FACTORS AFFECTING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS:
The Case of Standards III, V, AND VI in Muheza District

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Abstract: A study was conducted to examine the factors that impact the teaching of English to standard III, V, and VI pupils in public primary schools. The study aimed to identify enhancing elements and propose practical measures for improvement. Using a qualitative case study research design, data were collected through purposive sampling from eleven public primary schools in three wards that speak different mother tongues, namely Kicheba, Magoroto, and Kigombe. English language teachers and pupils were selected from the targeted group through purposive sampling. The research methods included teacher interviews, pupil focus group discussions, and classroom observations for standard VI.

The study identified key enhancing factors such as qualified English teachers, effective teaching methods, and the availability of valuable materials and resources. It also pinpointed inhibiting factors like overcrowded classrooms, time constraints, and inadequate teacher professional development programs. However, the study did not stop at identifying these challenges. It recommended practical and effective measures such as curriculum alignment, utilization of innovative teaching strategies, and substantial investment in teacher development. These measures, being practical and feasible, offer hope for a brighter future in English education, instilling a sense of optimism in the audience about the potential for positive change.

The study's findings underscore the critical need for targeted policy interventions to enhance English language instruction in public primary schools. The study concluded that improving teacher qualifications, enhancing resource allocation, and fostering supportive teaching environments are pivotal for advancing English education. These findings, with their potential to significantly impact educational strategies, provide invaluable insights for educators and policymakers, inspiring them with the potential to refine and enhance English teaching outcomes. This knowledge empowers and equips the audience to make informed decisions and take effective actions in their respective roles, thereby enhancing their sense of inspiration and motivation to drive positive change.

Keywords: Qualified teachers – Effective methods – helpful Resources

1. Introduction

The global education landscape is currently dealing with a significant issue: many pupils complete their primary education without fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (World Bank, 2018). There is an urgent need in African nations, particularly in Tanzania's primary education system, to identify effective language teaching methods. This is particularly important given the necessity of establishing a solid foundation (John, 2023). The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) emphasizes the importance of English language instruction in primary education, as it is an official language alongside Kiswahili in Tanzania. English is an essential business language that facilitates cross-cultural learning and knowledge acquisition (MoEST, 2019). Providing high-quality English language education is essential for children's holistic development. Despite this,

challenges persist in English language education, prompting the immediate need for interventions and reforms. This is evidenced by many pupils graduating without proficient reading and writing skills in English (Uwezo, 2014; Hakielimu, 2015; Finscope, 2017).

In a study by Ko et al. in 2013, the concept of educational effectiveness is thoroughly examined, going beyond the traditional notions of 'good' or 'quality' education. Educational effectiveness is assessed at various levels of the education system, including national, district-level, institutional, and individual teacher evaluations. This assessment determines these entities' efficacy in achieving specific educational objectives or outcomes. Effective teaching requires the establishment of precise criteria for measuring effectiveness, which must align with broader educational goals and specific objectives of instructional practices.

The effectiveness of teaching and learning depends on various elements, including the overall learning environment, classroom dynamics, and interaction between teaching and learning styles (Loeb, 2011, as cited in Qais, 2018). Educators who consider these elements carefully are likelier to achieve their educational objectives. Effective teaching involves thorough planning and the execution of well-thought-out strategies often likened to an art form. This artistic approach involves creating dynamic and engaging classroom activities that motivate pupils to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills (Qais, 2018).

The effectiveness of English language instruction in Tanzania largely depends on the quality of educators' work. According to the 2018 World Bank report, teaching effectiveness is influenced by the quality of instruction and the competence of teachers. Effective educators possess pedagogical knowledge, an understanding of learner diversity, and the ability to create a conducive classroom environment for learning (as cited in Uygun, 2013); referenced in (Bhattarai, 2021). They aim to establish a supportive atmosphere where pupils feel encouraged, actively participate and are motivated to develop socioemotional skills essential for success in and out of the classroom (World Bank, 2018).

Motivating disengaged learners is a key responsibility that effective English teachers must undertake. Traditional teaching methods can lead to pupils having low self-esteem and limited critical thinking abilities. Hence, educators must acknowledge and embrace pupil diversity, creating a classroom environment where each pupil feels equal value and respect (Qais, 2018). Building strong relationships with pupils, parents, and school administrators can significantly enhance teaching effectiveness by establishing a supportive network that prioritizes pupil success (Qais, 2018).

Teachers must adapt to diverse pupil backgrounds and learning styles in today's educational landscape. Effective educators engage with pupils to understand their needs and interests. They use this information to develop engaging lesson plans for different learning styles. Hands-on learning experiences aim to alleviate monotony in traditional classrooms. Mastering English early in Tanzanian primary schools is crucial for accessing diverse opportunities and communication platforms. Ensuring effective English language teaching at the primary level equips pupils with essential skills for their future academic and professional pursuits. This study examines factors influencing effective English language teaching in public primary schools to help educators customize strategies and create a conducive learning environment, empowering pupils to achieve English language mastery.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 The Sociocultural Theory of Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky

The study is guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the influence of social interaction and cultural context on cognitive development. It focuses on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), collaborative problem-solving, culturally responsive pedagogy, and teachers' role as learning facilitators. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of English language teaching in public primary schools.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study on the effective teaching of English in public primary schools in

Tanzania includes a range of enhancing, inhibiting, and intervening variables that influence the dependent variable of practical teaching of English. Figure 2.1 shows independent variables like the availability of qualified teachers, adequate materials and resources, and the integration of multimedia and technology in instruction, which contribute to effective teaching practices. Conversely, inhibiting factors such as overcrowded classrooms and time-fact challenges hinder effective teaching. Intervening variables like curriculum alignment and innovative teaching mechanisms play a role in impacting the teaching of English. The study aims to identify factors that promote effective teaching practices and inform policy recommendations to enhance educational outcomes. In this paper, I will focus solely on the enhancing factors.
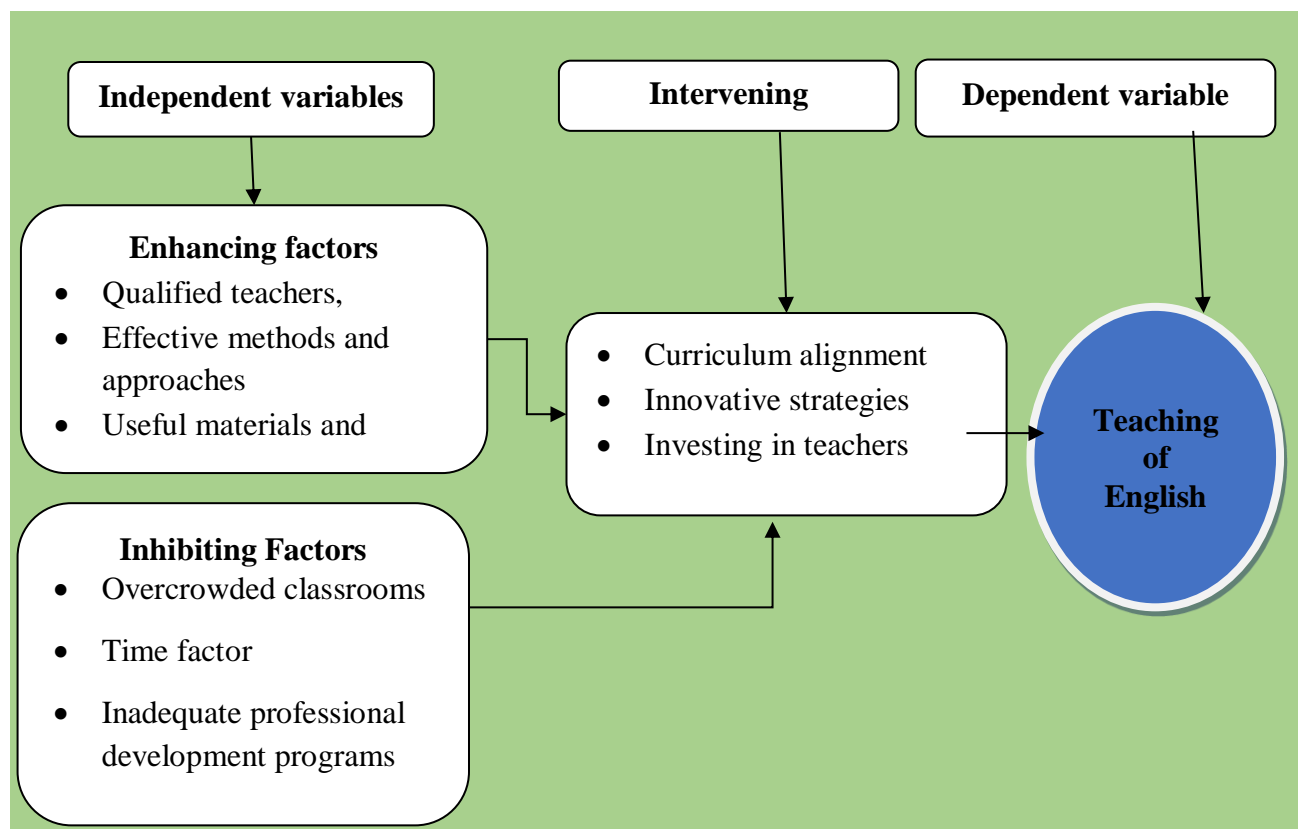

Figure 2.1 A Conceptual Framework

Source Researcher's illustration, Nov 2023

3. Research and Methodology

The paper outlines the strategies the researcher employed to conduct the research. It details the techniques used in data collection and the sampling methods. The study aims to understand the factors influencing the effective teaching of English in public primary schools in Muheza district, using standards III, V, and VI as the case study. It provides a clear roadmap of the research process.

3.1 Research Design

According to Selvam (2017:44), a research design serves as the framework that outlines a study's scope and guides data collection, measurement, and analysis, as stated by Bryman (2016). The chosen research design for this study was an exploratory case study design, which is effective for exploring new areas with limited previous studies and enabling a deep interpretation of fundamental features and patterns. This design facilitates a systematic understanding of the topic and sets the stage for future studies and potential interventions. This decision was justified by the need for an in-depth examination of specific instances within the research context to understand

the factors influencing the effective teaching of English in public primary schools in Muheza district. The researcher explored the phenomenon within real-life settings to gain insights into educators' unique challenges and opportunities in the targeted area.

3.2 Research Approach

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach to assess the factors affecting the effective teaching of English in public primary schools in Muheza district. This approach allowed for detailed insights through methods such as interviews and observation, enabling a nuanced exploration of various influencing factors.

3.3 Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Muheza district, focusing on the specific wards of Kicheba, Magoroto, and Kigombe due to limited time and resources. The research aimed to explore how mother tongues and sociocultural environments impact English language teaching and address challenges English language teachers face in accommodating linguistically diverse learners.

3.4 Target Population

The population for this study included English language teachers and pupils from standards III, V, and VI in Muheza district. Standard III pupils were selected for their initial exposure to English, while standard V and VI pupils offered varying levels of experience. Standards IV and VII were excluded due to their focus on national examination preparation. The study participants took part in interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, offering comprehensive insights into the research topic and yielding genuine findings reflective of the actual context.

3.5 Description of the Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

The study used a multistage sampling technique involving the selection of three wards and 11 public primary schools in Muheza district. The researchers then purposively selected 99 respondents, including English language teachers and pupils from different standards, to ensure diversity and comprehensiveness in the study.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The study involved three sampling phases in Muheza district, resulting in a sample size of 99 respondents from eleven public primary schools. This sample size was chosen for convenience and allowed for a thorough examination of the available information within a wide coverage area.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study used both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, while secondary data was collected from books, journal articles, and internet sources. The interviews involved 33 English language teachers, and focus group discussions were conducted with pupils from different classes. Observations were made in English language classrooms to evaluate teaching methods, pupil participation, and learning environment. Overall, these methods provided comprehensive insights into the effective teaching of English in the study area.
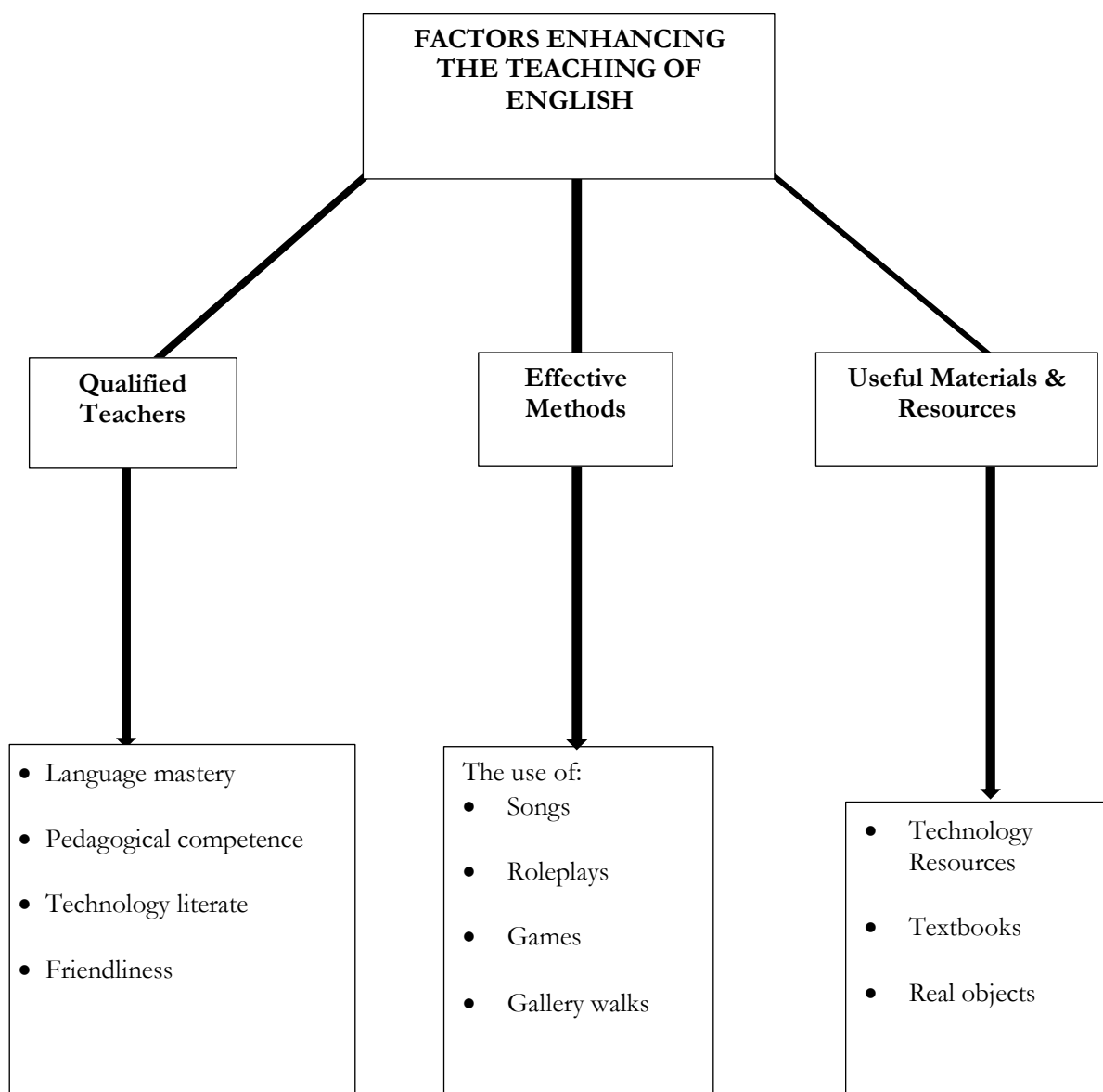
3.7 Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis to dissect and interpret data on factors influencing the effective teaching of English in public primary schools in Tanzania. Data immersion and coding revealed key concepts and patterns.

Overarching themes were identified through careful review and synthesis of coded segments. The interpretation of themes provided valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and strategies associated with teaching English in Tanzanian primary schools. The findings were validated through informant feedback, strengthening the trustworthiness of the results. Thematic analysis offered valuable insights for improving teaching practices and educational outcomes in Tanzanian primary schools.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Factors Enhancing the Teaching of English

According to research, essential factors for effective English teaching include qualified teachers, multimedia/technology resources, and access to other materials. Figure 4.1 categorizes factors inhibiting English teaching.

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          FACTORS ENHANCING
          THE TEACHING OF
              ENGLISH

   Qualified      Effective      Useful Materials &
   Teachers       Methods           Resources

• Language        The use of:     • Technology
  mastery         • Songs           Resources

• Pedagogical     • Roleplays     • Textbooks
  competence
                  • Games         • Real objects
• Technology
  literate        • Gallery walks

• Friendliness
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4.1.1 Qualified Teachers

The findings revealed that English language teachers must master language, including a deep understanding of grammar and vocabulary. They also need pedagogical skills to engage learners effectively and should be technology literate to enhance teaching. However, some teachers expressed challenges in integrating these elements into their teaching, such as lacking skills in various teaching approaches and not incorporating educational technology tools into their lessons.

4.1.2 Effective Methods

Based on the data, English teachers and pupils agree that teaching methods enhance the teaching of English. The survey revealed that the use of songs, role-plays, and games are effective methods of teaching English. Songs help in vocabulary learning and make language learning enjoyable. Role-plays ease learners' transition into using English in real-world situations, and games motivate learners and enhance their participation. Teachers emphasized the effectiveness of these methods in developing communication skills, curiosity, and creativity among learners.

4.1.3 Materials and Resources

The data revealed that educational materials and resources are vital in teaching. According to English language teachers and pupils, the tools empower them to engage in classroom activities actively. They expressed that those valuable materials encourage active exploration, developing problem-solving skills and critical thinking by catering to multiple learning styles. Likewise, the availability of enough materials and resources, such as textbooks and technology tool, builds a favorable classroom atmosphere where all teachers and learners can participate. This analysis uncovered a range of adequate materials and resources that enhance the teaching of English as;

Technology Resources; the data shows that using technology for audiovisual purposes in teaching encourages even slow learners to be involved in learning. Teachers believe that technology makes lessons more enjoyable and boosts engagement and participation among learners. It also promotes independent learning experiences and caters to individual learning style differences.

Textbooks: the data showed that pupils are more motivated when provided with enough textbooks while learning. Textbooks help them follow the lesson and engage more with the material. Some pupils mentioned that textbooks with audio CDs enable them to practice and develop their listening and speaking skills. Teachers also find textbooks useful as they engage learners in the lesson and help with vocabulary and grammar.

Real Objects; In this category, pupils emphasized the importance of using real objects such as maps, magazines, and newspapers in their English language lessons. They believe that real objects help them understand and remember complex concepts better. The English language teachers also highlighted how using real objects sparks curiosity and enhances learning by providing real-life context. However, during classroom observations, it was noted that no English language teachers used real objects when teaching, relying solely on textbooks.

4.2 Factors Inhibiting the Teaching of English

This section discusses the factors that hinder the teaching of English, including overcrowded classrooms, time constraints, and limited teacher professional development programs in public primary schools. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult to provide individual attention, while time constraints limit language learning practices. Limited professional development programs for teachers result in instructors being ill-equipped to use modern teaching approaches. Addressing these hindering factors is crucial for enhancing the effective teaching of English in public primary schools.
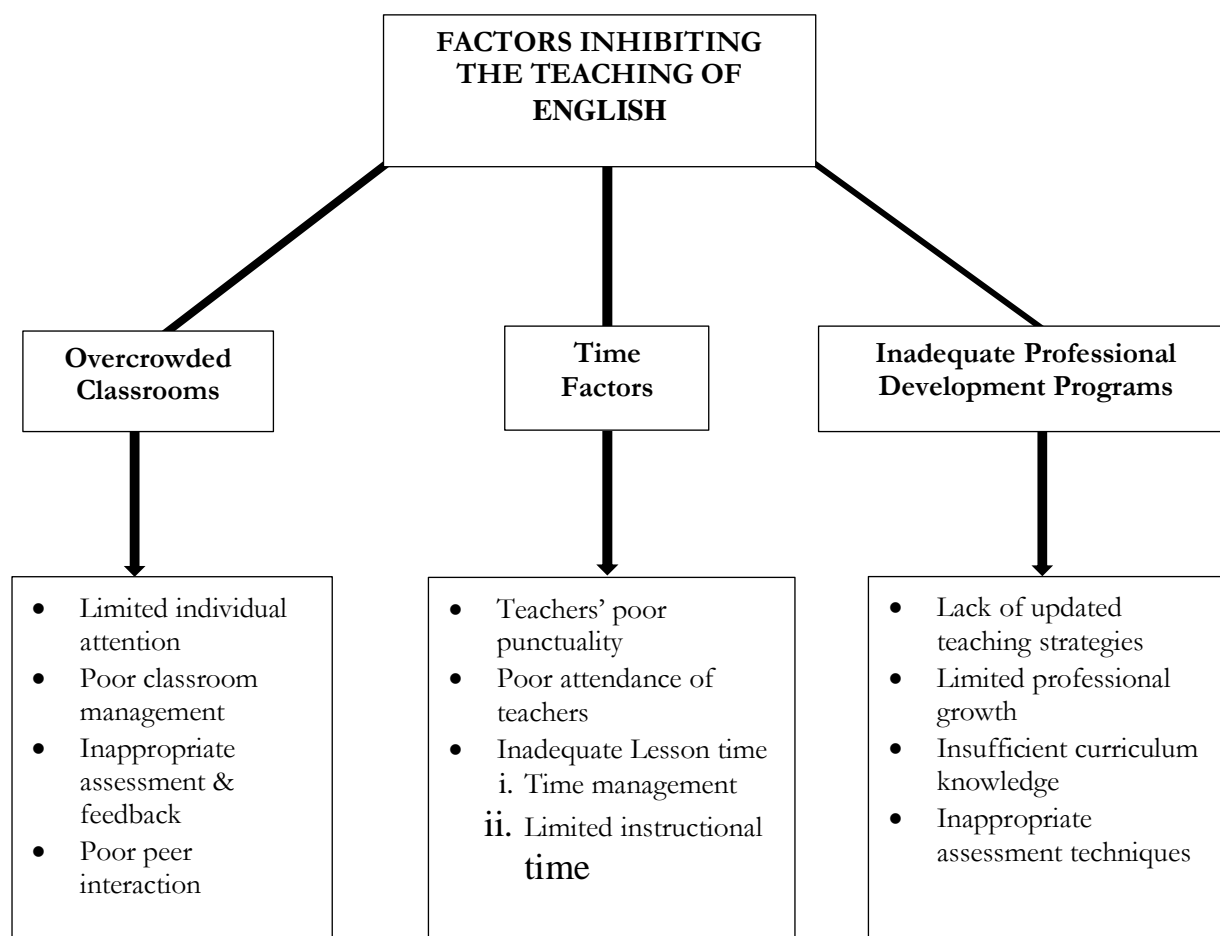
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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  FACTORS INHIBITING      │
                    │  THE TEACHING OF         │
                    │  ENGLISH                 │
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Overcrowded Classrooms	Time Factors	Inadequate Professional Development Programs

• Limited individual attention
• Poor classroom management
• Inappropriate assessment & feedback
• Poor peer interaction
	• Teachers' poor punctuality
	• Poor attendance of teachers
	• Inadequate Lesson time
	  i. Time management
	  ii. Limited instructional time
		• Lack of updated teaching strategies
		• Limited professional growth
		• Insufficient curriculum knowledge
		• Inappropriate assessment techniques

Figure 4.3 Factors Inhibiting the Teaching of English Tree Diagram

4.2.1 Overcrowded Classrooms:

The text below discusses the challenges posed by high pupil-to-teacher ratios in overcrowded classrooms. Teachers struggle to provide individual attention, manage the classroom effectively, and offer timely assessments and feedback. The overcrowded classrooms lead to limited individual attention, poor classroom management, and inappropriate assessment and feedback. These issues hinder the teachers' ability to cater to each pupil's unique needs and contribute to a disruptive and noisy learning environment.

4.2.2 Time Factors: Many teachers and pupils believe that the teaching of English is hindered by time-related factors. Teachers often arrive late and rush through lessons, and their inconsistent attendance disrupts learning continuity. This impacts the quality of English language education and affects pupils' progress. Teachers attribute their poor punctuality to heavy workloads and personal commitments. Pupils express concern over teachers' lack of punctuality and inconsistent attendance. This leads to disruptions in instruction, reduced teaching time, and negatively affects pupils' engagement and readiness.

4.2.3 Inadequate Professional Development Programs: Based on the data, teachers consistently highlighted the inadequacies of professional development programs as a significant barrier to effective teaching. The findings revealed several common attributes in teachers' professional development opportunities, including:

1. Lack of updated teaching strategies: English language teachers expressed concerns about the absence of continuous professional development opportunities, which forces them to rely on outdated teaching methods and makes it challenging to keep up with new strategies.

2. Limited professional growth: Teachers feel that the professional development opportunities are few and lack depth, leading to stagnant career development.

3. Insufficient curriculum knowledge: English language teachers reported not receiving adequate training on the curriculum, preventing them from effectively aligning their instruction with the curriculum goals and standards.

4. Inappropriate assessment techniques: Teachers admitted having trouble designing and implementing effective assessment techniques, which hinders learners' outcomes.

4.3 Effective Measure for Improving the Teaching of English

To effectively teach English, a comprehensive approach is needed. This includes aligning the curriculum, using innovative teaching strategies, and investing in teachers. By implementing these supportive measures, we can improve the well-being of both teachers and pupils and ultimately enhance pupil outcomes in English language education.
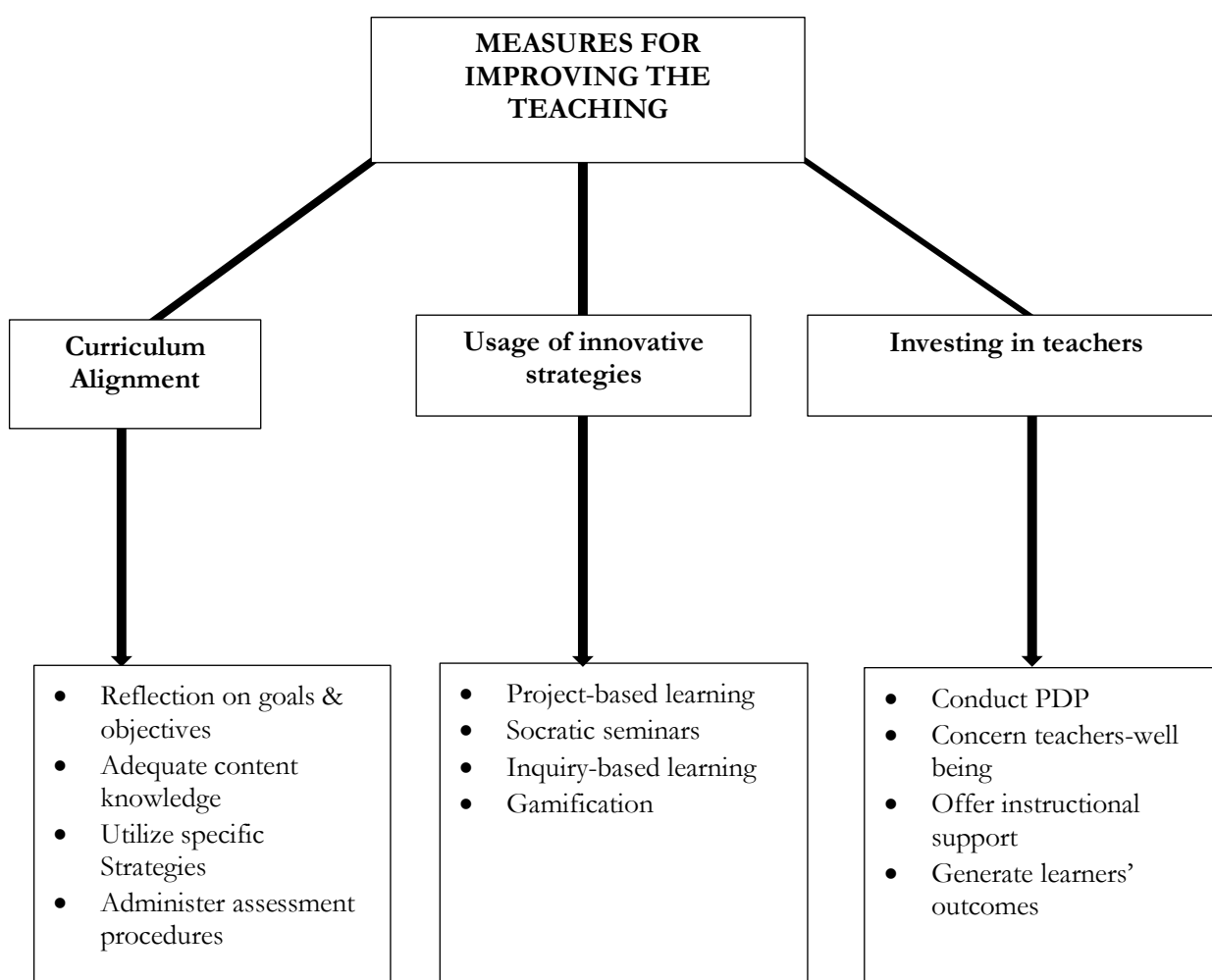
4.3.1 Curriculum Alignment:

The interview revealed that teachers believe a thorough understanding of the curriculum documents is essential for effective teaching. They emphasized the importance of aligning with curriculum goals and objectives and staying updated with curriculum revisions. Teachers also highlighted the need for professional development on alignment strategies and teaching methods. They expressed challenges in fully integrating all curriculum goals due

to time constraints but emphasized the benefits of aligning with curriculum goals and objectives in teaching.

4.3 2 Usage of Innovative Teaching Strategies: the data revealed that teachers must employ innovative teaching strategies when teaching English. They believed that using innovative strategies such as project-based learning, Socratic seminars, inquiry-based learning, and gamification would effectively enhance teaching English and other subjects. This finding disclosed several attributes common under the use of innovative teaching strategies in various English language teachers, namely;

*Project-Based Learning Strategy; a*fter interviewing English language teachers, it was found that project-based learning allows learners to explore various concepts through hands-on projects, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Teachers highlighted how traditional teaching strategies cannot cultivate learners' curiosity and critical thinking, and they encourage others to incorporate project-based learning. They believe that it enhances the quality of education and allows learners to see the relevance of English in their lives by applying language skills to real-world situations. When assessing projects, it's essential to evaluate learners' language skills application and their proficiency in effective communication across various mediums.

Socratic Seminars; English language teachers mentioned that Socratic seminars are effective for enhancing learners' language proficiency, particularly in higher grades. Socratic seminars encourage critical thinking, in-depth discussions, and responsibility for learning. Teachers with more than ten years of experience believe that innovative teaching strategies like Socratic seminars make teaching easier. Socratic seminars involve close reading, analysis of texts, strengthening comprehension, and creating a safe space for dialogue.

Inquiry-Based Learning Strategy; teachers during the interview emphasized the importance of using an inquiry-based learning strategy, stating that it promotes curiosity and deeper understanding. They provided examples of how they implemented this method in English language teaching and how it enhanced assessment practices.

*Gamification Strategy: t*he data revealed that the gamification strategy in teaching develops high-order thinking skills. English language teachers find that using gamification motivates pupils to practice the language in a fun and competitive way, enhances engagement, solidifies learning, and fosters collaboration among learners. Gamification turns language learning into an immersive experience, reinforces grammar rules and vocabulary, and boosts learner engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency.

4.3.3 Investing in Teachers: Teachers are crucial for effective education. Investing in their professional development, well-being, and instructional support and focusing on learners' outcomes greatly enhances the quality of education. This investment positively impacts teaching methods, classroom environment, and pupil motivation.

4.4 Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

4.4.1 Theoretical Perspective: Vygotskian Sociocultural Learning Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory emphasizes the role of social interactions and cultural tools in shaping intellectual growth and development. Applying this theory to teaching English in public primary schools highlights the importance of qualified teachers, access to resources, and effective teaching methods. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and limited professional development programs also come to light. Implementing Vygotsky's theory in teaching English as a second language involves considering the teacher-learner relationship, fostering an interactive learning community, and being culturally sensitive to diverse language backgrounds. Overall, the theory emphasizes the need for a supportive learning environment and the active construction of understanding by learners within a social context.

4.4.2 Study Findings Per Objective

4.4.2.1 Factors Enhancing the Teaching of English

The presence of qualified and well-trained teachers substantially impacts the quality of education, enhancing language acquisition and supporting pupils within their Zone of Proximal Development. High teacher qualifications are critical for effective teaching practices. Utilizing interactive and communicative teaching methods, along with adequate resources such as textbooks, visual aids, and multimedia tools, positively influences teaching and learning experiences.

4.4.2.2 Factors Inhibiting the Teaching of English

Overcrowded Classrooms; The data highlights that overcrowded classrooms hinder effective teaching by reducing individual attention and hindering classroom management. Scholars emphasize the negative impact on academic performance and the challenges in providing individualized guidance and support to pupils. The study underscores the urgent need for government intervention to address the issue by providing more teachers to public primary schools.

Time Factors: The data shows that many teachers struggle with time management, which impacts their effectiveness. This finding suggests that time constraints negatively impact language development. Research emphasizes the crucial role of time in enhancing effective teaching across various subjects when utilized optimally. Therefore, effective class time management is essential for all teachers.

Inadequate Professional Development Programs; the study emphasizes the critical importance of continuous professional development for teachers, aligning with sociocultural learning theory. It suggests that infrequent professional development hinders the adoption of innovative teaching strategies. Consistent with previous research, the study underscores the necessity of ongoing teacher professional development programs to enhance in-service teachers' skills and motivation. The findings stress the urgent need for educational authorities to intervene and provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to influence learners' outcomes positively.

4.4.2.3 Measure for Improving the Teaching of English

Curriculum Alignment; the data suggests that aligning teaching strategies with the prescribed curriculum is crucial for effectively delivering English lessons. This alignment is vital for fostering pupils' linguistic and cognitive development in line with educational goals. Findings highlight the importance of instructors adhering to the curriculum's guidelines when structuring lesson plans and activities, allowing educators to build upon pupils' knowledge and skills. Adhering to the curriculum also enables effective use of assessment tools, accurate progress tracking, timely content evaluation, and identifying areas needing further attention. This systematic approach supports a coherent path toward mastering English, aligning with sociocultural learning theory and promoting optimal learning outcomes within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Usage of Innovative Teaching Strategies; The data suggests that English language teachers should integrate technology and multimedia tools into their teaching methods. This includes implementing project-based learning and other innovative approaches such as inquiry-based learning, gamification, and Socratic seminars to engage pupils effectively. These strategies are rooted in sociocultural learning theory and are consistent with the importance of skilled and creative instruction using innovative methods and technology for professional development.

Investing in Teachers; the data shows that providing regular professional development for teachers strongly correlates with their effectiveness in the classroom. This emphasizes the need to improve teachers' working conditions and invest in their professional growth, aligning with sociocultural theory. Addressing teachers' concerns and providing support fosters their sense of accountability and commitment to their profession, highlighting the importance of enhancing and inhibiting factors in teaching English in public primary schools using the Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory as a framework. Practical measures can be implemented to improve the teaching of English and create a more supportive and effective learning environment, ultimately leading to an improvement in pupils' language proficiency and overall educational success

5.0 Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

5.1 Summary of the Study

The research study aimed to investigate factors impacting the teaching of English in public primary schools, focusing on standards III, V, and VI. The study had three objectives: identifying factors that enhance English teaching, examining factors that hinder instruction, and proposing practical measures to support English language teachers. It used a qualitative approach, sampling 33 teachers and 66 pupils from 11 primary schools in Muheza region. Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The study provided valuable suggestions for teachers to enhance their methods and develop language proficiency among learners.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The First Objective; the study found that qualified English language teachers, effective teaching methods, and the availability of materials positively impact English teaching in primary schools. Qualified teachers, diverse teaching methods, and adequate teaching materials were highlighted as critical factors in enhancing English language instruction.

The Second Objective; the study highlighted factors inhibiting English teaching in standards III, V, and VI. Overcrowded classrooms, limited time for English instruction, and insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers were significant barriers to effective English language teaching.

The Third Objective; the study highlighted the crucial role of teachers in improving pupil outcomes in public primary schools. It emphasized the significance of curriculum alignment and innovative teaching strategies for effective English instruction. Investing in teachers' professional development and creating a supportive working environment can enhance the quality of education.

5.3 Conclusion

Various factors supporting or hindering language acquisition affect the English teaching environment. Factors such as teachers' professional quality, availability of teaching resources, and multimedia use impact the effectiveness of English language instruction. However, challenges such as large class sizes, time constraints, and inadequate teacher development programs create barriers to success. To improve the teaching and learning environment, it's crucial to invest in English language education, provide support for teachers, and ensure the implementation of effective teaching methods aligned with the curriculum. Additionally, there is a need for government intervention at the national level to establish strong foundations for English language education. This will have far-reaching implications for learners globally.

5.4 Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Conduct a thorough assessment to identify deficiencies in the teaching environment and improve conditions for teachers and learners. This will involve providing competent English language teachers and enhancing their pedagogical skills.

2. Investigate the effectiveness of integrating diverse materials and resources into the teaching process, especially in supporting English language instruction in public primary schools.

3. Develop a comprehensive framework to provide continuous professional support for teachers, including mentorship programs, peer collaboration opportunities, and access to online educational resources and communities.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for future research are:

1. Conduct a comprehensive study in urban public primary schools in Muheza district to understand the disparities between rural and urban schools.

2. Evaluate learners' attitudes and engagement in learning the English language from standards one through six.

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