A Qualitative look at basic school teachers’ use of language.

- for mathematics classroom interactions in the Cape Coast Metropolitan area of the Central Region of Ghana.

Rationale and background

According to Khampesi (2001), the teaching and learning of mathematics is like the teaching and learning of a language.

What happens if the teaching and learning of mathematics is done in a language that is not familiar to learners?

The study therefore set out to explore how basic school teachers use language for mathematics classroom interaction to enhance rather than impede pupils understanding of the subject.

Aims and Objectives

- Explore how basic school teachers use languages in the teaching of mathematics.
- Explore the patterns of interaction that are played out in basic school mathematics classrooms and their implications.
- Identify various teaching strategies that teachers use to develop learners active participation in mathematics classroom discourse.
- Examine the reasons behind basic school mathematics teachers choice of language for classroom interaction.

Emerging Findings at a glance

- Teachers wield a lot of power in their classroom and therefore determine which language to use for classroom interaction, who should speak in class and how lessons should progress.
- Teachers prefer to use English for classroom interaction because they see English to hold more political, economic and social and educational capital.
- Teachers encounter a lot of challenges in using English to implement child centered approaches to teaching.
- However they implement other pedagogic strategies to help pupils to participate in lessons.
- Analysis of teacher talk beyond the patterns of interaction is needed to understand how teachers use language to facilitate pupils understanding of lessons.
- It appears that teachers focused more procedural understanding to the neglect of conceptual understanding.
- Teachers did not consider mathematics language to be relevant.

Sufficient exposure to the language of classroom interaction is necessary for effective teaching and learning

Policy and practice implications

- In posting teachers, the GES should take into consideration the linguistic backgrounds of the teacher.
- The English language should be taught very well as a subject before it is introduced as the medium of instruction.
- Teachers should use their pupils home language as a resource to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Publications


I trained as a secondary school mathematics teacher and also as an educational planner. I have taught in all the pre tertiary stages of education in Ghana prior to my PhD studies. My PhD has enhanced my critical thinking skills and also my capacity as a researcher and a teacher. My understanding of classroom processes and especially mathematics classroom processes has been deepened. I now have a better understanding of the role of language in teaching. The depth of knowledge and experience gained throughout my PhD journey will go a long way to enhance my ability to support my department better in teaching and research.