

# Effect of Gender and Year of Graduation on the Quality of N.C.E. English Graduate Teachers

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**Abstract** Series of papers have been written on the diverse challenges facing English language teaching in Nigeria which has led to the poor performance of students in the English Language. A lot of these works have concentrated on the Senior Secondary Education. They have identified as part of the problems, English Language (L2) teachers that are not academically qualified to teach are found in the classroom handling the teaching of the language, lack of adequate teaching materials, among others. A lot of these papers have failed to look at the competent of the English Language (L2) teachers at the Primary and the Junior Secondary level where the foundation of learning the language is expected to be laid. The quality of the English L2 teachers that have been certified, through the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) to teach at these levels. As a contribution towards ameliorating the drawbacks being experienced in the teaching and learning of the English Language in Nigeria, this paper attempts to investigate the quality of already certified teachers of English (L2) holding the Nigeria Certificate in Education. The sample of the study were fifty English Language students in 200 level, selected purposively. The criteria for selection is completion of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) programme in the English Language (L2). The class of Ninety B.Ed. English Student is heterogeneous because it contains students who got admission through UTME and Direct entry (those who have done NCE before). The criteria for selection is completion of NCE degree. Common Error Tests in grammar usage was used as the instrument for data collection. Test items comprise grammatical errors ranging from commonly confused spellings and wrong usages of words, errors of preposition/particles. The result was analyzed using T-Test, Mean and ANOVA. The findings revealed that N.C.E English graduate teachers exhibit low performance in the English Language which they have been certified to teach. It further shows that gender has no influence on the quality of teachers produced but the quality of NCE teachers drop as the year progresses. It concludes that the quality of NCE teachers being produced at present cannot give the Students the necessary foundation that is expected in English Language (L2) learning which is expected to be built on at the Senior Secondary School level. This ineptitude cannot give the students the quality of English expected to be taught and used in the school system; as such cannot serve in attaining Nigeria's educational goals and objectives for global challenges. This paper therefore recommends that the quality of Primary and Junior Secondary school teachers should be a concern for language educators. This should be improved upon by looking critically at the admission requirements into the College of Education as the three credits at one sitting that is being required at present can no longer stand the test of time. A policy that will encourage and attract intelligent students to seek admission into the College of Education system among others should be put in place by the government.

**Keywords:** *gender, year of graduation, quality, English language teachers*

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## 1. Introduction

The English language in Nigeria is a second language, as such, it performs multiplicity of functions. It is the Language of Education, in fact without a credit pass in English at the West African Examination Council (WASC) level students cannot proceed in their educational career, it is also the official Language, among so many other functions. It is in line with this therefore that Ubahakwe in 1988, with a catalogue of references spanning about 21 years has this to say:

Although the Importance of English in the Nigerian Education process has remained unchallenged, there is

no question, in recent years about the failure of English Language and Literature teaching in Nigeria... Interestingly, each generation of Nigeria users of English accuses the generation following it of declining competence.

Ubahakwe in Babatunde [11] has however located the root failure in the educational setting, the educational system, teachers' status and motivation, the examination pattern, the learning environment, teacher preparation and language philosophy.

In the same vein, Ayodele [3], Ige [6] among others, lamenting on the low English Language competence of Nigerian students (the language of education which thus has a dismal effect on the overall acquisition capacity of

learners) argue that the causes 'must be traced to the classroom because the formal classroom practices provide by far the greatest avenue for the learning of the language'. Some of these classroom factors are teachers' low level of competence in the Language skills.

Furthermore, Akere [1] says:

The nagging problem... concerns the quality of English that is taught and used in the School system. The concern being expressed in informed education circles is the extent to which the variety and quality of English being learned and used in the School system can serve in achieving Nigeria's educational goals and objectives.

According to Akere, 'the inadequate linguistic and communicative skills' of learners are caused by inadequate support for the current programmes in English. Akere therefore calls for an urgent need to embark upon a massive teacher-improvement programme for the teachers of English across the educational levels for the modification of 'their language' teaching methodology in favour of a skills-based approach.

It is pertinent to also note that, still in the recent past, a lot of scholars have also lamented over the low English Language Competence of Nigerian students. Majority of these scholars Ige [6], among others have judged their competence based on their inability to communicate effectively in the English Language during Post UTME Examinations, their low performance level at the West African Examination Council as well as their inability to make use of the language effectively while in the institutions of higher learning among others. In the light of this, various works have been carried out on factors affecting Students poor performance in the English Language with emphasis on the Senior Secondary Education. These works have identified the problem of English (L2) teachers that are not academically qualified to teach the language are found in the classrooms as teachers. These teachers do not teach the language well as they are not specialists in the field of study. Also, these teachers do not attend workshops among others. Nguyen (2014) Oribabor [9]. These works have not really justified the quality of the teachers that have been certified to teach the course but have only concentrated on the quality of the students produced.

Unfortunately not much work seems to have been done to look at how the foundation of learning the language is laid at the Primary and Junior Secondary School levels where these students are introduced to the English language. It has however been observed that the foundation of which the language is laid is very important in the overall performance of the students at the senior secondary and the higher institutions of learning.

Colleges of Education was established in Nigeria given the mandate to produce manpower to teach at the Primary and Junior Secondary Schools. The regulatory body is the National Commission for Colleges of Education (N.C.C.E.) as such, in Nigeria today, the minimum qualification with which to teach in the Primary School and Junior Secondary School is the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.). The requirements for gaining admission into the Colleges of Education for would-be N.C.E. teachers is a minimum of 3 credit pass including the English Language at one sitting and 4 credit pass at 2 sittings.

The objectives of the N.C.E. English as contained in the National Commission for Colleges of Education

(N.C.C.E.) minimum standards for English Language Curriculum (2012:21) are to:

- a) develop the four English Language skills; Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing for communicative purposes;
- b) make students to become confident and competent in the use of spoken and written English for various purposes;
- c) equip students to teach English effectively at the Junior Secondary School level and
- d) prepare students for further studies in the subject

Furthermore, to be able to graduate as a J.S.S. English studies specialist teacher, a trainee is expected to earn the following credits

- a) General Education - 30 credit units
- b) Teaching Practice - 6 credit units
- c) General studies - 18 credit units
- d) English - 32 credit units
- e) Any other teaching subject - 32 credit units (2012:23)

This means that English is expected to be studied with other subject combinations. By implication, it is expected that after graduation, a teacher of English should also be able to teach another subject. From all indications, it is obvious that the requirements for gaining admission into the Colleges of Education is rather too low, which readily suggests that the weak students who had found it difficult to gain admission into the University or Polytechnic are the ones admitted into the Colleges of Education System to be incidentally trained to teach in the Primary Schools (supposed foundation for formal education) and the Junior Secondary School levels of learning. To further compound the problem, during the process of their training, the student trainees are not allowed to really maximally concentrate on the teaching and learning of the English language as they also have to cope with other courses with which English is combined. Unfortunately for these teachers in the making, the rigour of having to combine their English studies with other courses end up making them 'jack of all trades, master of none'; as they only end up adding just a little knowledge in the English Language, to their weak entry points. At the end of the third year of their studies, they are expected to graduate and be certified as teachers of English at the Primary and Junior Secondary Schools.

This trend of turning out half-baked N.C.E. English language graduate teachers has now been very worrisome as it has constituted a serious problem, wherein the so-called graduates cannot competently teach in the Primary schools talk less of the Junior Secondary School, just as the saying goes- 'you cannot give what you do not have'. Good teachers are known by the quality of their output. Definitely, making such teachers to teach the English language in the primary schools and junior secondary school levels is a way of laying a weak foundation in the English language learning at these delicate levels of formal education. There is therefore bound to be problem, since the foundation is already weak, as any structure built on a weak foundation will definitely collapse. It is against this backdrop that this work is out to examine the quality of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) English graduate teachers. This is being done because Second Language Teacher Educators have begun to recognize that teachers, apart from the method or materials they use, are central to understanding and improving the quality of

English Language teaching. Freeman Johnson (1998). The following hypotheses are to be tested:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There will be no significant difference between the quality of the male and female NCE English graduate teachers.

Ho<sub>2</sub>; There will be no significant influence of the year of graduation of the NCE graduate teachers on their quality in the common error test.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There will be no significant influence of the age of the NCE graduates on their quality in the common error test.

This is significant because it will help to determine the competence of the recent products of teachers that have been certified to teach at the Primary School and Junior Secondary levels. It will also help the programme planners at the national level to know the effect of the programme designed on the output. It will also help the policy makers in taking certain decisions that will affect the production of NCE English Language teachers positively, especially in the area of the admission requirements into the Colleges of Education.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study aims to generally examine the quality of the English Language teachers with the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.), to establish whether or not there is improvement on their output year in and out. The population of this study consists of all already certified and certificated NCE English (L2) teachers. The sample of the study were fifty English Language Students in 200 level selected purposively. The criteria for selection is completion of NCE programme in the English Language. The class of ninety B.Ed. English students is heterogeneous because it contains students who got admission through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and Direct Entry (those who already have NCE certificate). Only fifty, comprising 8 male and 42 female met this criteria. This anomaly in the gender representation is attributed to inequality in their admission.

Common Error Tests was used as the instrument for data selection. Section A of the instrument consists of personal information about the sample subjects while Section B has 30 items consisting of tests laced grammatical errors ranging from commonly confused spellings and usages, errors of prepositions/particle and so on. The tests were administered to the graduate teachers to identify the errors in the sentences. The test was conducted in a classroom environment under the supervision of the researchers, within the stipulated time of forty-five (45) minutes to answer the questions, after which the scripts were collected and marked by the researchers.

To test for the validity of the item used, fifty (50) items were selected from a standardized Text Book on Common Errors in English Usage. These instruments were later given to 3 Colleges for scrutiny. The items that were agreed upon by (2) two out of (3) were used, while the ones that were not approved upon were deleted. In all, thirty (30) items which were agreed upon were used.

The reliability of the test was determined through Test re Test method. The test was administered to 30 students

in another Institution. The result obtained was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the reliability of 0.76 was obtained.

## 3. Results

Ho<sub>1</sub> There will be no significant difference between the quality of the male and female NCE English graduate teachers.

**Table 1. Table showing the difference between the quality of the male and female NCE English graduate teachers**

Grammar	N	Mean	t	Df	Sig
Male	8	14.00	0.63	48	0.95
Female	42	14.100			Not sig

The table above indicates that female students had a higher mean score than their male counterparts. However the difference is not significant ( $t = 0.63$ ;  $df = 48$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). It implies that gender has no influence on NCE English graduate quality. The hypothesis which states that there will be no significant difference between the quality of the male and female NCE English graduate teachers is therefore accepted.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There will be no significant influence of the year of graduation of the NCE graduate teachers on their quality in the common error tests.

**Table 2. Table showing the Analysis of Variance for the Influence of year of graduation on the quality of NCE English graduate teachers**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	551.019	4	137.755	5.583	.001
Within Groups	1110.261	45	24.672		
Total	1661.280	49			

$\alpha = 0.05$ .

The table above shows that the year of graduation has influence on the quality of the NCE English graduate teachers in grammar ( $F(4, 49) = 5.58$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The table shows that the value of F is 5.58 while the significant of is 0.001. Comparing the significant of F with  $\alpha$  which is 0.05, it was discovered that the significance of F is less than 0.05. It therefore implies that there is a significant difference among NCE English graduate teachers in term of different year of graduation. The table below explains the source of the significant difference observed.

Year	Number	MEAN
2011	16	17.3750
2012	18	13.2222
2013	10	10.6000
1999	2	5.0000
2010	4	18.5000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14.1200</b>

The table above indicates that students who finished in the year 2010 and 2011 had mean scores of 18.5 and 17.3 respectively which is above average of 15.00.

This implies that excluding 1999 which has a mean score of 5, students who finished in recent past (2011 and 2010) are of a better quality than those who finished recently in 2012 and 2013.

Also, a general view indicates that overall student performance of 14.12 out of 30 is below average score of 15 that is expected. This shows that all the N.C.E. graduate teachers did not identify correctly all the errors in the grammar test given. This indicates that the N.C.E. English graduate teachers exhibit low quality in English Language. It also shows that the quality drops as the year progresses. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There will be no significant influence of the age of the NCE graduates on their quality in the grammar test

**Table 3a. ANOVA table showing the influence of age of the NCE graduates on their quality in grammar test**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Group	127.569	2	63.785	1.955	.153
Within Groups	1533.711	47	32.632		
Total	1661.280	49			

The table above shows that the influence of age is not significant ( $F(2,49)=1.95; p>0.05$ ). Therefore it can be concluded that age does not influence the quality in grammar.

Although age does not have a significant difference, the table below further indicates the Mean Scores of the graduates.

**Table 3b. Table showing the Mean Scores of the Graduates**

	N	Mean
>30	4	9.0000
26-30	8	15.7500
20-25	38	14.3158
Total	50	14.1200

The table above indicates that, NCE graduates who are between the ages of 26-30 years scored higher (15.75) than their counterparts that are between 20-25 years (14.32). The Mean Score of those who score above 30 may be attributed to the weak foundation of the graduate teachers themselves.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the NCE English graduate teachers exhibit low quality in the use of the English Language which they have been certified and certificated to teach. This work corroborates Rivkin, Hanvshek and Kain (1998) in Rice (2003) which identified teacher quality in terms of student performance outcomes. Their research identifies teacher quality as the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. They conclude from their work that while school quality is an important determinant of students' achievement, the most important predictor is teacher quality. In comparison, class size, teacher education and teacher experience play a small role. Further findings in this study reflect that gender and age have no significant influence on the NCE English graduates' quality. On a final note, the outcome of this study reveals that the quality of the English NCE graduates drops as the year progresses.

In Nigeria today, English is the official language, the language of official documents and official communication, the language of business and social life,

especially among literate citizens. It is also the language of Science and technology. In fact, English is the language of instruction, which by implication, is the language of education, development, national and international communication and transaction. It remains the lamp which our youths and children need in order to travel through the educational tunnel without stumbling. Since English is as important as this, there is the need for all stakeholders to put in place policies that will attract more intelligent students to be interested in studying education related courses in teacher training institutions, so as to improve on the quality of the NCE English graduates every year.

At present, the NCE graduates being produced cannot give the students the quality of English that is expected to be taught and used in the school system, as the quality of teachers themselves is bound to have effect on the value of their products. It is however sad to note that the worth of NCE graduate of English cannot suffice to withstand the current and impending global challenges, yet these crop of students are being certified year in year out as teachers to handle the foundation laying of English Language at the early years. This is the dilemma in the Nigeria education system, as a result of the admission policy into Nigeria Colleges of Education and the overall disinterest on the part of the students to study education. As such, the current quality of Nigeria NCE graduate English teachers is not sufficient for achieving Nigeria's educational goals and objectives.

## 5. Conclusion

The low quality of teachers should be a concern for language educators. This should be improved upon by looking critically into the admission requirements of English teachers into Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions where education is primarily studied for quality assurance. In other words, admission requirements for candidates who want to study English as a teaching subject should be reviewed upwards. Programme planners should design the English language Study Programmes in such a way that emphasis is laid more on the mastery of English content and methodology rather than training the students to be specialists in two fields. There should be a policy to be implemented by the government that will attract intelligent students to seek admission into Colleges of Education willingly out of interest, to curb the idea of studying education as a last resort. Also both male and female teachers should be given equal opportunities and treated equally while trying to improve the quality of teachers.

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