



Original Research Article

Implementation lapses of the GCE O/L English language subject curriculum content on learners with hearing impairment

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Abstract

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The Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) has witnessed a significantly low performance in the past few years in the Ordinary Level English language subject examination at the National level, but that of learners with hearing impairment (HI) has been dismally very low. This paper investigates this dreary performance from the perspective of the organization of the curriculum content. It seeks to know how the organization of the content of the English language subject curriculum influences the academic performance of learners with hearing impairment at this examination. Anchored on Piaget's (1896-1986) Cognitive Theory and Vygotsky's (1978) Theory of Social Constructivism, the study adopts a mixed method design with data collected through questionnaire, interviews, observation checklists and a test. Purposive sampling techniques guided the choice of respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected with hypothesis verified through a chi-square test. The statistical analyses used were presented by way of bar charts. The findings revealed a significant relationship between the organization of the content of the GCE O/L English Language curriculum and the academic performance of learners with hearing impairment. The search revealed that content and subject objectives do not reflect the needs of learners with special needs. No special consideration is given to this group with regard to the language subject despite their impairment. Hence Curriculum designers in conjunction with the government and the GCE Board officials should consider redesigning the language curriculum taking the needs of this group into consideration

Keywords: Curriculum content, hearing impairment, implementation curriculum and performance.

INTRODUCTION

Hearing plays an essential role in communication, speech, language development and classroom learning (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association/ASHA, 2015). ASHA asserts that even a small amount of hearing loss can have profound negative effects on these language activities including comprehension and social development. Hence, studies indicate that without proper intervention, children with mild to moderate hearing loss would not perform well in school as compared to their

hearing counterparts thereby, widening the gap of the academic achievement of these categories of learners as they strive to make progress on the academic ladder. However, the major objective of every educational system is the achievement of quality education by the learners. Then, (UNESCO, 2000) maintain that if children with hearing impairments receive good and suitable education, they may perform well in many fields of study and would fit aptly into the society; they can be

academically successful teachers, doctors, lawyers, lecturers etc. This matches with Farrant (1980) as quoted in Salia-Bao (1989: P. 3) confirming that

If the curriculum is to serve its real purpose, it must assist the pupil to see the value of the past in relation to the present and the future; it must equip the child with the necessary skills for modern living and it must help to keep the child a fully integrated member of his community.

This supposes that success could easily be achieved in the Ordinary level (O/L) English language subject if the curriculum content is well organized despite the growing concern the world over regarding the increasing population of persons living with disability. This group is unable to create a significant impact on the country's political, social or economic spheres thereby, requiring a special attention. Hence, the Salamanca conference in relation to equalization of opportunities states that "Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. In the field of education, this is reflected in bringing about a genuine equalization of opportunities." It adds that "special needs education incorporates proven methods of teaching from which all children can benefit. It assumes human differences are normal and that learning must be adapted to the needs of the child rather than the child fitted into the process" This is an appeal that the knowledge and experiences acquired through the content of every curriculum, either by the so-called normal or by the hearing impaired, should anticipate making learners useful citizens for their country. This is possible if the learners are judiciously catered for; their learning difficulties, their learning needs and the content organization taken into consideration when designing any course in general and a language course in particular to ensure better performance.

The government of Cameroon in conjunction with other international bodies like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations (UN) have signed conventions and passed laws committing themselves to the education of those living with disabilities. In the same hint, Cameroon pledges for a successful academic achievement for persons living with disabilities without any discrimination. This is evident in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights signed on December 10, 1948, which insists on the rights of everyone to education. Again, by signing the Salamanca statement of June 1994, Cameroon agrees to the principle of inclusive education which as a matter of policy was adopted at the Salamanca conference (UNESCO, 1994). This Salamanca position was later confirmed by the UN Declaration, which holds that every child has the fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunities to achieve and attain an acceptable level (UNESCO, 1994). To achieve this goal, aspects like: programme objectives, teaching approaches, teaching

materials, content materials, learning environment etc, need to be considered with language constituting a stepping stone. It remains the key to success in every domain of life and the above aspects that make learning to happen, center around it. Hence, the organization of the content of any language course ought to be made favourable to all children irrespective of the degree of their disability. Removing children with disabilities, particularly those with hearing impairment from regular environments will only occur when services cannot be attained satisfactorily.

The term "deaf and hard of hearing" became popular only in the late 1980s. It was accepted as an alternative for hearing impaired. Hellen Keller, a deaf-mute and blind lady states that hearing impairment is the loss of the most vital stimulus – the sound of a voice that brings language sets through astir and keeps us in intellectual company (Keller, 1933). Pedro Ponce de León, a Monk (1510-1584) was the first teacher for the Deaf even though people thought they were uneducable. Pedro Ponce started with the language brought in by the students, introduced finger-spelling, writing and speech. Daniels (1997) specifies that the first book for the deaf entitled "Simplification of the letters of the alphabet and method of teaching deaf-mute to speak" was published 36 years after Pedro Ponce's death by Juan Pablo Bonet (1579-1638). The concept of HIM is no longer new in Cameroon following the existence of the Cameroon Deaf Empowerment Organization (CDEO), Association Nationale de Sourds du Cameroun (ANSC) in Bafoussam as well as the Cameroon National Association for the Deaf (CANAD). Through these organizations in general and CDEO in particular, many private institutions for the deaf have emerged. In addition to these associations, many schools with a special eye on the deaf also exist in Cameroon. Some of them include: Ephphatha Institute for the deaf in Kumba, CRESA in Garoua, ESEDA in Yaounde, CRES in Douala and Buea School for the Deaf and Dumb (BSD) in Buea. The main objective behind the creation of these schools has been to close up barriers in accessing education content, which may be evidently seen in learning and passing the GCE O/L English language Subject.

Statement of the Problem

Many years have gone down memory lane after the Salamanca statement on inclusive education and its provisions were made public. Other international and national laws have come up, emphasizing on appropriate communication methods to enable learners with hearing impairment have access to general education. Yet, one keeps wondering whether anything is done at all in that direction. Again, the question, if the syllabus reform indicated in the national forum of 1995 held in Yaounde has been implemented continues to beg for an answer.

This curiosity crops up as a result of the poor performance of learners with hearing impairment in the English Language subject at the Ordinary Level General Certificate Examination (GCE O/L). The output of this category of learners particularly in this language subject in the examinations mentioned above has remained dismally very low. This is evident in the statistics gotten from the GCE Board of Examination for the 2013, 2014 and 2015 sessions.

The statistics in tables 1 below indicate that the average national performance of students with hearing impairment in the O/L examination stood at 25 (42.62%) out of the 61(100%) HI student who sat the examinations in three years (2013, 2014 2015). Only 4 (6.55%) of these students passed the English language subject out of the 61 (100%) who sat and out of the 25 (42.62%) who passed as seen on Table 1 below

Of the 4(6.55%) who passed the language subject within the period under study, 2 were in 2015, 2 in 2014 and none in 2013. The number of HI learners; those who sat the examination generally; those who passed generally and those who passed in the language subject depict a gloomy picture for the future of people living with such a disability in Cameroon. This is especially when one compares the numbers with those of the “normal” learners who registered and those who passed as seen in Table 2 below:

This is an indication that not only do the normal learners out-performed learners with hearing impairment by a very wide margin but also that learners with hearing impairment give little consideration to formal or general education. Moreover, the numbers of those who pass in other subjects suggest that this category of learners do better in other subjects than the in English language subject. A keen observation of the results, indicated that all those who passed the language subject did so with merely “C grades”

This performance which is at the same time quantitatively and qualitative, depicts a profound and severe problem that needs to be treated as a matter of urgency if equal opportunities must be given to all. This is an indication that the situation is alarming, therefore, requiring a clear diagnosis as well as clear remedial measures. This study hinges on the organization of curriculum content. This is of course, crucial because the learners need the language which is one of the official languages of Cameroon to be able to function in the other subjects in the educational programme at this level and subsequent levels in the academic ladder as well as other spheres of life. The issue is even more disturbing because many scholars pay attention more to the causes of the poor performance in O/level English language subject only among normal learners. This study thus, investigates the effect of the organization of the content of the O/level English language subject, on the academic performance of candidates with HI.

This study anchors on Jean Piaget’s Cognitive Theory

(1896-1986) and Lev Vygotsky’s Theory of Social Constructivism (1978). Piaget postulates that every human being develops progressively, from pre-natal age to old age. He states that children use schemata or schema to construct their world. The schema can be physical action, mental operation, concept or theory used to acquire information. This study is very much concerned with learners under the formal operational age, who are writing the GCE O/Level in the English Language subject. They are expected to think in abstract terms, do complex mental analysis, think logically and formulate hypothesis. Their meta-cognition (individual way of understanding) is high. Knowledge gained from this theory can aptly guide the organization of curriculum content for any group of learners, especially those with HI.

On his part, Vygotsky holds that knowledge develops depending on how learners are actively involved in problem solving and thinking. Vygotsky (1978) states that, a child potentially develops through problem solving under adult’s guidance or collaboration with more knowledgeable peers. Learning is thus, said to move from a lower level of reasoning to a higher one guided by clues, modeling, discussion, explanations and joint participation. He postulates that learning takes place in the “zone of proximal development (ZPD)” Here; the learner is moved through scaffolding which is an incremental information support that moves the learner higher. Huffman et al. (2009) opine that due to deficits in oral language, children with hearing loss display lower level of social competence than their hearing peers. Hence, this theory provides a basis for curriculum content organization to consider the learning approach. This may improve on the social skills of learners thus, guaranteeing the much desired success at the GCE O/L English language.

The concept of hearing impairment

Ljubičić (2014) states that the term “hearing impairment” means loss of function of varying intensity to all parts of the ear and the auditory pathway. Individuals may suffer from uni-lateral (affected in one ear) or bi-lateral hearing (affected in both ears).In the 1970s and 1980s, “hearing impaired” was widely used as an inclusive term for every one with hearing loss regardless of the severity of the loss or the mode of transmission. The terms “deaf and hard of hearing” became popular only in the late 1980s and accepted as an alternative for hearing impaired. Today, many consider living in a unique cultural group where capital “D” is used to indicate group membership, while the lowercase “d” is used to describe the physical status of hearing (Susan and Sharon, 2002). The hearing process falls under seven distinct levels measured in decibels and hertz, which tell the degree of hearing loss that one has in each ear, ranging from mild to profound

Table 1. Statistics of HI Learners who passed in the O/L GCE English subject (2013-2015).

Years	N ^o and % of HI learner who sat the GCE O/L	N ^o and % pass of HI	N ^o and % passed in English
2015	21	11	2
2014	22	7	2
2013	18	7	0
Total number	61	25	4
Percentages	100%	42.62	06.55%

Source: Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board, Nov. 2015

Table 2. Number registered and national performance score at the G.C.E O/L English Language subject examination 2013-2015.

Year	registered	Sat	Passed	percentage
2013	89898	88780	33781	38.05
2014	91039	89821	11910	13.6
2015	105328	103978	27276	26.17
		average score	=	25.84%

hearing loss. The levels are: normal hearing 0-15 dBs, slight hearing loss 16-25 dBs, mild hearing loss 26 -40 dBs, moderate hearing loss 41 - 55 dBs, severe hearing loss 56-70dBs dBs, moderately severe 71-90dBs and profound hearing loss 90+. The impairment begins at the second level of 'slight hearing loss' where the individual cannot hear whispers; meanwhile individuals at the profound level do not hear the loudest volume of noise and are considered Deaf (Offei,2011). He or she that is affected at this level can only use sign language to communicate. Generally, all the forms of HI seen above contribute immensely to disabling the hearing ability of any affected individual.

Conceptualising English Language Subject content

The content of the English language subject at the GCE O/Level is done following the four main language skills that are taught and tested at the GCE O/Level examination. These skills include: listening, speaking, reading and writing. English language is learnt in Cameroon as a second and foreign language. French (2000) opines that learning a second language is more important than learning the description of it. Hence, to proceed, curriculum developers have identified three major criteria that must be satisfied in an effectively organized content which are continuity, sequencing and integration (Ibe, 2014).

Continuity entails a vertical reiteration of major curriculum elements i.e., a vertical relationship in learning while sequencing requires that the content be arranged in an order of succession of skills built from previous experiences. Ibe (2014) relates it to continuity by

progression saying that "It is from lower to higher levels of treatment of contents using various approaches such as simple to complex, known to unknown, general to specific, etc." The O/level English language syllabus depicts a movement from simple to complex; where words develop to sentences, which are later developed to paragraphs and finally into essays. In talking about integration, Esu et al. (2009), quote Ibe (2014), intimating that it does not only refer to knowledge but may relate to skills, attitudes and values. Content can therefore be organized in any of the following ways: topic-by-topic, chronological, place-to-place, concentric circle, structural logic, spiral, and problem-centered. In the English language subject which is our major concern, content organization is done following the four main language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This organization is reflected in the syllabus and the schemes of work of this language subject. Learners are expected to do tasks such as formal and informal letters, reports, speeches, talks, vague essays, picture compositions and so on, but the subject's curriculum content is organized to test two main aspects such as composition and directed writing. How this content organization especially with regard to the structure of papers I and II at the GCE O/L examination influence the academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment remains the main focus of this paper.

According to Wagner (1990), important learning outcomes must include basic and highly ordered content knowledge and thinking skills used across subject areas. In other words, schools must have programmes which provide students with coherent and intellectual curriculum contents. Such programmes should reflect twenty-first century problem-solving and should ensure a deep

understanding of the content to the teacher because such can easily be achieved if the teacher understands what content he or she is to use. In this way, school will collaborate with the community to meet the child's needs holistically (cognitive, intellectual, social, civic, emotional, psychological, ethical and physical) using familiar content that may foster students' engagement in creativity. Mba (1991) indicates that a good educational programme or curriculum content for HI children should provide communication skills such as auditory training lip-reading and manual communication. With this, one may be answering the question about language proficiency which is likely to culminate in the much needed excellent results desired at the GCE O/L exam in the English Language subject. However, Jingwa, (2004) finds out that aims, structure, content and assessment methods have changed while aims, objectives and structure have been maintained. She therefore adds that 'Understanding and Response' should not be abandoned in place of "Reading Comprehension especially as far as this group of learners is concerned. Meanwhile, Enoh (2010) lines up with the education forum of 1995 to recommend the redesigning and developing of a special and a modified curriculum for learners with hearing impairments in consultation with all stakeholders,

Theoretical Considerations and Related Literature

This study axis on Jean Piaget (1896-1986) viewpoint which suggest that every human being develops progressively, from pre-natal age to old age and that children use schemata or schema to construct their world. A schema being a mental picture or framework existing in the individual's mind to organize, interpret and acquire information where learning is seen as a change in the learners' schema. This therefore implies that just as each developmental stage ought to be guided, so too, any learning requires an appropriate curriculum content to guide it. It is in this same perspective that Vygotsky's (1978) inclination of social constructivism holds that a child potentially develops through problem solving under adult's guidance or collaboration with more knowledgeable peers. He adds that learning moves from a lower level of reasoning to a higher one guided by clues, modeling, discussion, explanations and joint participation. This notwithstanding, Nwazuo (2000) quoted in Yuh (2014) warns that the situation may be difficult where the teacher does not have sufficient professional training.

Enoh (2010) intimates that the regular curriculum affects the output of learners with hearing impairments and proposes a special curriculum to be designed for learners with hearing impairment. This reminds one of the provisions of the education forum of 1995 – which advocates for the redesigning of the curriculum in consultation with all stakeholders.

In spite of the proposals by Enoh (2010), the G.C.E Board has maintained the Regular curriculum which is not relevant enough to maintain standards and keep along with changing times vis-à-vis learners with hearing impairment as opined by Jingwa (2004). Hence, Wagner (1990), insists that schools should collaborate with communities to meet the needs of the child holistically. Thus, using familiar content, being culturally sensitive and addressing different learning styles that foster students' engagement in creativity, will be necessary.

To McDonough (1984), language needs of the learner should be the bases for course development. "information on his or her language needs is likely to help in drawing up a profile to establish coherent objectives, and to take subsequent decisions on course content" This is a clear indication that better organized content can assure the satisfaction of learning needs of all learners especially learners with HI.

METHODOLOGY

This study has failed to consider GCE results obtained within the 2016 - 2020 academic years because schooling was very unstable in the English speaking regions of Cameroon. This is owing to the scourging crisis resulting from what has come to be known as the "the Anglophone problem today in Cameroon." With the crises, many children could not make it to school within that period especially children with disabilities. Thus, to have a fair judgment of the problem, the study has ignored that time lapse and focused only on the results of 2013- 2015 sessions of the end-of course examination during which schools went on hitch free. Another motivation for ignoring the former periods and considering only the latter is the fact that these regions provide a vast majority of the student population who sit this examination each academic year. The two regions as a matter of policy, and historical background harbor English as the first official language for most speakers; and so the English system of education is quite grounded in them. These explain why the study could not give a holistic appraisal of the situation without giving equal chances to everybody who is subjected to the examination in general and to the language subject in particular.

The study adopts a mixed method design; it is quantitative and qualitative in nature. It makes use of experiments and surveys, giving preference to focus group discussions and interviews. The population for this study consists of students with HI, their English language teachers, curriculum designers and examination experts, all from the South West Region of Cameroon. A limited sample of 20 participants was fully involved. It was distributed as follows: 12 form five students with hearing impairment, 4 English language teachers from specialized schools (schools for the hearing impairment), 2

examination experts (from the GCE Board of Examination and 2 curriculum designers (from the Delegation of Secondary Education in Buea). The curriculum designers and the examination officials were purposively chosen due to their availability. The two schools from which the teacher and student population was taken were equally purposively chosen given that those were the only available ones. Of course, all the children as well as all the language teachers in the schools were involved in the study. The schools include: EPHPHATHA Institute for the Deaf located in the outskirts of (Kumba station) Kumba – Meme Division and the Buea School for the Deaf (BSD) located in Bulu in Buea. Both schools are run by non-governmental organizations-(NGOs) and private proprietors (Yuh, 2003). As already mentioned, the purposive choice of the participants was guided by availability. One hardly finds hearing impaired learners in normal schools in the South West Region despite the policy of inclusive education. As regards the teacher population, the study considered those who teach the language subject to these children even though from time to time interviews were conducted with non-language teachers in the same schools.

The study made use of questionnaires, interviews, tests and participant observation. Questionnaire items targeted learner's mastery of the content of the language subject; learners with HI were asked if they mastered the content of the language subject, if they signed well in the language, read and understand it. They were equally asked to say how the organization of content affects their understanding of the language subject. With regards to the research procedure, questionnaire items were first given to the heads of the establishments for vetting. This was to ensure that the language used was accessible to learners. On the administration of the questionnaire, the assistance of sign language experts (the director of the Buea School for the Deaf and the language teacher in EPHPHATHA,) were sought. They assisted in signing and interpreting the questionnaire items to the students and allowing them time to provide answers. While this was going on, the experts were closely observing to ensure that the respondents were not being influenced. The questionnaire items were administered and collected on the same day to avoid influencing respondents to change their opinions about their statements.

The interview guides were administered to the teachers. This was done in form of direct face to face encounters guided by semi-structured interview questions. The idea here was to get the teacher's opinions about the organization of the content of the language subject and how the organization of content and instructions impart the teaching and learning exercise as well as the learning outcomes or the academic achievements of learners with HI at the GCE O/Levels English language subject. Interviews were also granted to curriculum designers. This was equally to ascertain whether the organization of content has an

impact on the academic achievement of learners with hearing impairments and whether this group of learners is considered when designing the language subject curriculum and especially when organizing the content of the language subject.

As regards the test, the South West Regional Mock of March 2015 session was administered to form five students in EPHPHATHA and the Buea School for the Deaf. Prior to the administration proper, working sessions were held with the director of the Buea School for the Deaf and the Head of Department for English in EPHPHATHA. These two also doubled as the English language teachers in their respective schools. The working sessions were intended to establish the validity of the tests with regard to the target population and especially because the afore-mentioned persons are involved in the teaching process of this category of learners and particularly because they are teachers of the language subject in their respective schools. The services of an interpreter were hired in order to guarantee fluid communication between the parties concerned. During the administration proper of the test, the learners were equally closely observed with the aim of discarding any threats and to ensure reliability. Once validation and reliability were established, the mock examination was administered, papers marked and analyzed with focus on the organization of content. The analysis of the results was done with keen interest to ascertain whether the high failure rate noticed at end-of-course examination in the English language subject among learners with hearing impairments originates from the organization of the content of the language subject or if the cause is elsewhere. Any tenable conclusions at this level, took the curriculum objectives in to consideration. These objectives were first observed to make sure that they are suitable and are in line with the abilities of learners with hearing impairment. At another level, observation was carried out in an actual classroom situation. With the help of checklists, one could judge how content organization favours or disfavors learners with HI. The checklist comprised a five-point measurement scale ranging from 0 – 4, with "0" representing "not suitable", "1" representing "partially suitable", "2" representing "suitable", "3" representing "adequately suitable" and "4" representing "completely suitable". The observation took into consideration: teachers-students interaction, the presence of the four language skills, and the order of presentation of language items in a lesson, for instance, continuity (based on previous experiences), sequencing (based on simple to complex, known to unknown, general to specific etc) and integration (based on problem-centered, chronology, structural logic etc). This was done in several ways: observing through the window, occasionally sitting at the back of the classroom and at times moving round the class as the sitting position adopted is the separate roll sitting position. At the end, a summary of what was observed was done using a five-

point measurement scale of 0-4 with “0” representing “never taught”, “1” partially taught, “2” “moderately taught”, “3” “often taught” and “4” “always taught”

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive themes while quantitative data was presented in the form of percentages, mean scores and frequencies and analyzed using inferential statistics. To present this inferential statistics, a chi-square test was used, which further facilitated the verification of the hypothesis. As regards the impact of the organization of the content of the English language subject curriculum on the academic performance of learners with hearing impairments at the G.C.E O/L examination, the independent variable was the organization of content in the English language subject curriculum, while the dependent variable was the academic performance of students with HI in the English language subject. The scores of the independent variable were gotten from the responses recorded from the five questionnaire items that measured the organization of content in the English Language subject curriculum while the scores of the dependent variable were gotten from the scores of the test. The statistical analysis technique used to test the hypothesis for this study was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. The formula used was the deviation from the mean method as seen below:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

“x” is the independent variable, “y” the dependent variable, r_{xy} is the correlation coefficient for x and y, while \sum is the summation sign. Thus, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the impact of organization of the content of the English language subject curriculum on learners with hearing impairments at the G.C.E O/L examination (Number=12) is visible in Table 3 below.

The result of the analysis reveals that the calculated r_{xy} -value of 0.761 is greater than the critical r_{xy} -value of 0.576 at 05 levels of significance with 10 degrees of freedom. With the result of the analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This result therefore means that the organization of content in the English Language subject curriculum in secondary schools has a significant negative impact on the academic performance of students with hearing impairment. A further exploration of the result shows that the r_{xy} =0.761 was positive and high. This indicates that the better the organization of content in the English Language subject curriculum in secondary schools, the higher its impact on the academic performance of students with hearing impairment. Drawing from the mean score of 7.08/20 on the test based

on the organization of content in the English Language subject which is far below average, one can begin to account for the low academic performance of 25% recorded by students with hearing impairment in the English Language test in the course of this study and then, the low performance at the end-of-course examination (O/L) in the English language subject.

Data gotten through interviews with curriculum designers and teachers, further confirm the above findings. The curriculum designers reveal that specificities in terms of students’ physical or mental abilities are not considered when designing the curriculum irrespective of the course. They argue that different learners have different specificities and if individual cases are to be considered, the idea of inclusive education would be baseless and flawed. Again, they insist that apart from the issue of inclusive education, several strands of the curriculum would exist if individual cases are to be considered in the process of curriculum designing. One of the curriculum designers maintained that *“there would be a curriculum for the visually impaired, the physically impaired, the linguistically impaired and all forms of impairments.”*

This thwarts The Salamanca report (UNESCO, 1994), which upholds that “Inclusive education implies starting with children and young people as they are, with all their diversity and then designing a system which is flexible enough to respond to individual differences. This is particularly detrimental to learners with such an impairment because their impairment interferes with two major language abilities (listening and speaking) with one of them highly graded at the end-of-course examination (listening comprehension). Hence, curriculum developers insist on the criteria of continuity, sequencing and integration (Ibe, 2014) saying that they must be considered in an effectively organized content with sequencing requiring that the content be arranged in an order of succession of skills built from previous experiences. Despite this, Mba and Yaw (2011) confirm that this category of learners cannot learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expression and other verbal communication. Thus, in teaching and learning of language components involving oral communication, these learners are disadvantaged.

It is thus, important to note that sequencing in terms of language skills does not meet the needs of hearing impaired learners; the productive skills are a nightmare to them. Rather, sequencing regarding this group should be done with focus on topic-by-topic. Even in terms of continuity, items should not be introduced randomly to them. Continuity should intervene only after enough recycling must have been ensured. Constant reiteration of major curriculum elements must be the guiding principle in organizing the content of any curriculum involving this group of learners. Despite, the assertion by (Ibe, 2014) that “It is from lower to higher levels of treatment of contents using various approaches such as:

Table 3. Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the impact of organization of content on Learner's with HI at the O/L (Number=12).

Variable	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	Γ_{xy}
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$		
Organization of content	193	3143	4947	0.761*
Students' academic performance	300	8146		

$p^* < 0.05$; $df = 10$; critical $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.576$

simple to complex, known to unknown, general to specific that item should be introduced, listening which seem to be the easiest language skills tends to be the most difficult for hearing impaired learners. As such, it must not be considered as a priority in organizing the content of a language course or in evaluating this group of learners. However, Richards' (2005:150) in referring to the criterion of selection and sequencing, states that materials should go from simple to complex, chronology and needs. Taking productive skills into consideration in organizing the content of the English language course for the GCE O/L for the HI, is in no way, catering for the needs of learners with hearing impairment; it is rather preparing them for failure as reflected in the past GCE O/L results and those of the regional mock.

With regard to the arguments advanced by the curriculum designers in support of an inclusive curriculum and sequencing style, one expects the teacher in an inclusive class to use his discretion following the knowledge of the structure of his class to organize his teaching in such a manner as to meet everyone's needs especially as Solity (1991) defines children or learners with special needs as "children that teachers experience difficulties in teaching". Notwithstanding, the teachers interviewed rather argue that learners with hearing impairment are slow in learning, and their course materials must be different from those of "normal" learners. To some extent, these teachers are right because the inclusive English language subject content for the Ordinary Level is organized following what Cunningsworth (1988; 24) refers to as "*steep grader*", where each new item is closely introduced as soon as the other is completed. It is accompanied by some practice exercises. An example of a "*steeply graded*" unit as seen in the course book, unit one, contains grammar items introduced successively in the following order: article, preposition, conjunction 'but', present tense, pronunciation, vocabulary etc. combined with aspects like dialogue, dictation, translation and essay writing. All these are handled in one unit with very new and different items treated in unit two. This type of grading is not appropriate for the slow learners highlighted by the teachers; they will not be able to assimilate so much in limited time.

During observation, one teacher was seen to do a lot of adaptation in the course content, thus, implementing what Cunningsworth (1988: 24) refers to as "*shallow*

grading" According to this system of grading, very few items are taught at a time. Each new item is thoroughly presented and practised in various contexts. This type of course is very suitable and accessible to learners with special needs. The more a learner is frequently exposed to a particular item, the sooner (faster) he/she learns it. A peculiarity of the adaptations seen with this one teacher is that he makes the course more accessible to the learners. It is true that most of the contents of the course are omitted here, thus leaving the learner with fewer and necessary items to learn. However, skills like the listening, speaking, and all the related communicative skills are omitted in the class where "*shallow grading*" is practiced.

In the interview, the teachers added that the evaluation systems of learners with hearing impairment must not be cumbersome as to include listening comprehensions due to their disabilities. Like the curriculum designers, they regretted the fact that the plight of each learner cannot be considered. Observations even revealed that a whole class approach is practiced in this language subject despite the class structure. To this, the teachers explained that the time allocated for the English language subject would never be sufficient for a round table approach.

Regarding the presence of listening comprehension in the content of the English language subject, curriculum designers recognized the impossibility of meeting this need with this category of learners; but still hold fast to the claim that the curriculum cannot be designed based on individual needs. They point out that such attention was paid in the past but that during the recent syllabus updated in 2011, such consideration as to the plight of learners with hearing impairment was not contemplated.

Finally, the 'regular curriculum' seems to be pushing this group of learners to end up as drop-outs and misfits in the society. However, the curriculum designers suggest the need for curriculum re-design in the form of adaptation; but claim that the task is that of the teachers who are faced with the learners. This suggestion hooks up with the practice described above as seen in a particular teacher's class. Thus, it is appropriate if the teachers can institute a strict follow up of the syllabus provided by the G.C.E Board and prescribed by the Ministry of Secondary Education, while constantly re-adapting them to prepare schemes of work that can spur the learners to meet up with the most wanting areas of

their studies. After all, they admit that the most challenging skill in the curriculum content is listening as speaking is naturally done through signing and lip-rounding.

Moreover, a close observation of the content of the English language subject reveals a major handicap at the level of the syllabus objectives in relation to learners with hearing impairment. The programme requires learners at the end-of-the-course examination to be able to listen; speak; read and write in the language. They are expected to master the sounds of the language etc.; All the objectives related to the productive skills are completely unsuitable for the type of learners targeted. Hence, McDonough (1984) avers that language needs of the learner should be the bases for course development. "information on his or her language needs will help in drawing up a profile to establish coherent objectives, and to take subsequent decisions on course content" This is consistent with the discovery in this study which indicates that better organized content can assure the satisfaction of all learners' needs, especially learners with HI. This finding confirms that the organization of content of the English language subject in secondary schools has a significant negative effect on the academic performance of students with HI in the G.C.E O/L examination.

In terms of curriculum content, Wiggims and McTighe (2005) state that for learning and assessment activities to be appropriate for students to achieve desired results, the teachers should adopt the prescriptions of this same language syllabus to draw their individual schemes to teach learners with hearing impairment in spite of their disabilities. Tanner and Tanner (1980), in Esu et al. (2006), see curriculum content as planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated through symmetric reconstruction of knowledge, experienced under the auspices of a school for learners. That notwithstanding, they are expected to follow a curriculum that suggests appropriate learning activities and assessment for the so call "normal" children.

CONCLUSION

This study has empirically investigated on the implementation and effect of the G.C.E O/L English Language curriculum content on the academic performance of learners with hearing impairment. It reveals that there is a significant relationship between the organization of content, in the G.C.E. O/L English Language subject curriculum content and the academic performance of learners with hearing impairment. Hence,

all actors have to put hands on deck to improve on ways to organize and implement the curriculum content when it comes to learners with hearing impairment in order to obtain improved results. In order to consider the plight of these learners with hearing impairment in the implementation of the G.C.E O/L English language subject curriculum and improve the learning outcome, all the stakeholders must come on board; it requires the commitment of government, education stakeholders, teachers and students themselves. Teachers are key actors to the education of such learners if they are provided with pre-service and in-service training.

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