



Challenges English Language Teachers in the Wouri Division Face in the Teaching of Language Skills and Sub-Skills in a CBA Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This article set out to investigate the difficulties teachers face in the implementation of the Competence-Based Approach (CBA) in the teaching of language Skills and Sub-Skills in the classroom context in Cameroon. Three secondary schools in the Wouri Division were chosen for this study. To achieve this, we use the following tools: A questionnaire was administered to teachers. This was to inquire if teachers face challenges, if yes what types of challenges do they face when teaching in a CBA classroom. Interviews were also conducted with two pedagogic inspectors. This was to know if inspectors were aware of the challenges teachers face when teaching in the CBA classroom. Classroom observation were also conducted.

Data was analyzed statistically using tables and percentages. The analyses revealed the following: Inspectors were aware of the challenges teachers face in the teaching field, teachers face challenges such as : managing overcrowded classroom, lack of teaching aids, lack of the knowledge of the CBA, lack of training on the CBA tenets, lack of motivation and insufficient hours allocated to teach the English Language using the CBA norms.

Finally, we came up with some suggestions for successful implementation of the CBA by teachers, some recommendations which, will be of help to teachers curriculum designers and educational authorities. Some proposals for further research were also given

Introduction

The CBA was introduced in the French-speaking Africa in 1996 during the conference of ministers of education whose countries share the French language, in Yaounde (Bernard et al 2007)

The Competence based approach (CBA) is a new approach officially introduced in Cameroon's educational system in the year 2014 according to order no. 264/2014/MINESEC 13 August 2014. This students-Centered approach has its norms that must be strictly followed by both teachers and learners for effective learning to take place. The CBA aims at bridging classroom teaching to extracurricular activities. In this light, students are expected to use what they learn in the classroom, to function in society to perform real life activities.

It should be noted that the CBA aims at building Competences (discourse Competence, linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, strategic Competence) in learners.

For teaching of this approach to be effective, teachers must play some roles when teaching language Skills and Sub-Skills. They can play a role of a monitor, guide, observer, participants, assessor, among other roles with respect to the Skills/Sub-Skills taught. While students on their parts are at the Centre of the of the learning process and are expected to be autonomous, creative, researchers among other roles, during the learning process. Though the norms of the CBA are clearly outlined, teachers face a lot of challenges implementing them.

1.literature review :

Kouwenhoven (2003) gives concrete definitions of the two terms. He defines "Competency" as "the ability to choose and use an integrated combination knowledge, skills and abilities with the intention to realize a task in a certain context, while personal characteristics such as motivation, self-confidence and will-power are part of that context". Kouwenhoven (2003) defines "Competence" as "the capacity to accomplish up to a standard, the key occupational tasks that characterize a profession".

Competency-Based teaching is therefore an approach to education which focuses on the students' demonstration of desired learning outcomes as central to the learning process.

Richard and Rodgers (2001) indicate that the Competency-Based language learning approach centres on what learners are expected to do with the language they acquire in class. CBA is based on real-life situations. This entails, effective learning can only take place when learners are aware of the

fact that what they are learning will improve on their lives. As such, as far as the learning of English language is concerned under the CBA, language items should be introduced and practiced in different situations similar to situation in real-life.

(Markova, 1996; Kubrushko, 2001 Zeer, 2007) say professional Competence exists only within the frame of a concrete profession, professional activity.

Barber (2007: 33-34) citing Perrenoud (2001) says, Competence is the faculty of mobilizing a set of cognitive resources such as knowledge capacities and information in order to face a family of situation with efficacy and pertinence. To confirm this definition, Perrenoud stated that knowing how to treat an ill child is a competence which does not only mobilize capacities such as taking the temperature, knowing how to observe the psychological signs and how to administer a remedy but also requires knowledge of pathologies and their symptoms, some emergency measures, and what medicines to dispense and some medical and pharmaceutical services.

Chelli (2010) in “The competence-Based Approach in higher education” defines Competency as: a know how to act process which integrates and mobilizes a set of capacities, skills and amount of knowledge that will be used effectively in various problem-solving situations and in circumstances that have never occurred before. Chelli (2010) further states that Competency are the various skills learners have to be taught which may lead them to acquire the four language skills in an interactional way to be able to use them later on, either in their jobs or in their daily lives. The term Competency refers to the skill that one needs in a particular job or for a particular task.

Schadrikov (2011 : Raven 2002 ; Khutorskoi, : 2003) say the definition of Competence has common features in all investigations such as readiness of an individual to cope with various tasks, as unity knowledge, skills and experience, attitude, which are necessary for fulfilling concrete work.

(Sylvan, 2005 cited in Mosha, 2012) define competence as : a set of skills, knowledge and behaviours someone needs to have achieved in order to perform tasks or activities at school and in the world of work.

Nkwetisama (2012) investigated on the topic “The Competency Based Approach to English language Education and the Walls between the Classroom and the society in Cameroon...”. He realized that, though most Anglophone learners have taken a considerable length of time in learning the English language in secondary schools, their speech is still generally characterized by deviant forms. He used the metaphor of the “wall” to explain that “walls exist between the knowledge these learners get in the classroom and the implementation of the knowledge in the real life situations”.

According to Nkwetisama, English Language teaching in the classroom was not adapted to everyday communication needs of the learners. Nkwetisama attributed students’ poor oral performance to the fact that most teachers still used the traditional methods (grammar translation methods) which was more on the written form of language. The author believed that the competence based approach can solve this problem.

Georges Calvin Kengni Bidja (2017) investigated on “challenges in implementing the competence-Based Approach. The case of English language teachers of Francophone secondary schools in Yaounde”. His findings revealed that pedagogic workshops organised by inspectors were not enough for teachers to get sufficient knowledge on the CBA. Consequently, teachers faced difficulties in the field during teaching.

Nyam Anna Wulnijofwi (2018) did “An evaluation of the implementation of the competence-Based approach of teaching in the development of learners’ writing skill in ELT materials in Cameroon: the case of graded English”. She dwelt on whether the writing activities in Graded English Book Three are enough to enhance the writing tailored to meet the demands of the CBA. Her results revealed that the writing skill was fully integrated with other skills and these writing activities were in conformity with the national syllabus. The study also revealed that the course book did not clearly state how the learners could use these activities.

2. Challenges Teachers face in the CBA classroom.

With the introduction of then CBA in the educational system in Cameroon, English Language teachers face the following challenges: overcrowded classroom, classroom management, lack of teaching aids, lack of didactic materials, lack of knowledge of the CBA norms, lack of motivation, insufficient hours for practice, insufficient training

2.1. Over crowded Classroom

According to the norms of the CBA, students are supposed to be at the Centre of the learning process. In this light, individual/pair/group work is supposed to be organized by the teacher so that each and every student should be participative during the teaching/learning process.

Taking in to consideration the fact that in some schools especially government schools (Lycees) some classes have about 80-100 students, it is practically impossible for this process to be effective, given the time allocated for each period and the number of modules and lessons to be covered within the sequence/term/year.

2.2. Classroom management

In classes with large population, even group/pair/individual work is an up-hill task. It is practically almost impossible to manage such large classes which sometimes are characterized by uncontrollable noise

2.3. Lack of Teaching aids

The use of teaching aids lead to effective training. It is so surprising that most teachers don't have teaching aids even the course books which are supposed to be provided by the school administration. This is one of the greatest challenges teachers face which impede the impartation of knowledge.

2.4. Lack of knowledge of the CBA norms.

One can not claim to use an approach effectively to teach its learners whereas the norms of the approach are not known to him/her.

Some teachers complain of lack of knowledge of the norms of the CBA and that makes them ineffective in the teaching process. Their complains stem from the fact that: they have not had enough workshops/seminars to enhance them with the norms of the approach, others complain that inspectors don't visit them regularly in their classroom in order to correct some of the mistakes they make in their classrooms during teaching process.

2.5. Insufficient hours for practice

The norm of the CBA demand that students should be at the centre of the teaching process. This means that each and every students should participate in the learning process. This can only be achieved through individual/group/pair work. Unfortunately, the number of hours allocated for the teaching of the English Language in secondary schools is very insufficient to carry out this process (2/3 hours per week). As such, teachers find it difficult to do effective teaching during this very short period of time.

2.6. Lack of motivation

Motivation is one of the things that encourages people to work harder. When someone knows that they will be motivated after rendering a service, they will work harder in order to achieve this at the end. Unfortunately, teachers complain of lack of motivation by their bosses/the administrator after hard work. This discourages them and in turn paralyses hard work.

2.7. Lack of training

Some teachers especially those who were not trained in training schools (ENS) on how to teach using the CBA, express the wish to go back to school and be trained on how to teach using the CBA. They complained that seminars/workshops do not really equip them with enough knowledge of the CBA as being trained in a training school would have done. This difficulty poses a problem with regards to the implementation of the approach in the classroom context.

Presentation of Data on challenges English Language Teachers face in teaching following the CBA norms.

Samples of EFL teachers for the study

Locality	Name of school	Type of school	Number of teachers
Wouri Division	Lycee d'Akwa	Monolingual	08
Wouri Division	Lycee de Ndoghem	Monolingual	14
Wouri Division	All Saints Bilingual college	Bilingual boarding school	07
Total			29

The table above shows that three(3) schools were used for this research: Two(2) government schools and one (1) private boarding school. The number of respondent used was 29.

Presentation of Data on challenges teachers face in teaching following the CBA norms.

Options	Lycee d'Akwa	o/o	Lycee de Ndoghem	o/o	All Saints Bilingual college	o/o
Overcrowded classroom	6	75	11	78.5	4	57.1
Classroom management	5	62.5	10	71.4	4	57.1
Financial constraint	7	87.5	12	85.7	/	/
Lack of teaching aids	8	100	14	100	3	42.8
Lack of didactic materials	6	75	12	85.7	/	/

Lack of knowledge of the CBA norms	6	75	10	71.4	5	71.4
Lack of motivation	8	100	14	100	/	/
Insufficient hours for practice	8	100	14	100	7	100
Insufficient training at seminars/workshops	5	62.5	8	57.1	5	71.4

The table above reveals that in Lycee d' Akwa, 6 respondents (75 %) face the problem of over crowded classroom, 5(62.5%) respondents face the challenge of classroom management, 7(87.5%) respondents face the challenge of financial constraints, 8(100 %) respondents face the problem of lack of teaching aids, 6(75 %) of the respondents face the challenge of lack of didactic materials, 6(75 %) of the respondents face the challenge of lack of the knowledge of the CBA norms, 8(100 %) respondents face the challenge of insufficient hours for practice and 5(62.5 %) of the respondents complain of insufficient training at seminars/workshops on the norms of the CBA.

In Lycee de Ndoghem, 11(78.5%) of the teachers face the problem of overcrowded classroom, 10(71.4 %) of the respondents face the challenge of classroom management, 12(85.7 %) of the respondents face the problem of financial constraints, 14(100 %) respondents face the challenge of lack of teaching aids, 12(85.7%) respondents face the challenge of lack of didactic materials, 10(71.4 %) respondents face the problem of lack of knowledge of the CBA norms, 14(100 %) respondents face the challenge of lack of motivation, 14(100 %) respondents face the challenge of insufficient hours for practice, 8(57.1 %) face the challenge of insufficient training at the seminars/workshops on the norms of the CBA.

In All Saints Bilingual College, 4(57.1 %) of the respondents face the challenge of overcrowded classroom, 4(57.1 %) of the respondents face the problem of classroom management, 3(42.8%) of the respondents face the challenge of the lack of teaching aids, 5(71.4%) of the respondents face the challenge of lack of the knowledge of the CBA norms, 7(100 %) respondents face the challenge of insufficient hours for practice and 5(71.4 %) of the respondents face the challenge of insufficient training/workshops/seminars.

From the above analyses, it is clear that English Language teachers in Cameroon and specifically in the Wouri Division face serious challenges when it comes to teaching their learners using the norms of the new approach (CBA).

Questionnaire to teachers on the challenges they face

Questionnaire to teachers on the challenges they face was conducted as follows:

What are the challenges teachers face when teaching following the CBA norms?

Overcrowded classrooms Classroom management Financial constraints Lack of teaching aids Lack of didactic materials Lack of knowledge of the CBA norms

Lack of motivation Insufficient hours for practice Insufficient training at seminars/workshops

Interviews with pedagogic inspectors

Two Regional Pedagogic inspectors were interviewed to enquire the following issues with regards to the challenges teachers face in teaching using the CBA norms. The inspectors were expected to say: how they help prepare teachers to teach English Language Skills and Sub Skills using the CBA norms, if they were aware of the challenges teachers face in the field when teaching using the CBA, whether or not the inspectors provide any didactic materials to teachers to help them better implement the CBA in their classroom, how often inspectors organize Pedagogic seminars/workshops in order to arm teachers with the norms of the new approach for better implementation. The interview comprised of 7 questions as seen below.

- 1) How do you prepare secondary school teachers on the use of the CBA?
- 2) Do you provide any didactic material(s) to teachers to help them better implement the CBA in their classrooms?
- 3) How often do you organize pedagogic seminars in order to arm teachers to better implement the approach?
- 4) Are you aware of some of the challenges teachers face implementing the CBA in their classrooms?
- 5) What are some of the challenges that you as inspectors face when you are on the field for inspection?
- 6) How do you go about these challenges?
- 7) What suggestions can you make so that the CBA can be better implemented in secondary schools?

Classroom Observation;

Classroom observation was also done to witness the challenges English Language teachers faced in their various classrooms. This was done through the help of an observation checklist. This checklist included the following items: Skill and Sub-skills observed, title of lesson, class or level, teacher's grade, date, class population, usual aids used, the learning activities involved, general atmosphere of the class, mastering of Skills and Sub-skills taught, type of class, relation of skills to real life situation, lesson planning, role played by teachers during lesson, lesson objective attained at the end of the lesson.

Observation Checklist

1- Skill / Sub-skill observed

a) listening skill b) Reading skill c) Speaking skill d) Writing skill e) Vocabulary sub-skill f) Grammar sub-skill g) Pronunciation sub-skill

2-Title of lesson _____

3-Level/Class _____

4-Time _____

5-Grade _____

6-Date _____

7- Class population

a) less than 50 b) between 50 and 100 c) more than 100

8- Visual aids used

a) Pictures b) textbooks c) Video d) Real objects / realia e) photocopied materials
f) none of the above

9- The learning activities involved

a) project work b) pair work c) group work d) role-play e) individual written activity
f) none of the above

10- General atmosphere of the class

a) interactive b) passive c) noisy

11- Mastery of the skill/sub-skill taught

a) little mastery b) good mastery c) no mastery

12- Type of class

a) student-centred b) teacher-centred

13- Relation of skill /sub-skill to real life situation

a) little relation b) correct relation c) wrong relation

14- Role played by teacher during lesson

a) correct play of role b) wrong play of role

15- Lesson planning

a) Did not plan his/her lesson b) planned his/her lesson

16- Lesson objective(s)

a) Lesson objective attained at the end of the lesson b) Lesson objective not attained at the end of the lesson

Recommendations

After carrying out an analysis on the implementation of the CBA in the teaching of language skills and sub-skills, we have some recommendations to make. These recommendations could be of great help to teachers, learners, educational authorities and curriculum designers. This will help them to use things/items in the natural environment around the didactic materials.

Recommendations to Teachers

Though the CBA quests that the learner should be at the centre of the learning process, it is the teacher that initiates the teaching and the learning processes. As a results, the teacher plays a great role for the CBA lessons to be implemented effectively. For these to be successful, the teacher for instance is supposed to teach using visual aids or concrete objects found in daily life to stimulate his students, get learners perform certain real-life tasks by dividing them into groups or pairs and giving them tasks that will help them solve their real-life problems. They are also recommended not to teach language sub-skills in isolation but in relation to main skills and subsequently in relation to real-life situations. They are recommended to give equal weight to the teaching of all the language skills and sub-skills whether or not they are tested in official exams.

Recommendations to curriculum designers

We recommended that curriculum designers should incorporate Cameroonian real-life settings in the CBA prescribed course book.

Recommendations to educational authorities

To educational authorities we recommend that strategies which were put in place to introduce the CBA in the educational system in Cameroon should be reformed or revised. This could be done by inviting experts from other countries to train not only inspectors but also teachers on teaching language skills and sub-skills following the CBA norms.

Inspectors on their parts should come and inspect teachers regularly, after inspection, they should do some follow up to be sure each teacher inspected corrects his or her mistakes where or she went wrong during inspection. They should endeavor to add the number of hours used to teach the English Language. This will help teachers to have enough time for practical lesson/tasks.

Proposal for further research

This work is limited to the challenges English Language teachers face in Cameroon specifically in the Wouri Division. Similar research could be done in a wider scope. Below are some topics proposed for further research

- 1- A comparative study of the Competence-Based Approach and the objective-based approach in some selected schools in Yaounde
- 2- Challenges students face in the CBA classroom during the learning process. A case study of some selected schools in the Western Region.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the challenges English teachers face in teaching using the CBA norms in Cameroon and specifically in the Wouri Division. An analyses of teacher's questionnaire, interviews with inspectors and classroom observation carried out revealed that respondents face a lot of challenges when teaching using the new approach (CBA). These challenges include: overcrowded classroom, classroom management, financial constraint, lack of teaching aids, lack of didactic materials, lack of knowledge of the CBA norms, lack of motivation, insufficient hours for practice and insufficient training at seminars/workshops.