

Curriculum Content Quality and Educational Wastage in Secondary Schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon

Agborbechem Peter Tambi, Ndifor Jean Ndemmazea

Department of Curriculum Studies and Teaching, Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

Education is a vital tool in the developmental process of any given nation and therefore a critical examination of any weakness in education is essential, for it has a bearing at both individual and national fronts. In spite of the heavy investments made by the Cameroon government on education, the delivery of quality secondary education still faces various challenges. One of these biggest challenges is wastage. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in English speaking secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon. This objective was then transformed into research question and hypothesis. The mixed research methodology with an explanatory sequential design was used. The accessible population of the study was made up of 2166 elements from where a sample of 568 participants was selected, distributed as follows: 412 lower sixth students, 112 teachers, 12 vice principals/deans of studies and 32 Heads of Department. Data were collected using questionnaire, interview guides and focus group discussion guides. The reliability coefficients for the students' and teachers' questionnaire were of 0.743 and 0.768 respectively. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistic. The hypothesis was tested through inferential statistics using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that curriculum content has an inverse influence on educational wastage. The study then recommended that more hands-on activities be included in the curriculum, while secondary schools should have direct links with industries that can prepare teachers and students towards job creation.

KEYWORDS: Educational Wastage, Repetition, Stagnation, Dropout, Non-employability, Non-usability of knowledge and Curriculum content quality

INTRODUCTION

Education is very essential in the developmental process of any given country or nation. It is believed to be the root to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancements, the means to combat unemployment, the foundation of social equality, equal wealth distribution and the spearhead of political socialization and cultural diversity (Psacharopolous, 1988). This view has made many individuals and nations invest immensely in education. Expounding further on this belief, Ojiambo (2009) argues that the wealth of a nation depends on the capacity to develop their human resources and not so much on their physical resources. He also says that a country which is unable to develop skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them efficiently in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. The recognition of the noble role of education in society has led to concerns on the quality of education as provided in the school, family and society. Any institution consumes inputs to produce outputs. If the institution is quite efficient, it will make adequate use of appropriate inputs to yield optimum outputs. If the system of the institution is not efficient it may waste some inputs in producing outputs. It will not use inputs efficiently because of high entropy as upheld by the systems theory.

The term wastage is used within the field of education to describe various aspects of failure of an educational system

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to achieve its objectives (Yusuf, 2014). He also views wastage as failure of students to attain the qualifications they had registered for in a given course. According to Ajayi and Mbah (2008), wastage arising from repetition and drop out is a sign of internal inefficiency in the education system. UNESCO (1970) defined wastage to include drop outs, repetition, premature withdrawal from schools, non-employability of school leavers and non-usability of school learning. Economists liken education to industry, with capital invested in plant, and raw materials being processed into finished products. What is being wasted is human learning, school buildings and equipment and the labour of teachers. Wastage occurs through the failure of countries to achieve their educational objectives, when children fail to reach target achievement levels as exhibited in repetition of grades, in premature school leaving, in unemployable school leavers (UNESCO, 1971). Sunita (2011) holds that dropout is a universal phenomenon of the education system in India, and that it spreads over all levels of education, in all parts of the country and across all the socio-economic groups of population. The dropout rates are much higher for educationally backward states and districts.

The academic fields of curriculum studies saw light in the late nineteenth century with debates over creating the American school curriculum and debates over creating

professional historical practices. American educators and historians attempted to transform both educational and historical practices by adopting German methods of pedagogy and research. In each case, the application of German methods and theories was used to reform what could be described as more “native” practices of education and history, both of which had arisen from Puritan colonial educational and intellectual practices. During the first half of the twentieth century, social efficiency that had been one of the tenets of the progressive education reform movement became an underlying premise of Ralph Tyler’s rationalization of the school curriculum. Furthermore, Tyler’s rational curriculum discourse dominated much of the curriculum field for most of the second half of the century (Stephen, 2002). The field of curriculum studies, as a distinct area of educational research, emerged in the 1920s. From its inception, the field was strongly influenced by social scientific methodologies used to underpin education as a pedagogical science.

In Cameroon, despite the enormous investment in education, the enterprise has been accused of various predicaments which include the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor due to school dropout rates, high rate of unemployment, reduced number of job creators and a high increase in the number of job seekers as observed by the researcher. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate the influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in English speaking secondary schools in the Littoral region of Cameroon; a region that shows a very large gap between the rich and the poor. By extension the study shall equally propose some mitigation strategies to remedy this situation of educational wastage.

Statement of the Problem

Education is regarded as a prime mover for the socio-economic development of countries and accounts for as much as 20% of the annual Gross National Product (GNP) of developing nations (Alvares, Gillies & Biadsher, 2003). Despite this importance, educational wastage of different forms seems to have become a universal issue, and therefore affects Cameroon.

The Cameroon government and her citizens have invested heavily in improving both the access and quality of education in an effort to realize the promise of education as well as to achieve the education-related Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal four and also vision 2035 for Cameroon. The government has created many additional secondary schools, more teacher training colleges have also been opened. Few in-service training seminars are organized at the regional and divisional levels to update teachers. There have also been the introduction of the competency based approach (CBA) to better the curriculum. Some additional infrastructure, equipment and teachers are being provided to schools through the efforts of both government and parents’ teachers’ associations (PTA).

Despite this enormous investment in the education sector of Cameroon, the enterprise is being accused of various weaknesses, especially given that the objectives of education are not fully being achieved. The researcher noticed that there are high rates of repetition, stagnation, low transition rates in secondary schools and the presence of over aged students in examination classes (forms five and upper sixth).

Teachers still see students failing to complete secondary schools, leading to dropouts. The researcher also realized that there has been a considerable low rate of students’ performance at the GCE Ordinary level examinations for the past five years. The average GCE performance for these years is below 40%, as revealed by the examination results booklets from the Cameroon GCE board.

The consequences of wastage in secondary schools are severe, especially on the human, economic and material resources. All those students who repeat or drop out of school cause a huge public menace, given that they mostly turn to criminality, drug consumption and other societal ills. Secondary school completion has become a basic prerequisite for higher education, and dropouts who join the labour market mostly have low earning profiles. These dropouts do unskilled jobs or work at low paying service occupations that offer them little opportunities for upward mobility. Most of the few students that complete school experience high rate of non-employability, and also non-usability of their learning in Cameroon, especially that our cities and most urban areas are crowded with job seekers and very few job creators.

Faced with the above worries, the researcher was therefore prompted to find out the influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in English speaking secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in English speaking secondary schools of the Littoral region of Cameroon. By extension the study shall also bring out the causes of educational wastage and suggest some mitigation strategies.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral region of Cameroon?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Ho : There is no significant relationship between curriculum content quality and educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral region of Cameroon.

Ha : There is a significant relationship between curriculum content quality and educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral region of Cameroon.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some concepts related to this study were reviewed.

Education and Educational Wastage

There are certain necessities without which a man cannot live a life of his own. One of these is education. The Greek philosopher Aristotle said that man is a social animal by nature and by necessity (Rattansingh, 2011). The word education comes from the Latin world ‘educere’, meaning “to lead out”. It is indeed, difficult to define education. Education is a relentless process of becoming. To the human being we educate, and to the animal we train. According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, education in the broadest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense,

education is a process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another.

Education is the basis for development and empowerment for every nation. It plays a vital role in understanding and participating in day to day activities of today's world. It builds one's character and plays a significant role in transmitting one's culture, belief and values to others in the society. It helps in creating innovations and meeting the growing needs of every nation. The development of a nation is not measured through the buildings it has built, the roads it has laid down or the bridges it has constructed but by the human resources, the nation has developed through a well-defined system of education. Education is therefore a more crucial factor not only to equip the new generations with skills essential for earning a livelihood, but also to create among them an awareness to social and environmental realities and inculcate in them scientific temper, independence of mind and spirit which are of paramount importance for the individuals to become responsible citizens (Narayan and Reddy, 1979). Tambo (2012) also defines education as the formal or informal training of children to acquire knowledge, skills and also to develop attitudes, values, abilities, emotional and spiritual forms of behaviors required to develop the society in which they live.

Wastage according to Samuel (2004); is an unprofitable and uneconomical utilization of time and resources. The inability of a student to obtain a school certificate at the normal time for any reason whatsoever is regarded as wastage. On the other hand, wastage means the input, time, efforts expended in doing things but with no positive outcomes or outputs.

Educational wastage has been a challenge in many countries. Failures, stagnations and drop-outs are stated as the main factors that cause educational wastage. If an individual fails in school or leaves, before obtaining the diploma or the degree, then the investment made does not give commensurate returns, as both finances as well as human resources are wasted. Educational wastages mean premature withdrawal of child or students from school at any stage before completion of the prescribed courses. This implies that within an academic year, some student's dropout of schools for various reasons. The ultimate goal of every individual is to obtain employment. Well paid jobs require good education; hence, if a person is not educated and does not possess the degree, then he may experience problems in finding employment opportunities. Educational wastage has three components: failures, grade repetition and drop-outs. There are various forms through which it takes place, failure of the system to provide universal education, failure to recruit the students within the system, failure to retain students, incapability on the part of the system to set appropriate objectives and inefficiency in the achievement of objectives. Repetition of classes is also one of the important features of educational wastage (Samuel, 2017).

Individuals are required to experience many detrimental effects of educational wastage. These include unemployment, less income earnings, increase in criminal and violent acts, public dependency and deprived health conditions. When individuals are well educated and they experience problems in obtaining good employment opportunities, then in most cases they remain unemployed for a considerable period of

time. This makes them frustrated and depressed, hence, it is vital for the individuals to make use of education by getting engaged at least in some honorary work. In this way, they are able to make use of their educational skills and abilities in some manner for the welfare of the community (Samuel, 2017).

Forms of Educational Wastage

According to Brimer and Pauli (1971), Educational wastage occurs in the following forms:

Inability to Provide Universal Education: The Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) includes the child's right to education, and a country which is unable to make provision of educational opportunities for the entire child population is not acknowledging its duty and objectives. Children are the future citizens of the country and when they will receive good quality education, they would efficiently contribute towards the progression of the country. Education leads to development of human resources. This is not to say that all such countries are responsible. Many of them are economically unable to make such a provision, but to the extent that they cannot or are not able to receive any kind of assistance. In order to provide good quality education, the country needs resources.

Inability to Recruit Children into the System: The demand for education is normally greater as compared to supply. Lack of resources, materials, infrastructure, civic amenities, proper teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies and other facilities are the factors that cause inability to recruit students into the education system. The existence of legal prescription of the age at which children should begin school, together decrease the incidence of the second source of wastage at the first and second level. Yet such forms of wastage still need to be considered, above the age of compulsory education. It is one of the most important factors in making provision of additional and higher education. Recruitment into the voluntary sectors of an educational system depends upon ensuring that the pupils and their families recognize the objectives and the framework of education as compatible with their own goals.

Inability to Retain Students within the System: The retaining capacity of the educational system in both its voluntary and its compulsory sectors depends upon external and internal factors. The social and economic conditions of the educational institutions are primarily responsible for retaining students. Good quality education, extra-curricular activities, kind and approachable teachers, proper infrastructure and facilities and amiable environmental conditions of the schools are the primary factors that contribute in retaining students. Absence of any of these factors may cause drop-out of students from schools. As a result, it causes educational wastage. Since it is within the capability of the system to reduce these sources of drop-out, they are suitably regarded as forms of wastage.

Nevertheless, in many countries, the number of available school places at successive levels of education decreases, and it would be inappropriate to assume that all nations intend to retain children, primarily recruited into the system throughout the total range of provision. However, it is logical to recognize the primary objective as being to retain all students, recruited into the system until the objectives have

been adequately satisfied. An estimate of wastage should include an index of drop-out, which relates premature leaving to the number of children, who are recruited at the beginning of each cycle.

Inability to Set Appropriate Objectives: In the present world, there are differences among nations in setting objectives for the entire education system and its components. In most cases, the strongest single influence in the determination of objectives arises from a traditional conception of what an educated person should be. The curriculum content and processes, which have promoted this view of the educated man, over many decades and even over centuries still continues to have a considerable influence upon the concept of what education would make an attempt to achieve.

Inability to achieve a balance between the demands of education in leading to operative growth and progression of the individuals, and the production of trained and skilled human resources needed by the economy. This characterizes the incompetence of the educational system. So far as the international comparisons are concerned, each nation must be responsible, for setting its own objectives, and for determining whether or not they have been achieved.

Inefficiency in the Achievement of Objectives: Every educational institution has certain goals and objectives. The goals of enhancement of the educational system, leading to operative growth and development of the students, making use of modern and innovative strategies and methods and making provision of necessary facilities and equipment are some of the common goals. In order to achieve these goals, it is vital for the individuals to be skilled, aware, competent and knowledgeable. They need to possess the traits of diligence, conscientiousness and resourcefulness to meet the desired goals and objectives. The individuals are required to work in collaboration and share with each other, ideas and suggestions. It is vital for them to create an amiable atmosphere within the school environment and implement truthfulness, honesty and ethics. Absence of any of these factors would cause inefficiency in the achievement of objectives.

The primary aspect in which teachers are required to depict efficiency is within the education system. There are numerous factors that are included within the education system, in which the teachers and the staff members of the schools are required to be efficient. These include the teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies, time management, tests, class assignments, homework assignments, competitions, workshops and other areas that are needed to enrich learning among students. It is vital for the teachers to be experienced, skilled and qualified. These should possess efficient knowledge regarding how to put into practice, the strategies and approaches that are required to improve the standing of the educational institutions within the community. The individuals need to be aware of how to utilize the financial resources of the schools in an appropriate manner, especially when they have limited funds. In order to depict efficiency in the achievement of objectives, and to make the education system productive, it is imperative for the human resources to be competent and proficient in the performance of job duties.

Factors Influencing Educational Wastage

Brimer and Pauli (1971) identify a series of factors that influence educational wastage. These factors are discussed below.

Family problems have an impact on students. The families of individuals are the foundations from where learning, growth and progression take place. It is the responsibility of the parents to get their children enrolled in good educational institutions and ensure that their pursue for education takes place in an appropriate manner. The parents in most cases encourage their children to study, get them enrolled in good educational institutions and want them to obtain good quality educational qualifications. On the other hand, there are parents, who are unable to make provision of proper education for their children, hence, they either drop-out of school or are unable to get enrolled into schools. The main reasons have been financial problems or inability to understand academic concepts. In some cases, parents involve their children in domestic work, hence, they do not find sufficient time to devote towards studying and as a result, their academic performance suffers a setback. Support from the parents is of utmost significance for the individuals in order to prevent educational wastage and make complete utilization of skills and abilities.

Criminal and violent acts are common in communities, where individuals do not recognize the significance of education. These include verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, theft, robbery, rape and murder. The individuals belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society, who have the main objective to enhance their living conditions by making money, may get involved into various types of violent and criminal acts and do not recognize the significance of education. These individuals do not make effective use of their educational skills and abilities and hence, it can be stated that prevalence of any types of inappropriate acts and violence are major influencers of educational wastage.

Students themselves have a big role to play in their education. It is up to the individual himself to put in all the dedication and hard-work towards learning. They have to work diligently towards acquisition of education, be attentive in class, complete their assignments on time and provide solutions to various kinds of problems that arise within the course of attainment of education. When students are unable to understand academic concepts or do not take interest in studying, then they are likely to drop-out of school, hence causing educational wastage. When they feel vulnerable in communicating with their teachers in order to solve academic problems, then they usually feel reluctant in going to school and the ultimate outcome is school drop-out. There have been cases of individuals who work from an early age and are unable to find time for studies, or experience difficulties in understanding academic concepts; hence, they are unable to achieve good grades in tests and assignments. As a result, they may fail and have to repeat a school year. This is one of the major factors of educational wastage.

The school environmental conditions should be favourable to enhance learning and enable the students to make effective use of their education to lead to development and progress. There should be provision of facilities, equipment,

infrastructure and other materials that are needed to make effective education. When there are availability of facilities and equipment within the school environment, then it does not only enhance learning, but also leads to an increase in enrolment and retention rate. On the other hand, students may drop out, if there are absence of civic amenities and proper facilities. The schools should organize competitions and workshops that are not only regarded as ways to enrich learning, but also provide direction to the individuals to make use of their education. For instance, in schools, students are encouraged to participate in social work, where they conduct classes for the children belonging to deprived and backward communities, who cannot afford education.

Teachers have the duty to facilitate learning and education among students. They should therefore possess the required educational qualifications, skills, abilities and an approachable attitude. They have to implement proper teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies. They need to make sure that these are put into practice in accordance to the needs and requirements of the students. The students usually drop out of school, when the teachers are too strict in attitude. There have been cases where teachers get involved into criminal acts, such as verbal and physical abuse of the students. The students have developed an apprehensive and a vulnerable attitude due to these acts and therefore, have dropped out of schools, even before, their educational skills are honed. On the other hand, when teachers are unapproachable in attitude, do not possess efficient knowledge and awareness or are inefficient in managing the students, then it leads to improper functioning of the educational institutions and educational wastage (Patel, 2017).

The curriculum and instructional methods can strongly influence students' interest. When students possess certain negative viewpoints regarding the curriculum and the instructional methods, then they usually leave their education before completion. In most cases, difficult subject areas require private tuitions. When parents are able to afford tuitions, then students may understand curriculum and instructional methods. On the other hand, when parents are unable to provide tuitions or any kinds of assistance, then they are unable to achieve desirable grades. They are unable to understand the utility of various topics that are taught (Patel, 2017). When students do not develop interest and enthusiasm in the curriculum and instructional methods, then they are likely to drop out of school. Hence, the aspect that is of utmost significance is, teachers need to make use of curriculum and instructional methods that are manageable and understandable by the students. The lesson plans should be made interesting by even introducing role plays into them (Patel, 2017).

Financial problems of individuals have been severe, especially with those belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society. Upon completion of formal schooling, when students aspire to obtain admission in higher educational institutions, and they do not obtain any kinds of financial assistance, then financial problems prove to be impediments within the course of acquisition of education. In obtaining admission into professional courses, students have to take an entrance examination; hence they normally have to join coaching centres to obtain good quality training and preparation. Due

to financial problems, they are unable to obtain coaching or seek admission, thus students are unable to enrich their learning and education by obtaining higher education. This is termed as educational wastage.

The education system has numerous aspects that are taken into consideration besides the teaching and curriculum and instructional methods. One of the most important aspects is provision of equal opportunities. There should not be any kind of discrimination between individuals on the basis of caste, creed, race, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic background. When there is organization of competitions or events or functions in schools, then students should be provided with equal opportunities to participate. Grading should solely be based upon the performance of the students. There should be discipline within the school and the classroom. The individuals should communicate with each other in a decorous manner and provide effective resolutions to the occurrence of conflicts and disputes.

Examination systems usually cause stress and anxiety among the students. In the examination system, there is a certain passing percentage, if a student meets that percentage, he is passed, whereas if he scores below the passing percentage, he is failed and may have to repeat the entire year. Therefore, they have to work diligently towards preparation. When students receive complete encouragement and support from their parents, they entirely devote their time towards studying and score good grades. On the other hand, when they do not receive support from their parents, they become unable to adequately prepare themselves for the exams, then they will be unable to score a passing percentage and have to repeat the entire year, hence leading to educational wastage.

Working in other areas is also identified as a factor that influences educational wastage. There have been cases of individuals, who have obtained good quality education and are even professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, researchers, educationists, managers, administrators and so forth. Yet they experience problems in obtaining employment opportunities in their respective areas. In order to sustain their living, they get engaged into other jobs, which are not related to their field. Hence, when an individual is unable to make use of his educational qualifications to sustain his living and is not making any contributions to lead to well-being of the community, then it is regarded as educational wastage. Hence, individuals usually aspire to obtain employment opportunities relating to their fields.

Wanjiku (2014) who qualifies the causes of educational wastage as determinants of educational wastage groups them into three namely: schools based determinants, socio-cultural determinants and student's personal determinants.

Consequences of Educational Wastage

The economic consequences of wastage in secondary schools are myriad and severe. Advances in technology have fuelled the demand for a highly skilled labour force, hence, transforming high school education into a minimum entry into the labour market. Further, secondary school completion has become a basic prerequisite for higher education, meaning that a dropout who joins the labour market will have low earning profiles because they are likely

to work at unskilled jobs or at low paying service occupations which offer little opportunity for upward mobility. Dropping out also severely impairs a young person's job prospects and earning potentials and in turn causes other secondary indirect problems such as low self-esteem and reliance on public assistance (Goodland & Anderson, 1987).

Curriculum Content Quality

Curriculum content simply means the totality of what is to be taught in a school system. The content component refers to the important facts, principles and concepts to be taught. The content can be in the form of knowledge, skills, attitude and values that learners are exposed to. Content involves subject matter drawn on the basis of problems, themes or topics cutting across traditional subjects (Tyler, 1949).

Tyler (1949) identifies the following criteria for selecting curriculum content, namely: validity, self-sufficiency, significance, interest, learn ability, utility and consistency with social realities.

The content of a curriculum is valid if it promotes the outcome that it is intended to promote. It is also the authenticity of the subject matter selected ensuring that the topics are not obsolete. A self-sufficient curriculum helps learners to attain maximum self-sufficiency. Therefore it gives learners the chance to experiment, observe and carry out field study. Significance means the content of the curriculum is selected and organized for the development of learning activities, skills, processes and attitudes that will help in solving the problems of the country. The content of a curriculum should also be selected while taking into consideration the interest of the learners. This is because students learn best if the subject matter is meaningful to them. Learn ability describes the ease with which students can learn the content. The content should therefore be within the experience of the learners. Content utility is the usefulness of the content in solving problems, now and in the future. It is more important in skill or procedural knowledge whereby learners can put what they have learnt into practical life activities. Curriculum content is consistent with social realities when it is chosen based on the fact that it relates to our present social, economic and political aspirations. The content should be acceptable to the culture and belief system of the people.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The researcher made use of two theories namely the Alienation Theory and the Choice Theory Curriculum.

The Alienation Theory of Fine (1986)

The Alienation theory, which is used to explain why students drop out of school, is derived from Merton's strain theory (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). According to this theory as proposed by Fine (1986), when individuals feel the strain of not closing the gap between their experiences or capabilities and cultural norms, one response these individuals may have is to alienate themselves from society. In reference to dropping out of school, alienation theory suggests that students who drop out of school do so because they lack positive relationships with teachers and peers, resulting in an individual alienating himself from school, thus creating an environment that provides a reason for a student to

withdraw from school (Newmann, 1981). Studies have shown that some students leave school primarily because they feel that the teachers did not care about them or viewed them as troublemakers and were not supportive of them (e.g. Fine, 1986). In addition to student teacher relationships, other factors that affect a student's decision to alienate and eventually withdraw from school include school structure and social organization (Bryk & Thum, 1989).

One can deduce from this theory that when a person sees his/her efforts to achieve a goal being frustrated by one reason or the other, there become a high tendency for the individual to perform poorly or abandon the process.

Relating this theory to education, it can be seen that the nature of a curriculum and the quality of teachers that implement this curriculum may strongly determine whether a learner's effort could be considered wasted or not.

The Choice Theory Curriculum of Glasser (1998)

The Choice Theory was developed by Glasser (1998), to assist high school students in developing a method for understanding their motivation for learning. The general goal of Choice Theory/Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1998) is to help individuals meet their basic needs through assessment of current behaviour so that they may make more needs-satisfying and positive behavioural choices.

According to this theory all behaviour stems from a need to meet one of the five internal needs namely survival, love/belonging, power/mastery, fun, and freedom; and that individuals have the power to change their lives for better or for worse, based on the choices they make. It also believed that all people have a responsibility, towards themselves and others, to make choices that do not interfere with the rights of others to also make choices.

Reality Therapy is the therapeutic technique used to apply Choice Theory so that an individual may satisfy his or her own needs in a way that does not interfere on another person's ability to meet their needs. A person applying the techniques of Reality Therapy focuses on the present, avoids looking into the past for reasons or excuses, encourages others to self-evaluate their present actions, helps others create specific, workable plans, and asks others to evaluate their progress.

Glasser (1998) stated that most human problems stem from relationship problems. Extrapolating further, Glasser believed that the failure of some students to learn is related more to the relationship between teachers and students than it is to students' ability to learn. He proposed that if teachers were to learn and practice Choice Theory, students would be more motivated to learn. Specifically, at-risk youth may benefit from the opportunity to learn and understand their reasons for behavioural choices while practicing Choice Theory. Working towards becoming a Glasser Quality School means the staff is moving away from boss-management, towards lead-management. They have a basic understanding of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy (Glasser, 2001) and are working towards greater self-understanding. The meaning of this theory is simply that people select what they do, depending on how their needs will be met, but that this is done without preventing others from achieving their own needs.

From this theory the researcher thinks that the content of our school curriculum and the relationships between teachers and students should be rich and good enough to attract the students to learn. In addition the relationships should not hinder other students' progress. This can go a long way to encourage students' retention in schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

For this study the researcher used the mixed research methodology that involves both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Specifically the researcher used the Explanatory sequential design, where the quantitative data is first collected and analyzed with more emphasis before qualitative data. The quantitative data collected is also backed by qualitative data.

The researcher found this design suitable because the quantitative approach provides more structured, specific and precise findings based on quantification; it is also used to describe current conditions or investigate relationships. While the qualitative approach gives an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation; it helps to provide information used to back quantitative findings. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also affirm that qualitative research is an interactive inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their natural settings.

In view of this mixed methodology therefore, the study made use of a survey, interview and focus group discussion (FGD). Surveys are used to gather data from a sample of a population at a particular time while interviews and focus group discussions allow respondents to express their own opinions that the researcher could not predetermine.

Area of Study

This study was conducted in the Littoral Region of Cameroon, The Republic of Cameroon lies between latitudes 20 North to 140 North of the equator and latitudes 80 East to 170 East of the Greenwich meridian. The country is bound to the North by The Republic of Chad, to the West by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to the East by the Central African Republic and to the South by Equatorial Guinea, Congo and the Atlantic Ocean. English and French are the official languages of the country. Cameroon is often referred to as "Africa in miniature" for its geological, environmental and cultural diversity. The Republic of Cameroon is divided into ten regions with Littoral being one of these regions. The ten Regions of Cameroon are divided into 58 divisions and 360 sub-divisions. Littoral Region is a coastal region with a surface area of 20,248km² and an estimated population of 3,803,138 inhabitants (2013). Littoral as a region has four administrative divisions namely: Moungo, Nkam, Sanaga-Maritime and Wouri which are also broken down into sub-divisions. The Region has many ethnic groups, including immigrants from other regions and different countries like Nigeria, Chad, Mali and China. The capital of the Littoral region is Douala, the most populated city (2,446,945 inhabitants) as of 2017, and the economic capital of Cameroon. Being an economic capital therefore, a study on educational wastage will have respondents from many different economic backgrounds (From documentary analysis). The map and location of the Littoral region are shown below in figure 1.

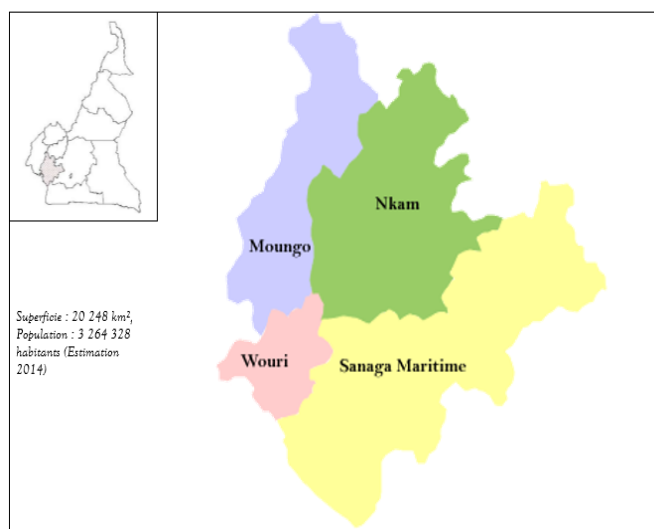


Figure 1: Detailed map and location of the Littoral Region

Source: National institute for statistics, Littoral Region

Population of the Study

The target (parent) population of this study was made up of all the students, teachers, vice principals and Heads of Department of English speaking secondary schools in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. The accessible (sampled) population was composed of all lower sixth students, teachers, vice principals and heads of department of the twelve selected secondary schools. These selected schools were made up of four public, four denominational and four lay private secondary schools from across the four divisions that make up the Littoral Region of Cameroon. A total sample of 568 participants was used, distributed as follows: 412 lower sixth students, 112 teachers, 12 vice principals and 32 Heads of Departments. The selection of the sample took into consideration the school type, class section (lower sixth arts or science) and gender.

Sampling Procedure

Vice principals and Heads of department were selected using the purposive sampling technique, given that it permits the researcher to meet the respondents of his interest. The stratified sampling technique was used to select the twelve schools, to ensure the inclusion of all three types of schools namely public, denominational and lay private schools. The researcher employed the simple random sampling technique to select the students and teachers, while applying caution to ensure gender balance.

Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments for this study were constructed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Three instruments were used in this study: the questionnaire, interview guide and focus group discussion guide. There were two sets of questionnaire, one for students and another for teachers. An interview guide for administrators was used to get information from vice principals and deans of studies while the focus group discussion guide was used for the heads of department. These instruments were formulated by the researcher with directives from the supervisors. The questionnaire for students and teachers were each made up of background information, followed by two sections A - B. Each of these sections was made up of eight structured or closed ended items to elicit quantitative information about

curriculum content and educational wastage. Each of the questionnaire was a Likert scale type with four options i.e. strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. There were also two open ended questions at the end of the two sections. In total therefore each questionnaire was composed of 10 items/questions (8 closed ended and 2 open ended questions).

The interview guide for vice principals and deans of studies was made up of three items, all aimed at collecting qualitative data about the study, while the focus group discussion guide also had three guiding issues for discussion.

Validity of Instruments

The researcher carried out both content and face validation of the instruments to ensure that they were good enough for the study. After the instruments were constructed, the researcher presented them to his peers and supervisors for any necessary adjustments (face validity). The researcher then carried out a pilot study where the instruments were administered to some of the students and teachers who did not form part of the target population to ensure that the constructs were all understood (content validity).

Reliability of Instruments

The researcher further carried out a reliability analysis on both sets of questionnaire for students and teachers after conducting a pilot study. This was to see that all sets of questionnaire had satisfactory reliability coefficients above the 0.50 value of Crombach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The

reliability coefficients of the students’ and teachers’ questionnaire were respectively 0.743 and 0.768

Administration of Instruments

Questionnaire (for students and teachers) and interview guide (for vice principals/deans) were personally administered by the researcher in their respective schools, after taking permission from the various principals. For the focus group discussions with heads of department, the researcher conducted this with the assistance of one of his course mates who played the role of a secretary. Every focus group discussion was organized in the staff rooms of the respective schools during break periods after obtaining permission from the school principals. The researcher selected the participants from different subject areas in order to encourage a good debate over the issues discussed.

FINDINGS

Data collected for this study were both quantitative and qualitative. The data were entered using EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Standard version, Release 21.0 (IBM Inc. 2012). The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically by grouping common ideas or themes together. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis. The results of the analysis are presented in Table1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Curriculum Content Quality and Educational Wastage in Secondary Schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon (N=412)

Variable	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$			
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Γ_{xy}	p-value
curriculum content(X)	7070	125543	135861	-0.40**	0.000
educational wastage (Y)	8050	165053			

The result of the analysis reveals that the absolute calculated Γ_{xy} -value of 0.40 is higher than the critical Γ_{xy} -value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance with 410 degrees of freedom. Also the p-value of 0.000 is lower than 0.05. With the result of this analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This result therefore means that there is a significant relationship between curriculum content quality and educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.

Since there is a significant relationship between curriculum content quality and educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon, a further exploration of the relationship showed that the $\Gamma_{xy} = -0.40$ was negative. This indicates that the better the curriculum content quality the lower the educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.

From descriptive statistics, it was observed that the vice principals/deans of studies were generally pessimistic with respect to the ability of secondary school graduates to create jobs. Only one out of them was optimistic. The vice principals, deans of studies and Heads of department generally affirmed that the secondary school curriculum in the greater part does not teach creativity. It mostly teaches general concepts and theories, no professionalism, no

entrepreneurship, few contextual or day to day life issues. The curriculum was perceived to have little relevance to the learners although few projects and club activities are found in the schools. They generally recommended that the above aspects of the curriculum should be improved. A thematic overview of the data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions reveals that all participants agreed with firmness that educational wastage was an issue to reckon with. They also affirmed that curriculum content, influences educational wastage. The following remedies were then prescribed: non admission of under aged children into primary or secondary schools, strict respect of pass mark boundaries during promotion, parents to play their role in monitoring and advising children,

$p^* < 0.05$; $df = 410$; critical $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.098$

creation of an examination body to better organize entrance examinations into secondary schools like common entrance and first school leaving certificate and also to tailor the curriculum towards specialization and professionalism.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that there is a strong inverse influence of curriculum content quality on educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon. This

means that the better the curriculum content quality the lower the educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained.

These findings are in line with the Alienation Theory of Fine (1986) which is used to explain why students drop out of school. It is derived from Merton's strain theory (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). According to this theory, when individuals feel the strain of not closing the gap between their experiences or capabilities and cultural norms, one response these individuals may have is to alienate themselves from the society. In reference to school dropout or educational wastage, this theory supports that students who drop out of school do so because they lack positive relationships with teachers and peers or interest on the content, resulting in an individual alienating himself from school, thus creating an environment that provides a reason for a student to withdraw from school (Newmann, 1981).

In the same light the Choice Theory Curriculum of Glasser (1998) holds that all behaviour stems from the need to meet one of the five internal needs namely survival, love/belonging, power/mastery, fun, and freedom; and that individuals have the power to change their lives for better or for worse, based on the choices they make. Students will therefore want to make a choice over the content of the curriculum studied based on the relevance and quality of the content.

The findings are also supported by Patel (2017) who holds that when students possess certain negative viewpoints regarding the curriculum and/or the instructional methods, then they usually leave their education before completion and that in most cases, difficult subject areas require private tuitions. Onyango (2013) in a study to establish the relationship between curriculum content and academic achievement in Central Nyanza Region of Kenya found that curriculum content influenced achievement. Jessica (2014) also investigated the Influence of curriculum quality on students' achievement and saw that the results of curriculum quality survey accounted for the largest amount of variance in student achievement. Also Benjamin (2017) established the link between perceptions of subject difficulty and subject choices in England and realized that although subject difficulty was an important consideration for teachers, much of their advice was based upon what each student would enjoy and find useful for future education/employment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusion was made. Wastage in the field of education occurs due to numerous factors. This study focused on the influence of curriculum content, on educational wastage in secondary schools of the Littoral Region of Cameroon. For a learner to complete his or her education and alleviate wastage in schools it is vital for the curriculum content to be up to date.

The absence of a good curriculum or inadequacy in the curriculum imposes detrimental effects and is likely to cause educational wastage. Educational wastage occurs, when students drop out of educational institutions due to various reasons such as, failure or being unsuccessful in examinations; repetition of classes; stagnation or multiple

repetitions; inability to make use of the knowledge acquired to earn a living or for the welfare of the society, and inability to get employment. One of the aspects that is of utmost significance is to make use of education in implementing the traits of morality, ethics and behaviour. The individuals should be equally honest in their conduct and possess effective communication skills. In order to alleviate this problem of wastage, it is vital to make improvements within the education system, through the provision of a rich curriculum content

Therefore, curriculum content as a cause of education wastage in secondary schools is a pertinent issue in the provision of quality education and unless this is addressed by all the education stakeholders in the country, a certain percentage of the citizens will miss out on development agenda both at the society and the individual levels. In as much as this state of affairs is not controlled, there will be wastage in terms of human capital and other resources. The mitigation strategies proposed to minimize education wastage in secondary schools are quite practical in applicability and if they are given a chance, the percentage of repetition, stagnation, drop of students, non-usability and non-employability would indeed be minimized thereby minimizing education wastage in secondary schools.

Recommendations

The findings of this study, have provided many suggestions that if put into practice may go a long way to alleviate the situation of educational wastage in secondary schools. The study recommended that more hands-on activities be included in the curriculum, while secondary schools should have direct links with industries that can prepare teachers and students towards job creation. Cameroonians should be encouraged to step-up consumption of locally made products to encourage creativity amongst graduates.

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