

REMEDIAL BASIC LITERACY EDUCATION PROGRAMME: A CORRECTIVE MECHANISM IN ADDRESSING THE “BABU TURANCI” SYNDROME AMONG STUDENTS’ IN SOKOTO STATE

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Abstract

Aside from the level of insecurity that plagues the Northern part of Nigeria, their hitherto restraint against Western education has had its effect on English language proficiency among students, which in turn has influenced students’ academic performance. This paper, therefore, critically examined remedial basic literacy education programmes as a technique to correct the menace of “BABU TURANCI” among secondary school students in some parts of northern Nigeria. Discussions on the three major concepts of remedial education programme, basic foundation literacy and English language proficiency, were brought to the fore. The concept, “Babu Turanci”, which means as English language proficiency was discussed in relation to academic performance. The rationale for basic literacy moreover, its implementation process was equally examined. Recommendations include; the identification of students who are not proficient in English language, design and implement remedial classes in all schools, advocate basic literacy, Government should sensitize and advocate adult literacy for parents in order to allow for balanced language communication and also create a nurturing relationship between school and home, Government should collaborate with National Youth Service Corp, to train Corp members on how to carry out such basic literacy classes and effective quality assurance over basic education programmes.

Keywords: Remedial Education Programme, English Language Proficiency, Basic Foundation Literacy, Northern Nigeria, Babu Turanci

Introduction

A great demand is globally placed upon the phrase “Equal educational opportunities” as it serves as a criterion for consideration before embarking on any educational policy or programme. Building on the reports from the world Conference on education in Jomtien, Thailand, “Education for All” (EFA) of 1990, eradicating illiteracy is an exigent objective of every nation. Nigeria’s continuous and conscious effort to eradicate illiteracy is both a fundamental and a constitutional goal. This is evident and heavily supported by the Constitution of Nigeria, Chapter 3, section 18, sub-section 3, which states that “Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy”. In achieving this goal, government has embarked upon providing free and compulsory basic literacy at all levels across the whole country most especially in the North in order to envelope a skewed educational system experienced hitherto, which is blamed on their historical restraint against the early introduction of Western education to Nigeria and contemporarily, the persistent level of insecurity.

English language was the language of instruction used by the early missionary. It was also the language of the colonial masters. Extensively, it monopolistically remained the

language of instruction and every other economic and commercial activity even after independence, as such one could deduce that retaining the language of the colonial masters is a feature of neo-colonialism which has extensively affected student academic prowess since it is a foreign language, although in the long run, with its predominant acceptance at the international stage, Aina and Olanipekun (2013) postulated that the peculiarity of the language in Nigeria has offered a great level of leverage to the nation in accessing opportunities at the international stage for all kind of matters and activities, be it education, commerce, research, defence and economy among many others.

A child's mastery of the language and mode of communication used for classroom instruction is a major determinant and factor in his/her academic performance, this is the major reason "English language" which is our lingua franca and language for classroom instruction is regarded as a compulsory subject across all levels of education and a major requirement for admission into the tertiary institution. Since there is a high level of relationship between student mastery or proficiency of the language of instruction and their performance in both the language as a subject taught in class and almost all other subjects.

Student proficiency in English language is very vital for both the progress and success in their academic pursuit and academic programme respectively. With little or no attention given to mother tongue education as a medium of instruction delivery, consequently, English language is unchallengeably the official language for instruction in most secondary schools in Nigeria. As such, students must be well acquainted with the language to be active in class rather than passive. The language is extremely indispensable since almost all other subjects are taught in English with their text materials also written in English, as such, student ability to understand and perform as expected in all other subjects hinges on their proficiency level in English language.

Besides, there is a high indication of Secondary school students who are not adequately proficient in English language, which makes it difficult for a successful classroom lesson delivery. Particularly, such students in the North across all levels of education, specifically in secondary schools, are observed to give replies such as "BABU TURANCI" or "TURANCI KANDA KANDA" which means "No English" or "English small small" (I understand a little of English) respectively" when asked to reply to a question or during a conversation. "Babu Turanci" would mean zero level of proficiency in English language while "Turanci kanda kanda" means a low level of student proficiency in English language. In corroboration, Umar et' al (2018) reported that students of the public secondary schools in the North are greatly lacking in the area of being able to comprehend and speak English.

Considering the peculiarity of the students under observation and consideration, it remains debatable why such students are in the senior secondary school level of education despite their low level of proficiency in English Language. Although this could be because of the ineffective implementation of primary or basic education programme as well as the illegal enrolment and promotion of students in spite of their poor performance. However, to salvage the situation, students with such peculiarity should be exposed to Remedial Basic Foundation Literacy Education Programme organised by schools or the government.

A remedial education programme is an educational programme that schools routinely and strategically employed to bring low-achieving learners' academic performance to the standard of their grades in school (Melton, 2010). Remedial education bridges the gap

between the actual student success level and the expected student success level. The remedial basic foundation literacy education programme is aimed at correcting the abnormality of low levels of proficiency in English language among secondary school students. The programme will focus on helping the student improve their basic literacy skill which extensively covers their mastery of the language of instruction. Remedial education is necessary where the learner is cognitively average or above average in intellectual ability and is, therefore, able to rapidly understand missed concept and relate it to the rest of the subject (Chakuchichi & Badza, 2004). Therefore, the paper sought to concisely advocate for remedial basic literacy education programme as a mechanism for enhancing students' proficiency in English Language.

Conceptualizing “Babu Turanci” and “Turanci Kanda Kanda”

The expression “Babu Turanci” is a Hausa word, which means “No English”, it implies “I do not understand English”, while “Turanci Kanda Kanda” literally means “English Small Small” or I have a little mastery of English language. The word is quite common among many dwellers of different occupations in the Northern region especially when they observe that they are conversing with an outsider who appears to lack proper understanding of Hausa and prefers to use English as a medium of communication. It is a signal for the person to consider alternative means to communicate or water down his/her vocabulary usage. Without disrespect to the mother tongue, the fact remains that English language is Nigeria's lingua franca and a medium of communication for almost all activities and sectors of the economy.

The word “Babu Turanci” can be better understood by explaining student proficiency in English language. English language proficiency means the level of student mastery of English language as it covers reading, writing, speaking, listening and its usage as a medium of communication and in understanding classroom instruction. This is the more reason why much attention is given to English language, since it is the language of classroom instruction. As such, students who do not have adequate mastery over the language might be cognitively segregated from the classroom. This is because its vocabulary forms the structure of the text materials and learning materials as well as the mode of communication used by instructors to transfer knowledge. The following are the challenges faced by such special students;

- a) Identification of Alphabetical letters, their names and sounds
- b) Usage of capitalisation
- c) Poor handwriting
- d) Frequent grammatical errors
- e) Poor punctuation and pronunciation skills
- f) Spelling errors
- g) Inability to understand instructions
- h) Poor communication skill
- i) Inadequacy of vocabulary
- j) Problem of tenses
- k) Knowledge of word formation processes
- l) Simple sentence formation

The Rationale for Basic Literacy

The ability to read and write is a paramount goal of basic literacy. It is a pivotal approach to eradicating illiteracy. Basic literacy is both foundational and pervasive. It is a fundamental and foundational stage in the academic life of a child. Its pervasiveness on the other hand is drawn from the fact that English language is the language of instructions for other subjects.

In explaining basic literacy, Mackenzie (2018) postulated that there are two types of literacy which are constrained literacy skills and unconstrained literacy skills. He explained that the first type of literacy is easier to teach because they are fixed. Examples of these skills include skills such as the alphabet or common spelling rules. He further stressed that, unlike constrained skills, unconstrained skills are more difficult to teach because they require interpretation and critical thinking. They are acquired through experience such as the development of a wider vocabulary and the ability to understand metaphors in reading.

There are significant implications for educators and educational leaders since literacy is present in almost all aspects of life, especially in the school setting (Antilla, 2013). In the same vein, Anderson and Cheungi (2003) postulated that literacy scholars advocated that reading to preschoolers helps them to prepare for greater success. It is therefore not just important to the everyday life of a child but also an irreplaceable foundation and unavoidable stage in the learning process. Travdgiridze, (2016) postulated that a lack of reading skills has an extreme impact on education at all ages. More precisely, Mackenzie, 2018 is also of the view that in the typical mathematics classroom. Literacy is not often the priority, instead one focuses on manipulative, worksheets, demonstrations and enquiry-based learning. However, he stressed that there are many ways reading can be used in developing mathematics skills and understanding, he further argued that a student has to be able to read the directions, interpret their meaning and solve the problem. These pose two concerns, one is that students without literacy skills might find it nearly impossible to read, consequently, unable to understand other concepts of other subjects. Secondly, they may find it difficult to read examination questions as well as the inability to put pen to paper. These two concerns will always transpire and lead to a nose-diving academic performance of such a student.

Many scholars have even defended early literacy development (parental involvement) to be very instrumental rather than exposure of a child to basic literacy later in life. This will lead us to consider the extent of the effect of the vernacular the students have been exposed to early in life. Snow and Mathew, (2016) opined that literacy skills are highly important to develop as early as possible, they further posited that children who do not develop age-appropriately literacy skills by the end of third grade are at high risk of school failure.

Remedial Education

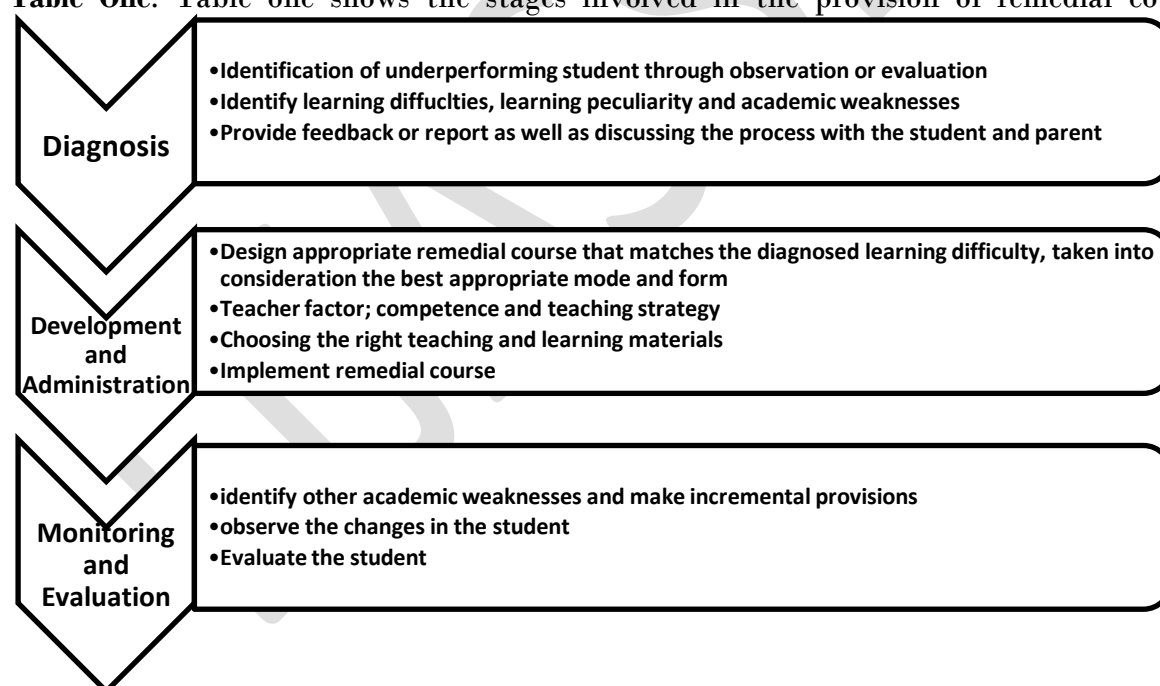
Educational wastage not only indicates internal and external inefficiency of the educational system but also a loss on the part of the government, parents or guardians who bore the cost of education. As such, beyond offering education along the indices “equal education opportunities”, a greater concern is recently given to the fact that every child has a certain quota expected of them to contribute to national development; thus the need for all students to meet the minimum academic standard.

Selvarajan and Vasanthagumar (2012) stressed that remedial education is intended to address children's learning difficulties especially that which covers their lack of control of the regular classroom instruction. As such, it is seen as an intervention and supplementary strategy. Remedial education is a well-designed strategic corrective mechanism targeted at an identified learning difficulty in a student that has continually prevented the student from reaching his/her learning potential or the class minimum academic requirement.

In the opinion of Munene, Peter, and Njoka (2017) such learners include those who have poor receptive capability; lack self-esteem and self-confidence; do not have interest in formal education; are easily distracted; and lack adequacy in terms of paying attention in class. Underperforming students could be also regarded as low-achieving students or those who are unable to attain the expected learning outcome. Remedial education should not be posed to treat only identified learning difficulties or learning disabilities, in some cases a child who is expected to perform at a particular level might not do so, as a result of an error of omission in a particular concept expected of a child to have known which will be needed for the present class where he/she is underperforming.

According to Eldah (2005), Remedial education is a part of education which is concerned with the investigation, prevention and treatment of learning difficulties from whatever source they may emanate and which hinder the normal development of pupils.

Table One: Table one shows the stages involved in the provision of remedial course



The diagram shows the stages involved in the provision of remedial education programs. The whole process is subsumed into three stages which include; Diagnosis; development and administration; and monitoring and evaluation. Remedial education is an offshoot of feedback from an assessment and evaluation. As such, Tseng's diary as cited in Huang (2010) described it as a spiral process which entails an assessment-instruction-re-assessment process.

Remedial education involves the process whereby a teacher, instructor, or educator diagnoses certain learning difficulties or needs in a child which happen to hinder his

expected healthy academic growth and carries out an investigation of several probable alternatives of corrective learning instruction that will best suit the identified child's special need to help the child achieve his/her expected academic success level. It is a diagnostic, Doctoral and scientific approach to a child's learning ability and disability Remedial education is not just organizing special classes for students who are underperforming rather it must seek to address a particular identified learning difficulty faced by the student which prevents him/her from progressing or performing well in the regular class. Along this line, Munene et' al (2017) emphasized the need for detailed and systematic planning of the remedial teaching or course which must be an offshoot of carefully identifying the learning difficulty in the child and properly matching against the identified learning difficulty appropriate teaching strategy, materials, reading materials, content and competent trainers under proper supervision. In the same vein, Hema and Sonam (2020) argued that the method chosen should reinforce the primacy of learning and provide assistance to learners to outgrow their fear and learning difficulties as well as maximize their potential. Implicit of these assertions is;

- a) Evaluation and observation precedes remedial teaching or the remedial course
- b) Identification of the student
- c) Diagnoses and identification of the learning difficulty in the student
- d) Designing appropriate remedial course
- e) Matching the remedial course against the identified learning difficulty
- f) There must be proper monitoring and evaluation of the whole process
- g) Remedial course must students overcome their learning difficulties and maximize their learning potential
- h) The remedial course might become futile if there is an incongruity between the identified learning difficulty and the designed remedial course

In addition, the mode of the remedial program must be well structured, this takes into consideration its form and mode which includes extra classes such as extra lessons or after-school lessons, provision of extra reading materials, home lessons, tutorial classes, E-learning and preparatory classes among others. The level of technological advancement supports and promotes remedial education, this will help to solve the problem of timing and its' interference with regular classroom instruction. It is also important to stress that, the student taking the remedial course should be subjected to evaluation to identify improvement or otherwise. This whole process requires a great level of competence on the part of the teacher.

According to Munene et al (2017), it is important for teachers to be trained in Remedial education programmes and also to make efforts to adapt instruction to learners' special needs. They further stressed that in the Remedial programme, personalised strategies are given to address each student's individual needs and measure their progress.

Remedial Basic Literacy Education Programme and Student Proficiency in English Language

A remedial basic literacy programme or remedial English program will be helpful to students who are poorly proficient in English language. Aina et' al (2013) reported that, "there is low proficiency in English language and this to a very large extent resulted in under-achievement among Nigeria senior secondary school students and those at the higher institutions". As against this, he also made a recommendation for the need for

policy makers to show more interest in the institutionalization of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction so as to reduce the monopolistic strength of English language.

This later position continues to remain an ending and unresolved discourse, with more clamour and less action. With this in mind, students who are poorly proficient in English language will continue to struggle with classroom lessons and in turn, are unable to progress through the school system. In support of this, Linake, Moyo, and Makeleni (2021) reported that the higher the level of students' proficiency in English language, the higher the tendency to improve their academic performance and vice versa. Scholars have also noted the prevailing poor and persistent worrisome performance of students in English language across all levels of the educational system, specifically pointing out students' failure in English language in the yearly West African Examination Council (WAEC) and subsequent deficiency in English language especially in the tertiary institution (Akinsolu, 2010; Anyadiegwu, 2012 and Olanipekun, 2013).

The remedial course should be structured to fit the basic foundation literacy which covers the basics of English Language. It should cover alphabet identification and their sounds, spelling, tenses, handwriting skills, punctuation, construction of simple to complex sentences, application of words to the understanding of other subjects, and vocabulary development and building. Although, the main aims are to achieve effectiveness towards reading and writing.

Reading is essential to the progressive nature of a child's academic life. Lesaux (2017) opines that reading is primate and pervasive having a great level of dynamism that requires its' continued development in the student in order to sustain and maintain the status quo in terms of preparedness amidst the increasing demand of school reading materials, learning materials and school tasks. Reading means interacting with prints and electronic materials to arrive at a point of insight and enlightenment based on the information contained in the material. However, one could argue that it would be nearly impossible to read a material when the student does not understand the language in which the text is written, thus, proficiency in the language to which a text is written and developing reading skills must precede developing a reading habit.

According to Burris 2009, discussing one of the implemented education programmes called the reading recovery programme of Maria Clay in New Zealand, he explained that students were by observation studied literacy achievement in text reading, dictation, letter identification, concepts about print, writing vocabulary and sight words in beginning and end of the programme. The reading recovery programme as discussed by Burris has a certain level of similarities with the supplemental reading programme as suggested by Linake et' al (2021) as a remedial teaching course that helps to improve the level of students' proficiency in English language. In their opinion, this entails continuous practice of reading unfamiliar text, until a certain level of fluency is achieved. Assistance must also be provided in the area of writing. There are different handwriting techniques or skills that could be provided during the remedial course in order to help students write clearly and boldly.

The development of an adaptive instructional technique that suits the diagnosed learning need is exigent to help improve a child in the areas identified by Burris. Likely are areas of spelling, missing letters and faulty pronunciation as spelt out by (Desai 2006). Employing such instruction in a Remedial class will help improve students' basic literacy achievements as well as help them have a positive attitude towards other subjects. In support of this, is the study conducted by Selvarajan, et' al (2012) on the impact of

Remedial teaching on improving the competencies of low achievers. Their findings revealed that the Remedial teaching programme proved to be effective in improving the learning achievement of the students in Tamil language and mathematics. In the same vein Desai, 2006 developed a Remedial programme for improving the language ability of children in fourth grade. The results showed that most defects committed by their pupils which included errors in spelling, missing letters and faulty pronunciation were minimized by Remedial instruction.

Conclusion

Literacy acquisition plays a significant role as well as a continuous strength for a child's academic development. Basic literacy is a necessity for every child as it is foundational, pivotal and pervasive; it also aims at helping the student become acquainted with the language of instruction at their early stage. It is therefore of great importance to advocate for the establishment of a special and remedial programme on basic literacy programme which is well designed and adaptively structured to meet the student needs most specifically in the area of English language proficiency.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Government in collaboration with school administrators and teachers should identify students who are lacking basic literacy.
2. Policymakers should carefully understudy the issue so as to design an adaptive remedial course policy and develop proper strategies to help execute the remedial programme.
3. Government should equip the existing remedial education centres and task them with the responsibility of assisting students with such learning difficulties.
4. Schools should create a special or a remedial class called a basic literacy class to correct such errors in identified students.
5. Government should sensitize and advocate adult literacy for parents in order to allow for balanced language communication and also create a nurturing relationship between school and home.
6. Government should collaborate with National Youth Service Corp, to train Corp members on how to carry out such basic literacy classes.
7. Government should prioritize the basic literacy programme education with effective quality assurance in order to prevent this educational crisis from continuous recurrence.
8. Government and schools should ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the basic classes, more precisely basic 1-6.
9. Sensitization of Corp members who are posted to such regions about remedial instruction
10. Organize a one-year remedial programme for the graduating students of the following classes; Basic Six, Basic Nine and Senior secondary school class three.

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