N=356)	
Gender	N	%	N	%
Male	11	50.0	166	46.6
Female	11	50.0	190	53.4
Age in years:				
12-15			14	03.9
16-20			278	78.1
21-30			64	18.0
31-40	00	00.0		
41-50	08	36.4		
51-60	14	63.6		
Course of study:				
General Arts			172	48.3
Home Economics			20	05.6
Visual Arts			33	09.3
General Science			96	26.9
Technical			18	05.1
Years of being at post as Head or Assistant				
From 1-5	09	40.9		
From 6-10	13	59.1		
From 11-15	00	00.0		
From 16-20	00	00.0		
21+	00	00.0		

Source: Field work, 2022

The fieldwork involved a sample of 389 individuals selected from a population of 5466, consisting of 356 final-year students and 22 headmasters/mistresses and assistant headmasters/mistresses (academic) in 11 senior high schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. Eleven English teachers were purposively interviewed and observed during lessons,

with some background data deemed irrelevant to the study. Gender distribution among headmasters/mistresses and assistant heads was equal (50 per cent male, 50 per cent female), while among students, females constituted the majority (53.4 per cent females, 46.6 per cent males). Age groups of the school administrators varied, with 63.6 per cent falling between 51 and 60 years. General Arts was the predominant course among students (48.3 per cent), reflecting the overall course distribution. Most headmasters/mistresses and assistants (59.1 per cent) had served for 6 to 10 years, indicating significant experience in assessing English curriculum implementation for quality education. The subsequent section provides quantitative data related to teacher variables affecting English language education quality in senior high schools, addressing factors impacting instruction standards. Table 3.2 presents this data.

Table 3.2: Teacher Variables that hinder or promote the quality of English education

Statement	Headmasters/mistresses		Students		Mean of means	mean of Stand dev.
	Mean	Stand dev.	mean	Stand dev.		
Teachers approach the instruction of the English language with seriousness.	2.7	.57	2.4	.90	2.6	.74
The English language teachers are adequately trained.	2.9	.21	2.4	.86	2.5	.54
Teachers use acceptable methods to teach the English language	3.3	.49	2.4	.86	2.9	.68
Teachers prepare adequately for lessons before class.	1.8	.66	2.4	.82	2.1	.74
Teachers use teaching and learning aids to teach the subject.	1.9	.49	2.3	.96	2.1	.73
Teachers are happy with their jobs.	1.3	.70	2.3	.94	1.8	.82
Teachers use varied methods to teach the subject.	2.6	.51	2.6	.78	2.6	.65
Teachers are limited in content knowledge.	3.3	.48	2.5	.77	2.9	.63
Teachers are limited in pedagogical knowledge.	3.2	.39	2.6	.70	2.9	.55
In-service training in the English language is available for teachers.	2.3	.46	2.4	.76	2.4	.61
Teachers are given a chance to improve themselves professionally.	2.6	.51	2.4	.78	2.5	.65
English language teachers participate in co-operative learning	1.6	.59	2.3	.99	2.0	.79
Teachers lack motivation owing to low salaries.	3.6	.74	2.8	.48	3.2	.61
Teachers have a considerable workload.	3.4	.49	2.9	.24	3.2	.37
Teachers incorporate interactive teaching methods (such as group activities, discussions, and role-plays)	2.5	.52	2.0	.71	2.3	.62
Teachers adapt teaching strategies to cater to the diverse learning needs and abilities of students in my English language classes	2.5	.64	1.9	.81	2.2	.71
Teachers provide opportunities for students to practice and apply their English language skills in real-life contexts.	2.7	.84	1.8	.66	2.3	.75

Teachers use a variety of assessment methods (such as quizzes, tests, projects, and presentations) to evaluate students' English language proficiency.	3.0	.42	1.4	.53	2.2	.78
Teachers provide timely and constructive feedback to students on their English language performance and assignments.	2.8	.58	1.5	.50	2.2	.54
Teachers effectively manage classroom behaviour and maintain a conducive learning atmosphere for students.	3.0	.43	3.1	.51	3.1	.47
Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and set goals for their English language development	3.2	.56	3.4	.64	3.3	.60

Source: Field work 2022

The study's quantitative data analysis revealed various perceptions among headmasters/mistresses and students regarding English teachers. Most participants disagreed that teachers adequately prepared for lessons (mm=2.1) or were happy with their jobs (mm=1.8). However, there was agreement that English teachers used diverse teaching methods (mm=2.6). Surprisingly, there was consensus that teachers had limited content knowledge (mm=2.9) and pedagogical knowledge (mm=2.9) for teaching the English language. Respondents disagreed that English teachers had opportunities for in-service training (mm=2.0) or engaged in co-operative learning (mm=2.4). This suggests that limited professional development opportunities may lead to traditional, teacher-centred methods.

Furthermore, participants agreed that English teachers lacked motivation due to low salaries (mm=3.2) and faced a considerable workload (mm=3.1). There was disagreement regarding the use of various assessment techniques (mm=2.2) and timely, constructive feedback (mm=2.2). However, there was consensus that teachers effectively managed classroom behavior (mm=3.1), maintaining a conducive learning environment, and encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning and set goals for English language development (mm=3.3).

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the impact of teacher motivation, workload, and professional development on instructional quality. The next section delves into the qualitative aspects of the study for further insights.

Respondents' view about English teachers on the instruction and acquisition of the English language

In enhancing the quantitative data gathered on teacher variables that promote or hinder the standard of English language education in senior high schools, qualitative evidence was sought to comprehend the influence of English teachers on teaching and learning the English language. The central idea that emerged from the responses was that English teachers take

their work seriously and that an equal measure of such seriousness from students could significantly improve outcomes in English language classrooms.

Teachers' responses on the key challenges that affect the quality of English language education in senior high schools

To confirm and ascertain some of the responses given in the questionnaire, an interview was conducted. It was gathered from the interview that English teachers faced a lot of challenges that impeded the provision of quality English language education at the senior high school level. The study found that there were inadequate teacher-student interactions due to large class sizes, pressure on teachers to complete the content of the English curriculum before their final examination. This is what some of the teachers had to say:

“I’m not able to effectively engage in meaning interactions with my students due to inadequate time allocation on the timetable. The total number of hours for the teaching of English is 4 hours per week.” (T3 and 4)

“There is insufficient time allocation for the teaching of English Language” (T5)

Some teachers also attributed large class sizes as a challenge that hindered the standard of English language education. A teacher stated that:

“The classes are congested and that it is sometimes difficult for me to attend to every individual student’s needs. (T7)

Other teachers had this to say about classroom management practices that influenced the quality of English language education:

“Classroom management is an essential aspect of creating a conducive learning environment for students, and it plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of English language education.” (T10)

“Due to the large class sizes it is very tedious to provide individualized attention to students' needs. This is particularly crucial in language education, as learners may have varying levels of proficiency and different learning styles.” (T8 and T11)

Another set of teachers had this to say:

“Maintaining discipline and orderliness in such large classes like these during teaching and learning also affects the standard of English language education” (T9)

Teachers' suggestions for improving the quality of English language education in senior high schools

Having asked English teachers to make suggestions that would help improve the standard to English language education in Ghana, these were some of the suggestion teachers gave:

“Since we have insufficient time to teach English in the language classroom, we must collaborate with other teachers to integrate English language learning into various subjects. For example, encourage science teachers to have discussions and presentations in English during biology or physics classes.” (T1 and T9)

Another teacher had this to say:

“Because English teachers don’t have enough time to interact with students in language classroom, we can encourage students to create language clubs where students can practice English in authentic settings.” (T2)

“Engaging in conversations helps students to improve their fluency, pronunciation, and understanding of the language.” (T6)

Finally, a teacher suggested that:

“Providing continuous professional development opportunities for English teachers will enhance the standard of English education. Offering workshops, training sessions, and access to the latest teaching methodologies and resources will be of immense benefits to teachers.” (T7)

To also confirm and establish the truth in the responses given by headmasters/mistresses and students in the questionnaire and the responses given by English teachers in the interview, a lesson observation was carried out. The next segment delves into the lesson observation that was carried out.

Qualitative analysis of classroom observation schedule

The researchers employed a seven-item instrument to collect data by observing English lessons in 11 senior high schools. These observations aimed to understand various aspects of English teaching, including the teacher's verbal ability, content knowledge, use of instructional materials, pedagogical expertise, classroom management, handling of students' questions, and student involvement. Approval was obtained from school authorities, and lessons were observed in a natural setting, each lasting one instructional hour. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon under investigation.

The verbal ability of the teacher

Effective communication skills, particularly in teaching the English language, are crucial for educators. This study explored the link between teachers' verbal proficiency and their effectiveness in English instruction. While most observed teachers demonstrated good verbal skills, minor grammatical errors were noted possibly due to observation-induced tension. Teachers' verbal abilities serve as models for students, encouraging fluency and language proficiency. Although not at native speaker level, the teachers' verbal skills were deemed

satisfactory. This aligns with research indicating that teachers with strong verbal fluency can better engage students in discussions and language acquisition, modelling correct pronunciation and grammar. Improving teachers' verbal skills can enhance the overall quality of English instruction.

Teachers' content knowledge

Teachers' subject matter expertise is vital for demonstrating competence in their teaching. In this study, the researcher assessed the subject matter knowledge of English teachers. Among the 11 observed teachers, seven who taught phrases and clauses exhibited deficiencies in subject matter knowledge. They seemed to lack a deep understanding of the content and effective instructional methods. Conversely, the other four teachers who covered topics like summary writing, idiomatic expressions, debate writing, and reading comprehension displayed sufficient content knowledge. Interestingly, these topics were considered less challenging than phrases and clauses. This suggests that English teachers may struggle with complex topics but perform better in teaching less demanding ones within the curriculum.

Teachers' use of instructional materials

Effective English language teaching relies on the use of instructional resources to simplify content and improve comprehension. However, in 11 observed lessons, only six included instructional materials like textbooks, lesson notes, and reference books. Seven out of 11 classrooms lacked instructional materials beyond textbooks. The limited use of resources stemmed from financial constraints in the schools, intensified by the demands of free senior high school education in Ghana. Sadly, none of the observed teachers had access to a teacher's guide. This lack of essential instructional materials highlights a significant challenge in enhancing the quality of English language education.

Teachers' pedagogical knowledge

A teacher's pedagogical knowledge involves understanding effective teaching methods for their subject. In English classrooms, teacher-centred methods like lectures and notes were commonly observed. Occasionally, teachers incorporated question-and-answer sessions and brainstorming techniques. They also tapped into students' prior knowledge at the lesson's outset and referred back to previous lessons for context. Most students were attentive and well-prepared for their lessons, contributing to a conducive learning environment.

Teachers' management of classroom situation

In the observed classes, disruptions were common. In one class, students arrived late due to a

delayed lunch, while two classes had clear rules that students adhered to. Prefects occasionally interrupted with announcements, and noise from neighbouring classrooms was a problem. Teachers addressed noise issues by visiting the noisy classrooms. Overcrowding hindered teacher movement and the ability to capture students' attention. Despite challenges, teachers maintained a positive demeanour, being firm, fair, friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, and confident. While some students faced heckling when asking questions, teachers made efforts to control such behaviour, recognizing that these disruptions affected the quality of instruction.

The proficiency of teachers in addressing students' inquiries and contributions

Teachers demonstrated professional management of students' responses and questions by praising good work and redirecting questions for whole-class participation. They maintained flexibility in handling unexpected contributions, refrained from threats or sarcasm, and avoided humiliating students for incorrect answers. Some teachers even rewarded students for correct responses.

Teacher's engagement of students in the lesson

The study's observations unveiled limited student engagement in English lessons, marked by passive participation and teacher-dominated instruction. Large class sizes posed challenges for effective student-centred activities. While students displayed initial enthusiasm, their involvement waned as teachers monopolized the lessons, resulting in a predominantly teacher-centred approach.

It can be observed from the entire data that almost all the respondents were of the view that English teachers were not serious with their work. However, the rate and extent of non-seriousness differed significantly among the respondents. However, in the open-ended question, respondents believed the teachers were serious about their work. Respondents alluded that English teachers did not adequately prepare before the class. This study revealed that teachers were not happy with their jobs. It can, however, be recognised that teachers used varied methods to teach the English language.

According to Karaman (2012), the art of teaching is also a dynamic practice that involves instructors' discipline content and pedagogical knowledge as they converge to facilitate the thought and learning of students within the confines of their classroom setting. English teachers did not have adequate content and pedagogical knowledge to teach the subject. Respondents expressed their blatant agreement that teachers **had** limited content and pedagogical knowledge. This confirms the assertion by Gess-Newsome et al. (2019) that

instructors are deficient in specialised and pedagogical content knowledge needed to teach their subjects. Teachers cannot teach something they do not know. Research has shown that teachers with background experience in the content they teach produce better outcomes than those with little to no knowledge in their fields of subjects (Gropen et al. 2017). Good teachers know the content and can recognise the necessary knowledge and skills needed to master the subject to incorporate them into the successful execution of a programme (Langer 2015).

Okello and Kagoire (2013) argue that the education standards of a country primarily rely on the quality of its teachers. Alternatively, standard education is as good as teacher quality. The standard of education will be poor if teacher quality is also poor. Although effective curriculum implementation is achieved when teachers are professionally trained to teach. The study uncovered that the majority of teachers responsible for teaching English in schools lacked formal training as English teachers in their specialized subject area. This supports Arnott's (2017) view that the training teachers receive from their colleges and universities does not adequately prepare them to teach various subjects in schools.

Regular seminars and in-services orient teachers for the task at hand. Several English teachers expressed that they did not have opportunities for in-service training, nor did they engage in co-operative learning. This contravenes Amadi (2013), who believes that teachers should be provided with continuous access to training and on-going professional development at every level of the education system so that they can make decisions that influence their teaching climate locally and internationally. The attitudes of teachers towards their jobs may affect quality teaching. Teachers with positive attitudes about their profession work hard, while those with negative attitudes do not. The teachers identified several factors that influenced their attitudes toward their work. They believed they had a considerable workload and a lack of motivation due to low salaries, unlike Makokha's (2014) study, which established that instructors were pleased with their wages and sensed that they received a reasonable amount for their work. These factors have impacted the quality of English language education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's primary findings underscore the inadequacy of English language education in meeting expected quality standards. Notably, a significant number of English instructors lacked expertise in English as their main teaching subject, resulting in diminished content mastery and impacting the overall quality of English instruction. Additionally, administrative support for the English curriculum was lacking, and teachers expressed dissatisfaction and

demotivation due to low salaries. Content and pedagogical knowledge of English tutors were also questioned, with respondents agreeing on the limited competence in these areas. Continuous professional development opportunities for English teachers after their Bachelor of Education degrees were notably absent, as evidenced by a lack of participation in in-service training and cooperative learning engagement. Furthermore, a shortage of English language teachers was observed in schools.

In summary, this study's findings reveal a range of interconnected factors impeding the advancement of quality English education among teachers, which directly and negatively influence classroom effectiveness and ultimately hampering students' language learning outcomes. Based on these insights, recommendations include instilling enthusiasm in English lesson delivery, fostering a positive outlook towards the subject and students, and creating teaching resources when official support is lacking. Embracing student-centred, communicative teaching approaches that emphasize participation, authentic language use, and critical thinking is also advised. Establishing professional development programmes and communities can empower teachers with innovative instructional skills, while cultivating supportive and interactive learning environments is essential to nurture positive attitudes and enhance language learning experiences for students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The current study focused on the teacher-related factors affecting the quality of senior high school English language education in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. Further studies should be conducted in other metropolis, municipalities or districts in Ghana where there are few studies or no such studies. This would provide a more comprehensive picture of the quality of English language education across the country.

FUNDING

The authors received no direct funding for this study.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors

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