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ReSciLaC permet de faire la diffusion de travaux de jeunes chercheurs ou de chercheurs confirmés *en sociolinguistique, en linguistique, en didactique des langues, en communication, en littérature, en philosophie du langage, en sciences de l'éducation, en sociologie*, etc.

L'objectif de ReSciLaC est d'encourager des discussions scientifiques et théoriques les plus larges possibles portant aussi bien sur les sciences humaines que sur les sciences sociales.

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SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULA REFORM IN BENIN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND OTHER SUBJECTS

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Abstract

Curriculum reform is complex machinery that involves many stakeholders both in its design and implementation. This paper is intended to investigate the 2001 curricula reform in secondary education in Benin from a historical and comparative perspective. More specifically, it explores the process that led to the reform, documents the change brought about and identifies the challenges in the implementation of the reform. The investigation showed that a lot of preparation work was done long before the launching of the reform, in terms of evaluation of previous curricula. Furthermore, the reform is a reshuffle of the curricula of all secondary school subjects and migration from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. However, the implementation was confronted with many difficulties. Teachers were poorly prepared and adequate documents were not provided either, which led teachers to take initiatives to develop their own documents as was the case during the implementation of reforms in Eastern European countries in the 1990s (Kallen, 1996).

Key Words: *Curricula; comparative analysis, Benin, EFL*

1. Introduction

Modern societies are confronted with more and more challenging social, technological, and business problems. When such problems become persistent, citizens look at the educational system to find sustainable solutions. Hence the need for curricula reforms with all the accompanying difficulties in design and implementation. The reform under consideration was kicked off in 2001 in secondary education in Benin. Iwikotan (2013) conducted a study that revealed a lot of challenges in the implementation of the innovated English curricula. Nonetheless, that study did not investigate the historical background of the reform. In addition, the challenges identified had not yet been addressed completely. It is therefore necessary to conduct another study that digs deeper into the historical background of the reform and uses a comparative perspective in order to find out if the challenges are specific to English or cut across all other secondary school subjects. Such a study enables to have a more comprehensive view of the reform and determine areas that require adjustment for informed policymaking.

Furthermore, the implementation of curricula reforms involves many stakeholders with common or diverging interests. For that reason,

reforms may fail if they are not in tune with the environment in which they are to be implemented or for lack of teaching materials (Walters and Vilches, 2009; Humphries and Burns, 2015). Besides, teachers' understanding and acceptance of a reform play a key role in its success (Veen and Slegers, 2006; Bantwini, 2010). Teachers are strategic stakeholders in the success of educational reforms, mainly curriculum reforms, in the sense that they are in charge of the actual implementation in the classroom.

This paper investigates the 2001 secondary school curriculum reform in Benin from a historical and comparative perspective, with a particular emphasis on the teaching of English as a foreign language. In other words, the paper aims to thoroughly explore the process that led to the reform, to document the major changes brought about by the reform, and to find out the challenges confronting its implementation. As a consequence, three questions have been addressed: what process led to the 2001 secondary curricula reform?; what were the major changes brought about by the reform?; and what are the challenges related to the implementation of the reform?

After the literature review that focuses on the rationale for curricula reforms and factors that affect the implementation of reforms, the procedures of the study are described before the presentation of the findings.

1.1 Rationale for Curricula reforms

A curriculum reform does not take place in the vacuum. There are always strong reasons to undertake a reform in that schools reflect the societies they serve. Following the fall of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, the former Eastern European countries felt the need to wipe their school curricula of their ideological contents and to reinstate subjects that were taken out because they could not be used for indoctrination (Kallen, 1996). Attempts were also made to reform mathematics in order to make it less selective and encourage students to embrace it. In the same vein, after the demise of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the curricula were thoroughly reviewed to eliminate racist language and to update them (Bantwini, 2010). As these two examples indicate, major

social changes often trigger curriculum reform. But other reasons may account for reforms.

The curricula reforms that were carried out in New Zealand from the 1990s were rather driven by the desire to introduce accountability into the educational system. According to Philips (2000) , *“The curriculum and assessment policies in the 1990s have focused upon specifying through achievement objectives what students are expected to know and do and how their learning is to be monitored”* (pp. 144-145). The reform emphasized both student learning and assessment to measure what has been learnt. But accountability is not the only reason why curricula reforms take place.

In the specific case of the teaching of English as a foreign language, when an engineering college in Japan joined the Japan Accreditation Board for Engineering Education (JABEE) in 2007, it had to adopt a more communicative approach in its English curriculum through a change in textbooks (Humphries and Burns, 2015). The reform was undertaken in order to meet a criterion defined by the JABEE which required each college to develop communicative competence for international communication and competitiveness in students. As far as the English Preparatory School in a state university in Turkey is concerned, it was complaints on the parts of both teachers and students that led to the curriculum change (Timunçin, 2006). While teachers complained about students’ absenteeism from EFL classes and lack of focus, students blamed their teachers for sticking to textbooks and failing to make their classes lively and attractive. Timunçin (2006) further explained that computer-assisted language learning was introduced to address those complaints.

All in all, the transition from one political system to the other, the establishment of social justice, the need to hold teachers more accountable, dissatisfaction with instruction or students’ behaviors as well as the need for competitiveness in a globalized world are some of the causes underlying curriculum reforms. Nevertheless, when it comes to the implementation of reforms, a number of factors come into play.

1.2 Factors that Affect the Implementation of Reforms

No matter how well-designed reforms are, their implementation may fail or succeed for many reasons. Misconceptions about the

innovation can seriously hamper implementation (Humphries and Burns, 2015, Bantwini, 2010). For example, after the introduction of CALL in the EFL preparatory school at the Turkish University, teachers feared that they might lose their jobs because they did not understand that they were to operate the system (Timunçin, 2006). This lack of understanding is often caused by teachers' previous work experience, failure to sensitize teachers on the innovation, and the gap between the innovation and prevailing classroom practices at the time of innovation (Walters and Vilches, 2001; de Segovia and Hardison, 2009). Another inhibiting factor for innovation implementation is when teachers have the feeling that the innovation is imposed on them from the top. In this kind of situations, teachers develop resistance because they feel manipulated (Timunçin, 2006; Bantwini, 2010; Mohammed and Harlech, 2008). That is certainly the reason why Walters and Vilches (2001) suggested that in the implementation of a reform, not only do trainers have to train teachers but they should also sensitize the teachers they train on the relevance of the reform in order to facilitate ownership.

From a different angle, lack of support in terms of professional development, supervision, and provision of materials can be detrimental to reform implementation (Iwikotan, 2013; Humphries and Burns, 2015; Bantwini, 2010). In some cases, textbooks provided may not be adequate in as much as they lack *"explicit content and guidance for the students to complete activities"* (Humphries and Burns, 2015, p. 243).

In the specific case of EFL, teachers' lack of confidence in their English proficiency may become a serious stumbling block. In an English curriculum reform implemented in Thailand, many teachers stated that they used little English in the classroom because of their limited English proficiency and the fear that learners might imitate their errors (de Segovia and Hardison, 2009). According to Walters and Vilches (2001), *"The confidence to communicate meanings comes from a secure classroom environment and knowledge of language form."* (p. 136). In the Thai example, the teachers who were to create the secure classroom environment did not feel safe themselves and they also lacked knowledge of the English language. As a consequence, they constituted an obstacle to the successful implementation of the reform because they could not teach their students to communicate in a language they could not speak themselves.

In short, misconceptions about an innovation, the adoption of a top down approach to a reform, lack of support in terms of textbook provision and teacher development, and lack of proficiency in English on the part of EFL teachers are some of the factors that are likely to have a negative impact on the implementation of a reform. Concerning the reform that was initiated in secondary education in Benin in 2001, a number of procedures have been used to investigate its design and implementation.

2. Methods and Procedures

This study used a qualitative design in that it seeks to look into the origins of the reform. A focus group discussion was organized in 2015 in order to shed light on the actual content of the reform and the main challenges in its implementation. The focus group discussion was chosen as data collection instrument because the group dynamics it generates enables participants to reveal facts that are not politically correct under the encouragement of the moderator (Goldenkoff, 2004). Three teachers of three subjects including French, mathematics, and English took part in discussion. The selection criterion is to have participated in the experimental phase of the reform right from the beginning. Teachers of other subjects were included in order to determine whether the challenges are the same across subjects or specific to English.

The group interview lasted 85 minutes and it was recorded. Field notes were actively taken during the discussion. Immediately after the discussion, a summary of the conversation was prepared as suggested by Krueger (1988). Later on the recording was transcribed. The data were analyzed using the data reduction and pattern identification suggested by Caudle (2004).

In addition to the focus group discussion, historical documents were also collected from the English language teacher who took part in the focus group discussion and from an English inspector, given that the primary focus of this paper is EFL. However, as mentioned earlier, this paper uses a historical perspective. One of the major difficulties with this type of research is to ensure that the documents used were written during the period covered (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). For that reason, I

saw to it that only dated documents were used. The documents used include two sets of training reports, the first two study programmes developed for the first year and second year, and the first textbook developed within the framework of the reform, the fourth year book.

3. Findings of the Study

This section is articulated around the history, the content, and the implementation challenges of the reform.

3.1 Historical Background of the Reform

Before the reform under consideration, the only educational policy in force in Benin was called *Programme d'édification de l'école nouvelle* (New School Building Programme) which was enacted in 1977. The implementation of that policy was evaluated in 1981 and the evaluation revealed some difficulties including the non-implementation of Article 10 which provides for the establishment of the National Education and Research Council tasked with the coordination of the various educational structures and the implementation of the ordinance on the New School Building Programme (République Populaire du Bénin, 1981).

Furthermore, a workshop was organized on the evaluation of curriculum development procedures in Benin in December 1989. During that workshop, the New School Programme was further evaluated. The problems identified include the ideological content of some subjects, the inadequacy between the contents of the curricula and students' real life situations, ambiguities in the curricula and the fact that teacher training and development did not follow the pace of the improvement of the curricula. In order to overcome these challenges, the workshop recommended the development of objective-based curricula by a team that was to be trained adequately (Institut national pour la formation et la recherche en éducation, 1989). An outline was also suggested for the objective-based curricula. It includes an introduction, the overall orientations of the curricula, the content of the curricula, the methodology, assessment, other specific factors, and bibliography (Institut national pour la formation et la recherche en éducation, 1989, p. 5). Nevertheless, the recommendation fails to specify the contents of each of the components of the curricula.

One year after the organization of the workshop on the process of curriculum development, a national conference on education referred to as *Etats généraux de l'éducation* was organized. The conference was very critical of the New School Reform and decried the lack of qualified teachers, crazy innovations such as the change in the names of some degrees, the cancellation of some examinations, and the poor democratization of education (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 1990). After this negative evaluation, the conference makes strong recommendations on secondary education curricula including the strengthening of the study of scientific subjects and the study of social sciences and foreign languages. It is worth noting the emphasis on foreign languages which underscores the desire of the new democracy to open up to the world. The conference further recommended that curriculum development should be carried out by a team of experienced and knowledgeable subject experts working in various educational research institutions (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 1990). The problem with this recommendation is that it excluded classroom teachers by limiting the membership of the team to experts working in educational research institutions.

As it appears from the foregoing, the inadequacy and poor implementation of existing curricula, the desire to wipe some subjects of their ideological content are some of the factors that led to the 2001 reform. Therefore, what were the major changes brought about by that reform?

3.2 Major Changes Induced by the Reform

The secondary school curricula have undergone profound reforms. The first important aspect of the reform highlighted by respondents is the systematization of the learner-centered approach through the use of various teaching/learning strategies. According to the English teacher who was part of the focus group discussion,

The way we teach now is not the way we used to [teach]. For example, we have now individual work, group work, and collective work. You know, in the past we used to pour knowledge over the kids but now the kids are asked to construct their own knowledge. All of them must participate.

In the same vein, this is what the French teacher stated about the learner-centered approach imposed by the reform: *“we no longer have students who sit down and watch the teacher. They have to do research, especially in my subject”*. The mathematics teacher viewed the change as democratization of the teaching/learning process. For him,

Teaching has been democratized now. The teacher and the students, all of them participate in the process. The teacher is no longer like a dictator who comes to class to impose his knowledge to passive students.

What transpires from the above three statements is that the active involvement of learners in the teaching/learning process in order to build their own knowledge. The role of the teacher is therefore to facilitate knowledge construction by the learners.

The second aspect underscored by participants is that the reform is intended to integrate notions to be taught so as to avoid teaching them in isolation. According to the mathematics teacher,

The content of the curriculum has not changed but the teaching method has changed. Within the framework of the reform, some notions have been put together. In mathematics for example, we no longer teach algebra and geometry separately. In some learning situations, we have both geometry and algebra.

The major change here is the combination of geometry and algebra that are now to be taught together. The same transformation was also carried out in the teaching of both English and French.

In the previous curriculum, the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as well as grammar and vocabulary used to be taught separately but the reform led to an integration of the teaching of all those aspects. In that regard, the English teacher stated:

You see, the major change brought about by the reform is that all these aspects of the language can be taught over and over again within a single learning situation in an integrated way and for that reason, the Go For English series is no longer used from the first to the fourth form.

What this statement implies is that from one text for example, it is possible for the teacher to teach reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The French teacher equally explained that there used to be eight sub-subjects in French including grammar, conjugation, orthography, writing, dictation, reading comprehension, guided reading, and oral communication. With the reform, the eight subjects were

squeezed into two integrated learning areas: reading and written communication.

In short, the two major changes introduced by the reform are the promotion of the learner-centered approach and the integration of the teaching of notions. Yet, the reform was not implemented without difficulty.

3.3 Challenges in the Implementation of the Reform

The two major challenges were identified and they have to do with documentation and teacher development.

3.3.1 Challenges Related to Documentation

Teachers who participated in the study expressed a lot of concerns about the availability of appropriate documentation to support the implementation of the reform. According to the mathematics teacher,

Talking about documentation, I say that the documentation is bad. It does not even exist. We only have the curriculum and the guide which are sent in single copies to the schools and it is up to the schools to photocopy them for teachers, which causes delays in the availability of those basic documents.

The least that can be said about this statement is that teachers were not provided with documents to support their teaching activities. Secondly, the available documents were not edited in large numbers and consequently, photocopying them might affect their quality.

The implication of the lack of appropriate documentation is the increase in teachers' workload. Teachers complained about finding the right materials to plan their lessons. During the discussion, the French teacher mentioned that he had to rely on the internet as a source of documentation. Since there is scarcely any internet connection in public secondary schools in Benin, he explained that he had to go to internet cafés late at night when the cost of navigation is reduced. In addition, the math teacher revealed that science teachers were quite creative in resolving the problem of documentation. Teachers got together to design documents commonly called *cahiers d'activités* (study guides or workbooks) and they sold those documents to students. As a consequence, there were different workbooks for the same subject and the same grade level. Obviously teachers would promote the documents they designed or participated in designing or the document designed by

one of their friends if they did not design any. The math teacher made it clear that

Teachers get together to design student workbooks and they call an inspector or a teacher advisor to preface their work to give it more weight. And you know, the workbooks are not uniform; they vary from one group of teachers to the other and from one school to another.

Although the efforts made by the teachers are laudable, the reliability and quality of documents designed under such circumstances are questionable. Teachers are not necessarily material developers. Whatever the quality of those documents, teachers succeed in imposing them to their students because their sale constituted an additional source of income.

Given that English is a foreign language in Benin, it was not easy for English teachers to develop workbooks as was the case with other subjects. But a close look at documents made available to them revealed some shortfalls.

3.3.2 Specific Challenges Related to EFL Teaching Documentation

As far as English is concerned, the only document available in 2001 was titled *Programme d'études: Classe de 6^e* (Study programme: First year) which is neither a syllabus nor a textbook. It contains a descriptive list of competencies to be acquired by students including three subject-specific competencies: communicating orally and appropriately in English; reacting appropriately to read or heard messages; writing different types of texts (Ministère des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire, 2001).

In addition to competencies, the document has a list of four learning situations: Introductions, family life, at the hospital. The title of the third learning situation has not been mentioned. The document equally describes instructional procedures such as: *"ask the students to greet each other in their mother tongue"*; *"ask the students to greet each other in English"*; *"ask the students if they greet an elderly person in the same way"* (Ministère des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire, 2001, p. 54). However, the document does not contain any listing of notions to teach and it does not specify the skills on which the instructional procedures focus. This is all the more true since during the first training that was organized for

teachers in Lokossa from 18 to 26 October 2001, one of the activities performed by teachers was to group notions to be taught into more encompassing titles (Kottin, 2001). This implies that a syllabus was not prepared before the kick-off of the implementation of the reform.

Concerning the second form document developed in 2002, *Programme d'études anglais: Classe de 5^e* (Study programme: Second Year), its content is a bit different from the one of the first year. In addition to instructional procedures, it contains notions to be taught at least in terms of grammar and vocabulary but such notions are mixed up with too much detailed instructional procedures to the extent that they will not be easily located by the teachers.

Furthermore, neither of the documents is a lesson plan or a collection of lesson plans. Therefore, there is no need for them to include instructional procedures in that instructional procedures show how to teach a notion in a given context. Apart from that, both documents refer teachers to the teachers' guide, the student's book, and other documents. However, neither the student's book nor the teacher's guide was available during the first year of implementation of the reform. It was in 2004 that the first student's book was developed and it was even the fourth year book.

The fourth year book called *Document d'accompagnement* (Student's book) has the merit of suggesting structured and practical activities in all four skills as well as in vocabulary and grammar. It is also accompanied by a teacher's guide to help teachers in their lesson planning. Nonetheless, it requires a lot of improvement.

First of all, it has no table of contents and as such, it is difficult to have an overview of its content at a glance and to locate specific items easily. Secondly, the document is full of typos. It is not rare to find sentences of the type "you should some rest" (p. 11), instead of "you should *have* some rest", "don't listen him" (p. 17) instead of "don't listen *to* him", "to suffer from *diabetis*" (p. 32) instead of "to suffer from *diabetes*" to mention just a few.

Apart from the typos, the page and paragraph numbers indicated in some activities are not accurate. For example, in learning situation 2, students are requested to "look at the picture on page 26" while the picture is on page 27. Besides, in activity 5 on page 23 of the document, the paragraph numbers indicated do not correspond to the actual

paragraphs where the words are to be found. Besides, most of the pictures are hand-drawn and hazy, and for that reason, it is difficult to understand what they represent. Below are some examples:

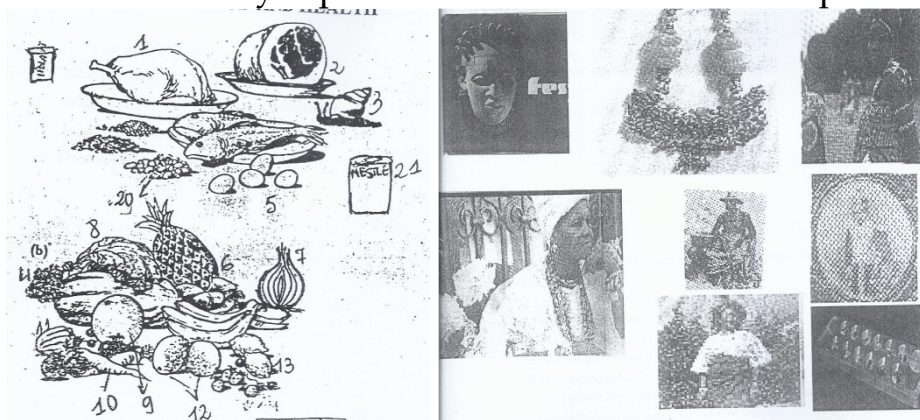


Figure 1. Some pictures from the first student's book developed
(Source: Ministère des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire, 2004, p. 27 ; p. 103)

As it appears from the above illustrations, it is difficult to identify some of the pictures. In the first series that relates to food items, pictures 5, 9, 12, and 14 are not easy to identify. In the second series on cultural heritage, it is not easy to identify the cultural artifacts represented.

The last important thing to point out about the document is that the listening comprehension texts that are supposed to be only in the teacher's guide also appear in the student's book, making the activity irrelevant because the texts to be read by the teacher are available to students. This is the case for all three listening comprehension activities in the textbook on pages 24, 44, and 94.

At first sight, the above shortfalls may seem minor but they are likely to have negative impacts on the learning process insofar as students may not take the document seriously. The shortfalls also complicate the work of teachers as the latter have to correct mistakes/errors in the book before planning their lessons and make the same corrections with students before teaching the lessons, which may result in considerable loss of time.

Having analysed the reform and the documentation issues pertaining to it, I now turn to teacher development for the implementation of the reform.

3.3.3 Teacher Development

Teacher development and its timing play a pivotal role in the success of the implementation of a curriculum reform. The first thing to

point out is that the training took place at the beginning of the academic year. In fact, the kick-off training sessions organized in Lokossa for the teacher advisors and selected teachers took place respectively from the 15 to 17 October 2001 and from 18 to 26 October 2001 while school generally resume in early October in Benin (Dossou-Yovo, 2001; Kottin, 2001). The training of teachers lasted eight days, which means that they were out of their classrooms during this period.

The other issue raised by teachers is that in some cases, the training is organized well after school resumption. One of the participating teachers complained that the second training was organized late in November 2002. For almost two months, teachers were at a loss as to what to teach in the second form during the experimental phase of the reform. As far as the quality of the training is concerned, the statements made by teachers during the group interview showed that the quality was very poor. All three teachers were unanimous on the fact that the trainers were not well-prepared for the trainings. Here is what the English teacher stated about the trainers: *“Really, really, to tell the truth, I have the impression that the trainings were just like a formality. The trainers themselves were not well trained.”* Not only did the teacher complain about the level of preparedness of the trainers but he also got the impression that the trainings were organized for the sake of organizing them. The following comments made by the French teacher provide more details:

Apparently, the trainers themselves are not very conversant with it [the reform]. When we go for the trainings, the answers they give to the questions we ask are not always adequate. One year, the supervisors who were in charge of training us did not even come with any document.

The above statement underscores lack of preparation as well as lack of understanding of the reform in general since the trainers were not in a position to address concerns raised by their trainees. But the most important thing to highlight here is the fact that sometimes, the trainers go to the trainings without any documentation. The English teacher was then right to state that, sometimes, the trainings looked like formalities.

The mathematics teacher made the following all-encompassing statement about various aspects of the trainings they received:

The training itself has always been superficial. In fact, there is no follow-up of the training on the ground because since I have been involved in the experimental phase, no CP or inspector has willingly come to visit my class to make sure I am really applying

what I had been taught. It is only because of my exams that they came once and this because I chose to do my practice in an experimental class. Otherwise, nobody has ever visited my classes to find out the problems I am confronted with.

This statement points out the teacher's dissatisfaction about the trainings organized during the experimental phase of the reform. The teacher insisted on the fact that, after the trainings, the trainers did not ensure any follow-up on the ground. Teachers were left to their own devices. No supervision was organized to ensure that teachers were doing what was expected of them.

In view of the comments made by all teachers, it can be inferred that the training challenges are common to all subjects and not specific to English.

4. Discussion of the Findings

The reform under study stemmed from successive evaluations of previous curricula, mainly the New School Building Programme. Such evaluations revealed a general dissatisfaction with the New School Programme including inadequate teacher development. Because of the transition to democracy, there was a desire to eliminate the communist ideological content of some subjects as was the case in the former Soviet Union countries (Kallen, 1996). Another important rationale for the reform as identified during the 1989 workshop is the divide between what is being taught in school and learners' real life situations. Hence the need to have curricula in which "*school activities*" are connected with "*life outside the school*" (Osei, 2004, p. 432).

Furthermore, in view of all the workshops and evaluations organized, it can be inferred that the reform was meticulously planned. However, the time that elapsed between the various workshops and the launching of the reform was quite long. The time gap is due to the fact the reform was initiated in primary education in 1994 and in secondary education seven years later. But no matter how long it took, the secondary school reform ended up being kicked off and some major changes were introduced into the curricula of all the subjects.

The reform was a deep transformation not only in the content to be taught but also in the way such content is to be taught. What is noticeable is that none of the teachers who took part in the focus group

discussion expressed a positive opinion about the reform (Bantwini, 2009). The negative opinions voiced by the teachers were quite justified. All the teachers indicated that the documents provided were of poor quality. This common stand was corroborated by the analysis of the study programmes, which are, for the most, written in French. This is a major concern in Benin where all the teachers are francophone. Nonetheless, the problem is not just a language issue. The very content of the documents leaves a lot to be desired. Snyder (1997) contended that education reform should be based on strong evidence from research. This does not seem to be the case with the 2001 reform in Benin, given the quality of documents produced. In no way did the programmes follow the guidelines developed during the 1989 evaluation workshop mentioned earlier (Institut national pour la formation et la recherche en éducation, 1989), which implies that those who developed the study programmes did not take cognizance of the recommendations of the 1989 workshop.

On a general note, there was a dire lack of documentation to support the implementation of the reform. As a consequence, the development of the *cahiers d'activités* (Student workbooks) was an effort on the part of science teachers to overcome the challenges confronting them during the implementation of the reform. Teachers behaved exactly in the same way during the implementation of the reform carried out in some former Soviet Union countries by producing or adapting new materials in response to lack of documentation (Kallen, 1996). In the case of the teaching of English as a foreign language, no student workbook was developed until 2004. The first textbook that was developed three years after the kickoff of the reform has many problems both in its content and its form. Documentation is part of the means to be made available to teachers for the successful implementation of any reform (de Segovia and Hardison, 2008). The same documentation issue was raised by Iwikotan (2013), which implies that the documentation problems that had been there at the early stages of the reform have not been address adequately until a recent period. Teachers' negative opinions about documentation are substantiated by the poor quality of the study programmes and the first student's book developed in English.

Besides, teacher's opinions about the training received at the beginning of the implementation of the reform are not positive. This all the more understandable since the study programmes which are the foundation documents were poorly written as was the student book. According to Crandall and Miller (2014), effective professional development provides teachers with the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and improve instructional practices. The professional development organized for teachers as part of the implementation of the reform under consideration does not match that idea at all. It suffered from inadequate timing and unpreparedness of trainers. As a consequence, the reform generated negative emotional reactions in teachers (Veen and Slegers, 2006). These findings confirm the results of a similar study on a secondary school curriculum reform in Ghana where more than a decade after the launching of the said reform, teachers had not been given the opportunity to acquire the skills required for the implementation of the reform in their classrooms (Osei, 2004). However, what is peculiar about this study is the lack of preparedness at most levels. Documents were not well-designed and the trainers not only failed to address the shortcomings in the documents but also displayed unpreparedness for the trainings (Iwikotan, 2013). Again, this is the proof that problems have existed for a long time and are yet to be resolved.

5. Conclusion

The process that led to the reform examined was very long. A lot of workshops were organized to evaluate previous curricula and to lay the foundations for the development of new curricula. Such foundations focused on the qualifications of those who were to develop new curricula and the guidelines for the development of such curricula. However, the team that developed the English curricula investigated did not take those guidelines into consideration.

The reform was a profound one that touched upon all subjects taught at secondary school level, including English. It consisted in reorganizing curricula and migrating from teacher-centered to student-

centered instruction. As some respondents put it, the reform brought about democratization of instruction insofar as learners were to take an active part in the construction of their own knowledge.

The implementation of the reform was confronted with many challenges. Challenges related to teachers' professional development constitute a critical issue in as much as most respondents complained about their trainers' unpreparedness and the poor quality of the content of the trainings. If in other subjects, teachers developed student workbooks in response to lack of documentation, the first document developed for English instruction three years following the enactment of the reform displays limitations including unclear pictures, lack of table of contents, appearance of listening texts in students' documents to mention just a few. However, these are superficial observations. A deeper linguistic analysis of the document might reveal more serious limitations.

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