Teaching Challenges of English Second Language Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia

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Abstract

The study investigated the teaching challenges faced by English Second language (ESL) teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia. The study used the mixed methods research approach to collect data from a sample of 60 ESL teachers currently teaching in the eleven Senior Secondary Schools in Ohangwena Region. The research participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations. The study found that ESL teachers in Ohangwena Region encounter challenges such as lack of resources for teaching and learning ESL, overcrowded classes, absenteeism by learners, lack of parental involvement, learners' lack of motivation, learners' poor altitude, lack of support from advisory education officer, lack of refresher workshop and learners' lack of exposure to English language programs. To minimize the identified challenges, the participants highlighted the need for the provision of adequate resources such as ESL textbooks and buildings to accommodate all the learners, involving parents in their children's education, reducing the teacher-learner ratio in the classrooms, organizing capacity building workshops for ESL teachers, and changing the medium of instruction for junior primary grades from Oshikwanyama to the English language. The study recommended that government should improve the teaching resources and infrastructure as well as provide refresher workshops to enhance the ESL teaching conditions in the study area.

Keywords

English Second Language, Teaching Challenges, Mitigation Measures, Ohangwena Region

Significant Statement

The Namibia education system continues to undergo major transformation under the government's relentless effort to make teaching and learning respond directly to the socio-economic needs of the citizens. Reeling from the segregated pre-independence education system, the Post-independent Namibia's government had introduced different curriculum transformations such as Towards Education for All (TEFA) in 1993, Junior Secondary Certificate Education (JSCE) between 1991 and 1993, Senior Secondary Certificate Education (SSCE) between 1994 and 1995, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) in 1994, Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) Ordinary level in 2009, and recently the revised curriculum for Basic Education implemented in phases from 2015 to 2021. However, improving the quality of education delivery cannot be successful without addressing the work-related challenges of teachers who are in the forefront of curriculum implementation. Thus, this study provided research-based baseline data on the teaching challenges of English Second Language teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia and possible mitigation measures. The research findings have important implications for both teachers' and learners' education, planning for critical intervention, curriculum design and implementation as well as policy change aimed at improving the quality of education delivery in the region and Namibia at large.

1. Introduction

Soon after Namibia got her independence in 1990, English language was introduced as the official medium of instruction in all public and private schools as the English language was deemed to be the language of inclusive communication and it was hoped to unite the Namibian populace with multi-lingual tribes (Simasiku, 2016). Namibia has approximately fourteen ethnic groups that speak different languages throughout the country (Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN), 2017). Additionally, the use of English language as the official language of communication was meant to redress Namibia's linguistic and political isolation in a bid to close the isolation gap among the communities, as most of Namibia's neighbours such as Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa use English as the medium of communication.

However, it appeared that the English Second Language (ESL) teachers in senior secondary schools, especially in government schools in Namibia are experiencing numerous teaching challenges as the ESL learners continued to perform poorly in grade 12 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSC) examinations in recent years. In fact, there has been a sharp decline in the pass rate of ESL learners between the years 2015 to 2020 in grade 12 final NSSC examinations (GRN, 2017). To achieve effective ESL teaching and learning outcomes, the teacher factor is always the most important consideration.

According to Simasiku (2016) teaching English as a second language has been and is still a complex task among ESL teachers worldwide. Selim and Tasneen (2016), concurred that teaching English as a second language becomes more difficult and challenging to the teachers when it is done in areas where there is little background knowledge of English as a language. In most instances, the ESL teachers are non-native English speakers, teaching learners who are also non-native English speakers to learn to speak, read, understand, and write English (Piage, 2018). Thus, ESL teachers face numerous teaching challenges inside and outside the classroom (Khan & Khan, 2016). Despite their possible adequate training and innovativeness, research reports revealed that ESL teachers face real teaching challenges and that most of these challenges are contextual (Mundy 2008 cited by Khan and Khan, 2016).

One of the major challenges of ESL teachers is the lack of resources that stimulate the learning environment and help to arouse imaginations from the learners' perspective. Harumi (2011) noted that most teachers encounter challenges in teaching the English language because of a lack of proper and adequate teaching materials and this negatively impacts teaching and learning. The attitudinal approach is another problem that most ESL teachers face. Fatiloro (2015) adds that the lack of absolute commitment and attitudes to comprehend the English language on the part of both teachers and learners can affect ESL teachers' efficiency. According to Pande (2013) and Simasiku, Kasanda and Simit (2015) most learners have a misconception that English is the most difficult subject and as a result, they are afraid or they lack the confidence to speak English language in the classroom, especially in front of other brilliant learners. According to Ngwaru (2010), this is made worse by selective teacher attention which creates a feeling of discrimination among learners and as a result, some learners lose interest in ESL lessons. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that most ESL learners have few or no interactions with English First Language speakers which could compel them (learners) to communicate in English language, and in the process gain context-specific communication skills (Khan & Khan, 2016; Simasiku, 2016). Thus, the absence of social interactions in English language outside the classroom among ESL learners places a huge responsibility on the teachers to teach and nurture English language communication skills of the learners.

As noted by Mann (2018), Botes, Dewaele and Greiff (2020) and Davila (2019), teaching ESL in an overcrowded classroom is a stressful, overwhelming and discouraging experience, especially for ESL teachers. When the classroom is overcrowded, it poses various challenges to the teacher, even to the most productive teachers. Makielski (2018) noted that learners tend to learn effectively when the teacher can offer a one on one instruction or small group discussions. According to Anyienda (2017), large classes put a strain on the teachers' ability to provide quality teaching, especially in English second language lessons. In another instance, Harris (2011), Brozak (2017) and Makielski (2018) variously ar-

gued that classroom management in overcrowded classes is always a challenging task for effective teaching to take place, and this could more difficult in ESL classes. Classroom management involves all the activities undertaken by the teacher to organize the learner's space, manage time and materials for effective teaching and learning to take place. In Namibia, the prescribed teacher-learner ratio is 1:35 for primary school, and 1:30 for secondary schools. Sometimes teachers however, find themselves teaching more than 44 learners per classroom, which according to New Era's report, compromise the quality of education.

In different study reports (Yilmaz, 2011; Nhan & Lai, 2012; Abebe & Davidson, 2012), the authors identified that limited classroom English language practice constitutes another teaching challenge that ESL teachers face because learners only use the daily 35 minutes of English language lesson period to intensively speak the language. The authors argue that when the learners are learning other subjects, they switch from one language to the other, depending on their most familiar tongue. In addition, the other subjects' teachers keep changing the language of instruction from the official English language to their mother tongue either because they are not well-versed in the English language or to make the learners understand the subject matter more clearly (Yilmaz, 2011; Nhan & Lai, 2012; Abebe & Davidson, 2012). This situation results in limited exposure of the learners to English language, especially as the language outside the classroom and at home is mostly the local language. Given that the English language learning requires a lot of exposure as postulated by Cummins (2017), ESL teachers are left with the sole burden of guiding learners to develop competence in English language within a 35-minute lesson.

The lack of context in curriculum content and the use of unfamiliar words have also been identified as major challenges that ESL teachers' face. Most textbooks and other teaching resources did not contextualise their media of expression for the best understanding of the learners in context (Nhan & Lai, 2012). Cummins (2017) highlighted that some of the textbooks used in teaching ESL are not up to date, and are largely old, boring with pictures that are not attractive to learners. These observations corroborate those of Ngwaru (2010) in a study done in Zimbabwe in which the author noted that using an unfamiliar language as a medium of instruction is a major impediment to learning. Ngwaru cited a comprehension passage in the English textbooks which have used the English expression, "as white as snow" and argue that this expression is difficult for learners to relate to since there is no experience of snow in the African context. In this regard, Fatiloro (2015) argues that the lack of a variety of teaching methods, techniques, knowledge, expertise and approaches for teaching English second language is a hindrance to ESL teachers. In addition, Davila (2019) posited that most ESL lessons lack the learner-centred approach which is supposed to facilitate and reinforce ESL teaching and learning. In all these challenges, Harumi (2011) stressed that the teachers constitute the primary focal point in a poor learning outcome. Thus, this study has the main objective of investigating

the teaching challenges faced by English second language teachers in senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena region and identifying helpful mitigation measures to address such challenges.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

Creswell (2014) defines research designs as types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches that provide specific directions for procedures in a research design. The study used the mixed methods research design to explore the teaching challenges faced by English second language teachers in senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena Region. This design is considered necessary because it concurrently, but separately collects and analyses quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to investigate the research problem. Quantitative data were collected using a survey questionnaire while qualitative data were collected using focus group discussion. According to Creswell (2014), incorporating both the quantitative and qualitative approaches increased the validity and reliability of a study.

2.2. Population of the Study

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define population as the total number of people, organizations, subjects or occurrences with well-defined characteristics from which a sample is drawn. The study population consisted of 78 English second language (ESL) teachers currently teaching in the eleven Senior Secondary Schools in Ohangwena Region, Namibia. The population size was determined from the Ohangwena Region Education Directorate's records of the English second language teachers currently teaching in Senior Secondary Schools in the region.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Method

The study sample consisted of 60 participants (ESL teachers) and these were selected using the purposive sampling technique. All the 60 participants completed the survey questionnaire. Furthermore, a subsample of 33 participants (made up of three ESL teachers per school) were purposively selected to participate in the focus group discussions.

2.4. Inclusion Criteria

De Vos et al. (2011) explained that purposive sampling of research participants must be done according to a pre-determined criterion that suits the research focus. Thus, the inclusion criterion for this study was that a participant should be currently teaching English Second Language as a subject at a senior secondary school in the Ohangwena Region. To complete the survey questionnaires in the quantitative study, all the English Second Language teachers were selected regardless of their years of experience in teaching while in the focus group discussion, which was the followed up qualitative study, only English Second Language

teachers with at least, two years of experience in teaching the subject in the study area were selected.

2.5. Research Instruments and Data Collection

The study used surveyed questionnaires, focus group discussion guide, and observation guide as instruments for collecting the data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) concurred with Morgan (2014) that a research instrument is a tool used to collect data related to one's subject of investigation. The questionnaire consists of three sections, A to C. Section A collected participants' demographics data, Section B consisted of a five-point Likert scale probing questions (1 = Disagree, 2 = Strongly disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) that gathered data on the teaching challenges faced by ESL teachers in senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena Region, while Section C contained open-ended questions that sought information on the mitigation strategies which the participants feel could be used to address their teaching challenges.

The data were collected in October and November, 2020. Before distributing the questionnaires, the purpose of the study was explained to the satisfaction of the participants and issues raised including ethical considerations were addressed to ensure that they fill in the questionnaires freely without fear of intimidation and fear of the unknown. Thereafter, the researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the participants and requested to collect the questionnaires back after three days. This was done to ensure a high return rate (Sarantakos, 2005). The researchers made follow up through phone calls to humbly remind participants not to forget to complete the questionnaires. Participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaires in their offices to minimize losses. The researchers personally collected the completed questionnaires from the participants.

There is a total of 11 focus groups, with each group made up of 3 participants who are ESL teachers with at least, two years' experience in teaching English second language in senior secondary schools in the study area. The focus group discussion was used to gain further insight and confirm the data gathered through the questionnaires (Panferov, 2010). A recording device was used to capture the participants' responses during each focus group discussion, where the researchers served as the moderator.

2.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical tools to discover useful information (Shannon-Baker, 2016), Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2014); and Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2010) explained that data analysis in mixed methods research design involves analysing both qualitative and quantitative data using appropriate methods respectively.

Thus, the study employed the thematic analysis method by Creswell (2014) in analysing qualitative data. This involves transcribing the focus group discus-

sions, as well as scanning, sorting, and arranging the data based on emerging themes. On the other hand, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to establish the mean and percentage of response frequencies.

2.7. The Research Ethical Consideration

This study was a part of a Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation at the University of Namibia. Thus, the research Ethical Clearance Certificate was first obtained from the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Committee to conduct the study. Then, permissions were sought and obtained from the Director of Education, Ohangwena Region and the principals of the schools where the participants (English second language teachers) are teaching. To ensure autonomy of the study participants, they were provided with complete information sheet detailing the aims of the study, potential risks, and the rights of the participants to enable them to decide on their own whether to enrol as voluntary participants. The participants were also assured of their rights to withdraw from the study at any point they feel uncomfortable to continue without any consequences. Furthermore, participants remained anonymous by using pseudo names to identify them and their schools throughout the study. Finally, we sought and obtained participants' permission to record the focus group discussions using an audio recorder.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Important Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

3.1.1. Age Category of the Participants

Table 1 below shows the age distribution and years of teaching experience of the participants. The results showed that 41.6% (25/60) of the participants were in the age category of less than 30 years, 45% (27/60) were between the age of 31 and 40 years, and 10% (6/50) were between the age of 41 and 50 years while only 3.3% (2/60) were between the age of 51 and 60 years. None of the participants was above 60 years of age. According to Iipinge (2013), teachers in Namibia retire from service at the age of 60 years. Thus all the study participants are still within the active service year and hence, would share useful information on the

Table 1. Age distribution and years of teaching experience of participants.

Age category (years)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Years of teaching experience	Frequency	Percent (%)
≤30	25	41.6%	≤5	36	60
31 - 40	27	45%	6 - 10	12	20
41 - 50	6	10%	11 - 15	6	10
51 - 60	2	3.3%	16 - 20	3	5
>60	0	0	>20	3	5
Total	60	100%		60	100%

teaching challenges faced by the English second language teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the study area. In terms of the years of teaching experience of the participants (Table 1), the results revealed that 60% (36/60) of the participants had less than 5 years of teaching experience, and 20% (12/60) of them had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. The result further showed that 10% (6/60) of the participants had 11 to 15 years of teaching experience while 5% (3/60) each had 15 to 20 years and above 20 years of teaching experience. These results showed that majority of the participants were still novice teachers with little teaching experience. The fact that more than half of the participants had less than 5 years of teaching experience was a clear indication that the majority of English second Language teachers in the study area might still be relatively new in the teaching profession, and hence, may not have vast experience and skills in teaching ESL. This suggests that teaching experience is a constraint that ESL teachers are facing in the study area. Ceka and Murati (2016) highlight that the experience of the teachers is critical in teaching ESL, emphasizing that more skills are acquired as the teacher gain more years of experience.

3.1.2. Highest Level of Participant's Education Qualification

The distribution of the participants by the highest level of education qualification (Figure 1 below) showed that majority, 80% (48/60) of the participants indicated that they held the Bachelor of Education (Honours) in English language. The figure further showed that 10% (6/60) of the participants held Master of Education in Curriculum Development, and another 10% (6/60) held Diploma in Education in English Language. This implies that the English second language (ESL) teachers in Ohangwena Region are qualified enough to teach ESL and the qualifications of the teachers might not be a constraint to the teaching challenges experienced by these teachers in the study area. The majority of the participants possessed the required minimum educational qualification—Bachelor of Education (Honours) in English language expected of an English second language
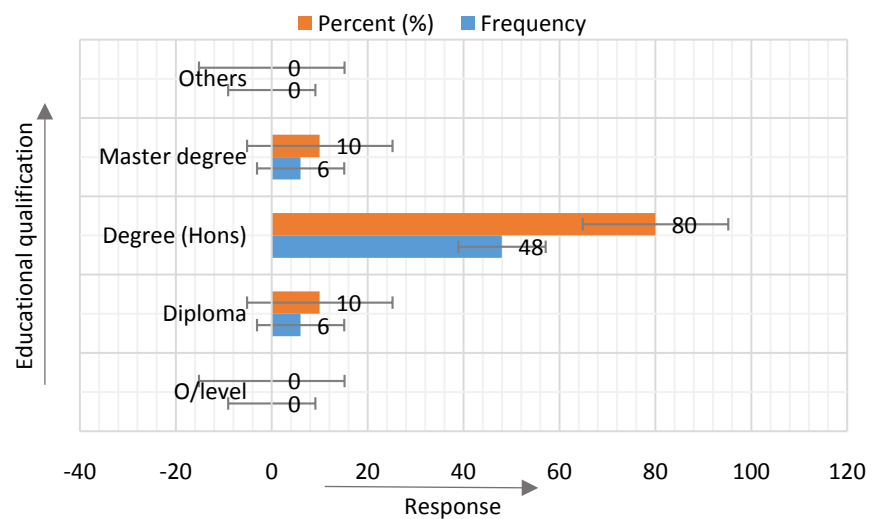
Figure 1. Distribution of the participants by highest level of education qualification.

teacher in Namibia to teach at the senior secondary school phase. The study by Harris (2011), titled: "Language in Schools in Namibia: The missing link in educational achievement" reflected a similar phenomenon. In the study, Harris (2011) established that educational qualification of teachers was not a factor to the challenges that the English second language teachers and learners faced in the country. The author noted that ESL teachers were qualified enough to teach the subject at least, at the secondary school level.

3.2. Teaching Challenges Faced by English Second Language Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Study Area

The results obtained revealed that the English second language (ESL) teachers in senior secondary schools in the study area mainly face the following teaching challenges: lack of resources for teaching and learning ESL, overcrowded classes, absenteeism by learners, lack of parental involvement in their children's education, lack of refresher workshop, lack of advisory services from the subject advisor, and learners' lack of motivation and negative attitude towards ESL tasks.

3.2.1. Lack of Resources for Teaching and Learning ESL

The results (Figure 2 below) revealed that 55% of the study participants agreed and 25% of them strongly agreed participants agreed that they experienced the challenge of limited resources for teaching and learning ESL in their schools. In addition, the participants in the focus group discussions stressed that their schools lacked adequate textbooks, reading materials, photocopier machines to copy reading materials for learners, as well as computers and internet to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching ESL and hence, are unable to teach the subject effectively according to the requirement of the syllabus. It also emerged from the focus group discussion that learners are compelled to share textbooks during teaching, adding that in most cases, a minimum of 4 learners share one textbook during ESL lesson. The participants argued that the situation was made more difficult by the government's COVID-19 mitigation measures where learners' sitting arrangements in classrooms must
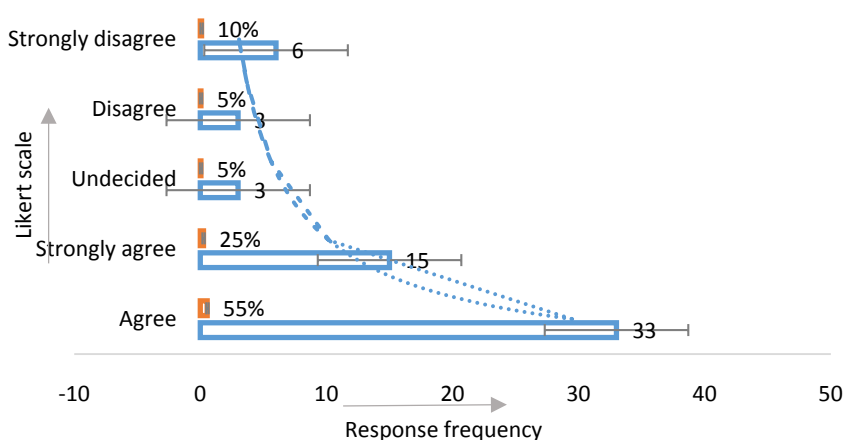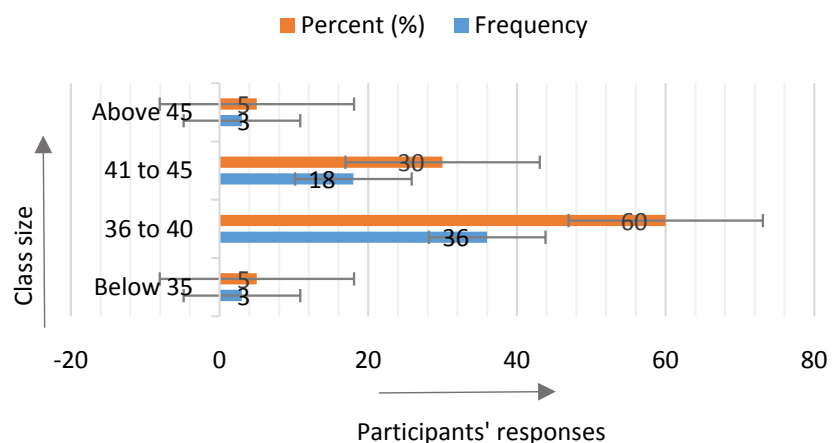

Figure 2. Participants responses on lack of ESL resources in the study area.

adhere to the social distance rule of 1.5 m apart. This constrained the textbook sharing approach being used by the ESL teachers to engage learners and made effective teaching and monitoring of learners very difficult in the affected schools. The results are in line with the findings by Van Wyk and Mostert (2016), and Garton et al. (2014), who established that most English language teachers encounter the challenge of resources, especially in developing countries and other non-English speaking countries where the number of learners enrolled in government schools will be too high as compared to the number of textbooks available. Harris (2011), Brozak (2017), Mule (2011) and Kisting, (2011) separately stressed that the lack of appropriate textbooks is a big hindrance to the teaching of ESL where the prescribed textbooks lack quality activities. Abebe and Davidson (2012), Mathew and Alidmat (2013), and Akasha (2013) believe that teachers of ESL should be provided with relevant teaching materials such as magazines, newspapers, as well as graphic and visual sources to aid the teaching of ESL.

3.2.2. Overcrowded Classrooms

As shown in Figure 3 below, majority of the participants, 60% (36/60) indicated that their classes were overcrowded, with class size ranging from 36 to 40 learners; 30% (18/60) of them stated that their class size ranges from 41 to 45 learners; and 5% (3/60) of the participants even indicated that they had class size of over 45 learners, sharing the same resources meant for a class of below 35 learners. Only 3 (5%) of the participants indicated that their class size is below 35 learners. The teacher-learner ratio in secondary schools in Namibia is 1:35 (Education Management Information System, 2016). The results of the study are consistent with the results of the studies by Mann (2018), Botes et al. (2020) and Davila (2019) in which the authors revealed that teaching ESL in an overcrowded classroom is stressful, overwhelming and discouraging. Meador (2019) stressed that overcrowded classrooms in schools have sadly become the new normal, noting that a combination of an increasing population and a decrease in funding has

Figure 3. Participants' responses on overcrowded classrooms as ESL teacher's challenge in the study area.

caused class sizes to soar. According to Meador (2019), an overcrowded classroom presents challenges that can feel nearly impossible to overcome, even to the most effective teachers.

During the live ESL lesson observation, it was noted that in all the eleven schools, the classrooms were indeed, overcrowded. From the focus groups discussions held, the participants brought many sentiments on the challenge of overcrowded of classrooms. They echoed that they were stressed up by the high teacher-learner ratio as they could not effectively manage their classes. One participant from one of the focus groups said:

"*At this point, I am no longer worried about learners' performance as I cannot effectively perform my work in overcrowded classes, and the circumstances in my classes are obviously beyond my control*".

At 10 schools, the participants in the focus group emphasized that large classes were a burden to them as they could not cater for the individual difference of learners especially, the slow learners who require special attention. One participant repeatedly voiced his frustration, saying:

"*large classes stress a lot and they always give me high pressure*".

Mann (2018), Davila (2019), and Botes et al. (2020) in their separate studies noted that teaching ESL in an overcrowded classroom is stressful, overwhelming and discouraging. According to Makielski (2018), learners tend to learn effectively when the teacher can offer one on one instruction or teach a small group of learners. However, this becomes a major challenge when the classroom is overcrowded as many teachers struggle with classroom management while learners tend to make noise. Emery (2012) conducted studies on factors affecting the teaching of English as a second language and concluded that in most African countries, effective teaching of ESL is hampered by the problem of overcrowded classes which also have direct consequences on the and learning outcomes. It even becomes difficult for the teacher to give individual attention to learners who are struggling, while learners themselves find it difficult to concentrate. Panferov (2010), Niehaus and Adelson (2014), as well as Göktürk and Dinçkal (2018) also noted that teaching ESL in overcrowded classes poses various challenges, stressing that there is lack of the use of "immediacy behaviour" in overcrowded classes as well as lack of one-on-one interaction between the teacher and learners. Similarly, Emery (2012), as well as Mahmoud (2018), submitted that teaching in overcrowded classes is self-defeating because there is an absolute lack of interaction between the teacher and learners, and learners engagement is minimal. However, Meador (2019) viewed increasing class sizes as a sacrifice many schools have to make in order to keep their doors open in an era where schools are underfunded. This is a likely situation in the study area as the participants identified the lack of critical teaching and learning infrastructures in their schools, which may be due to inadequate funding.

3.2.3. Absenteeism of Learners

The result (Figure 4 below) showed that the majority of the participants (60%)
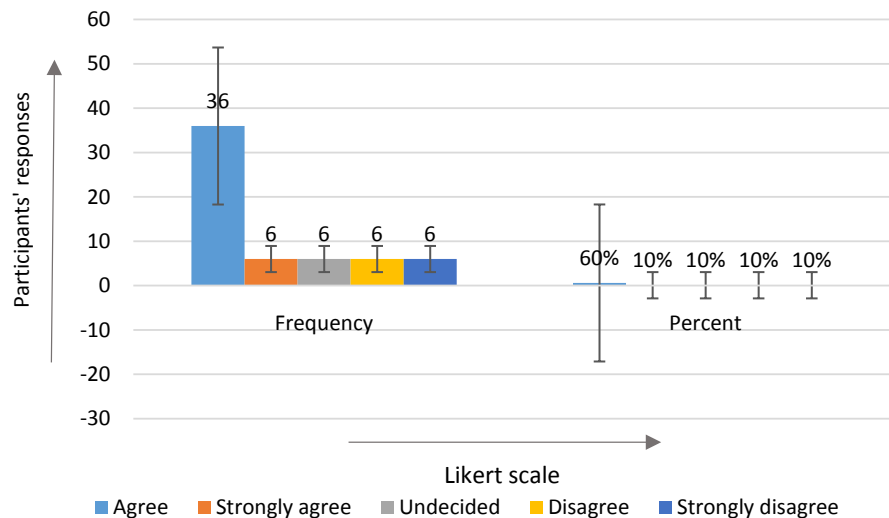
Figure 4. Participants' responses on learners' absenteeism as a challenge to English second language teachers in the study area.

agreed and 10% of them strongly agreed that learners' absenteeism from school was a challenge faced by ESL teachers in the study area. However, 10% each of the participants disagreed, strongly disagreed, and undecided that learners' absenteeism constitutes a challenge to them in ESL classes. During the focus group discussions, it also emerged that learner's absenteeism was emphasised as a real challenge to the ESL teachers in the study area. The participants argued that whether a learner who was absent from school provides a genuine reason or not, the impact remains the same since absenteeism impacted negatively on learner's performance in ESL. In the studies conducted by Iipinge (2013) as well as King (2013) about challenges in teaching English as a foreign language, the authors concluded that it is a serious challenge teaching learners English as a foreign or second language when learners are always absent from class lesson. In a different view, Davila (2019) and Brozak (2017) concurred that the socio-economic background of learners affects the attendance of learners in classes, with most learners coming from lower class in the society having lower attendance as compared to those from the middle and upper class socio-economic background. This is a likely situation in the Ohangwena Region—the study area, being a predominantly rural community; the learners often assist their parents with farming duties and tend to miss classes.

3.2.4. Lack of Parental Involvement

The results (Figure 5 below) revealed that the majority 60% (36/60) of the participant agreed, and 15% (9/60) of them strongly agreed that lack of parental involvement was a challenge to the ESL teachers in the study area. The figure also showed that 20% (12/60) of the participants were undecided, 5% (3/60) disagreed while no participant strongly disagreed with the statement. Participants from all the eleven focus groups bemoaned that most parents do not assist their children with their homework, stressing that they (parents) failed to have positive
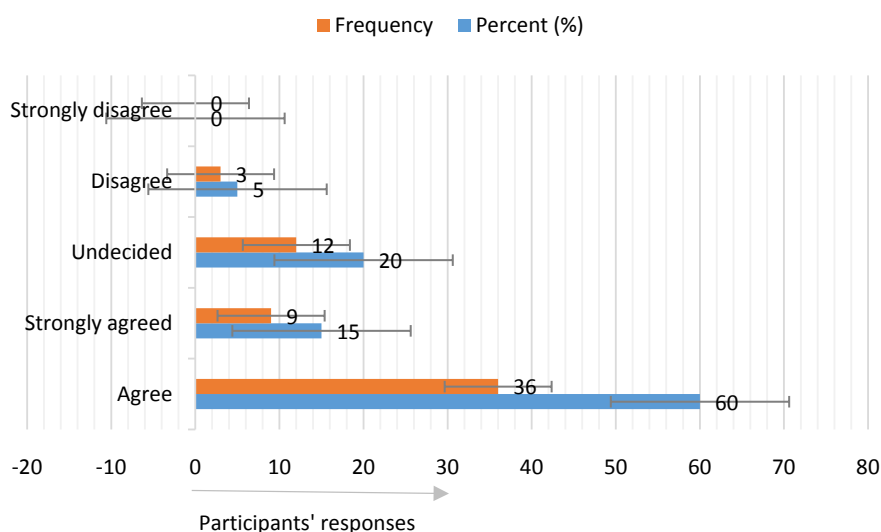
Figure 5. Participants' responses on lack of parental involvement in learner's learning in the study area.

influences on the behaviours and attitudes of their children towards school works, especially in the ESL. One participant repeatedly stressed that:

"*Those parents are simply not serious about tier children's education because any time the schools invite them to parent-teacher's meetings, prize giving days and book inspections, they would rarely show up*".

Another participant in one focus group responded with emotion and said:

"*The parents are really disappointing; if you call them for a face to face briefing on how best both teachers and parents could join efforts to assist the children, they always give a deaf ear*".

According to Erdener and Knoeppel (2018), parental involvement in ESL encompasses the actions that parents take to enhance the learning achievements of their children at schools. The authors argued that this requires parent-teacher, parent-learner and parent-parent joint partnerships to enhance teachers' effectiveness, and curb learners' negligence of their school works. LaRocque et al. (2011), and Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) posit that parents are the first teachers of their children and they continue to play that role during school life where they provide a conducive environment for studying at home as well as working in collaboration with teachers.

3.2.5. Lack of Refresher Workshop

The result (Figure 6 below) presents the participants' responses to whether or not, lack of refresher workshops constitute a teaching challenge to the ESL teachers in the study area. The figure shows that 30% of the participants agreed and 40% of them strongly agreed with the statement while 15% of the participants were undecided, 5% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed with the statement. During the focus group discussions, the participants articulated that ever since they joined the teaching profession, they had never attended any workshop to inform them about new strategies, and methodology in ESL teaching. The
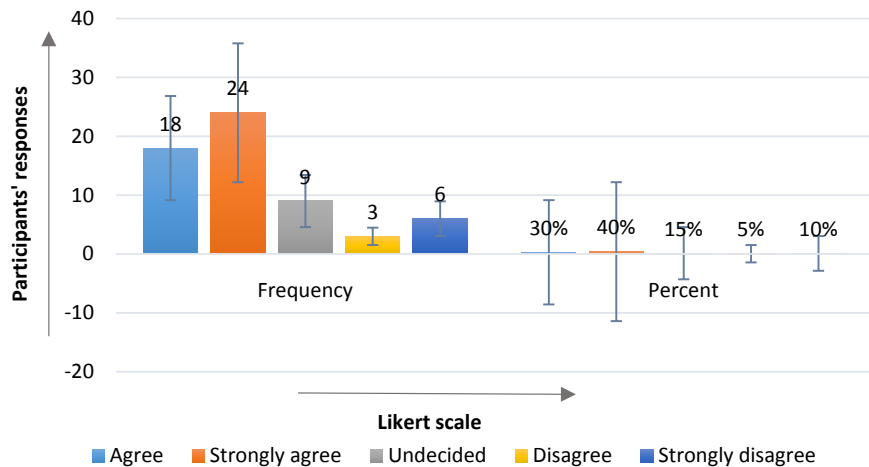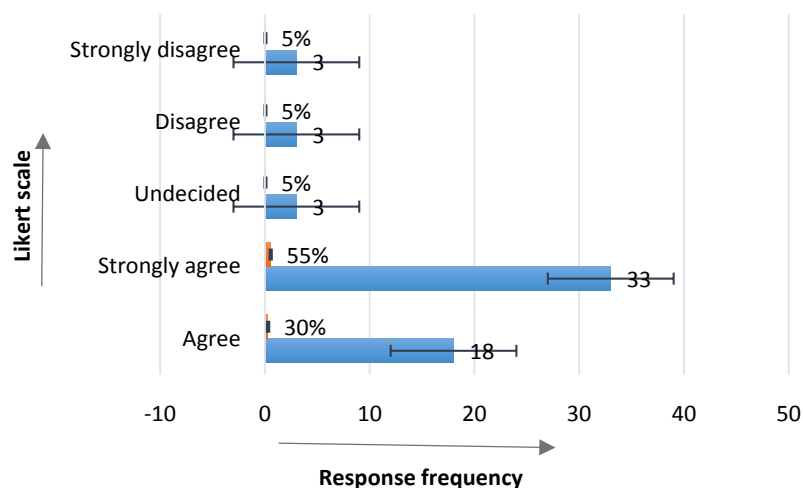
Figure 6. Participants' responses on lack of refresher workshop for ESL teachers in the study area.

participants also lamented that they were not growing professionally since they lacked refresher courses for professional development. Pande (2013) and Fatiloro (2015) in their studies about problems and remedies in teaching English as a second language, established that refresher workshops help teachers with new ideas and strategies of teaching ESL. Refresher workshops can provide helpful opportunities for ESL to share relevant experiences, and learn from more experienced colleagues on what works best in teaching the subject, and dealing with related challenges.

In a study on the impact of teachers' training on students' learning and organizational performance, Ali and Hamza (2018) noted that teachers' trainings help teachers to adopt new teaching techniques and methods, and help teachers to change students' learning attitude positively which ultimately improve organisational performance. According to Whitby (2010), teachers need to refresh their insight and abilities on educational modules, brain science, and instructional method of the students and new research on instructing and learnings. For a beneficial training program, Garton et al. (2014) cited in Ali and Hamza (2018), identified four conditions that should guide the planning: The program ought to be: 1) sufficiently concentrated to cause an adjustment in educator's conduct, 2) associated with training, 3) consistent, and 4) lined up with instructor motivating forces. In the study area where most ESL teachers and learners come from English language disadvantaged backgrounds, relevant refresher workshops could become a bridging avenue for the teachers to adapt to new trends in English language teaching, and hence, cope better with their specific teaching challenges.

3.2.6. Lack of Advisory Services from the Subject Advisor
The results (Figure 7) showed that 30% of the participants agreed and 55% of them strongly agreed that they were not receiving the desired advisory services from the subject advisor. All the eleven focus groups complained that the subject education officer rarely visits schools to reinforce, guide and advise teachers,
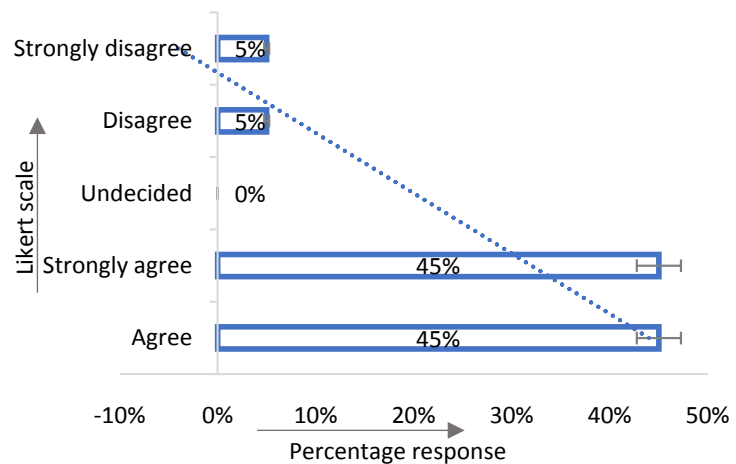
Figure 7. Participants' responses on lack of advisory services from the subject advisor in the study area.

especially novice teachers on English language teachings. In three different focus groups, the participants highlighted that most of them were still fresh from university and did not know how best they can deliver their lessons in ESL to meet learners' needs considering that the subject is also foreign to them. Barber and King (2016) argue that pedagogy has shifted in nature due to the digital environment. Thus, the subject advisor is expected to provide expert advice to teachers especially, in areas that will enhance teachers' creativity skills, self-motivation, innovation, problem-solving and collaboration skills (Barber & King, 2016). Subject advisors are "specialist office-based educators in a district office or circuit office whose function is to facilitate curriculum implementation and improve the environment and process of learning and teaching by visiting schools, consulting with and advising school principals and teachers on curriculum matters" (Department of Basic Education, 2013). Javid et al. (2012), Pande (2013) and Fatiloro (2015) posit that ESL teachers should get advice from subject experts and curriculum designers to enable them to teach and assess learners effectively. Shedeh (2010) also concurred that ESL teachers should always receive advisory services from the Ministry of Education, especially in areas that have to do with learners' assessments and any changes that might have been implemented. In a study conducted by Zughoul (1986) cited by Souriyavongsa et al. (2013), it was established that most education subject advisors in developing countries are based at the regional offices whereas, they are supposed to be visiting schools and providing expert advises to teachers in areas that need attention. Mbanjwa (2014) noted that subject advisors need to develop a mutual relationship with teachers for conducive teaching and learning environment that could yield to quality 21st Century education.

3.2.7. Learners' Lack of Motivation and Negative Attitude towards ESL Tasks

Figure 8 below revealed that 45% of the participants agreed and another 45% of

Figure 8. Participants' responses to Learners' lack of motivation and negative attitude towards ESL tasks in the study area.

them strongly agreed that the learners lack motivation in ESL learning and hence, have negative attitudes towards the subject; only 5% each of the participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. During the focus group discussions, seven out of the eleven focus groups lamented the learners' lack of motivation and negative attitudes towards ESL. One emotional participant from one focus group said:

"*It's a mere waste of time and effort to teach learners who are not motivated and always having a negative attitude towards their work*".

It also emerged during the focus group discussions that the learners seem to lack intrinsic and self-driven motivation to participate in class and that learners only participate and work through the teacher's coercion. In four different focus groups, the participants highlighted that the parents, and the community at large do not motivate their children and as a result, learners had a negative attitude towards learning. Several authors highlighted that most learners viewed learning English language as a duty; something that they have to, but do not want to do (Akasha, 2013; Al-Khairy, 2013; Bahrani & Sultani, 2012). In separate studies conducted by Salahuddin et al. (2013), Fatiloro (2015), and Mawere (2012) about learning difficulties in English language, the authors established that it is difficult for learners to master the intricacies involved in the language without total commitment to it. It is not possible to be a competent speaker of English language without giving it the attention it deserves in reading, studying and writing. Fatiloro (2015), in the study on factors affecting the quality of English language teaching and learning, and Mawere (2012) in reflection on the problems encountered in the teaching and learning of English language in Mozambique's public schools explained that teachers tend to struggle in teaching learners who have poor attitudes towards school work. Thus, the learners' lack of motivation and negative attitude towards ESL tasks as indicated by the participants might frustrate the teachers' efforts in teaching ESL in the study area with a predominantly rural set-up.
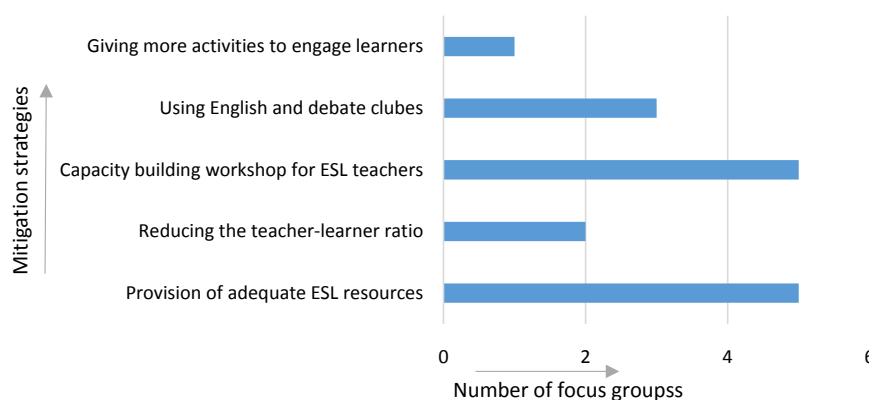
3.3. Strategies to Mitigate the Teaching Challenges Faced by ESL Teachers in the Study Area

The results in **Figure 9** show the participants' responses (to questionnaire) on the strategies that could be implemented to mitigate ESL teaching challenges in the study area while **Figure 10** shows the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions on mitigation strategies. A total of 33.3% of participants that responded to the questionnaire advocated for provision of adequate resources for teaching and learning ESL in the study area. During the different focus group discussions, it consistently emerged that resources such as ESL textbooks, magazines, newspapers, and English language audio-visual programs were not always provided in time by the regional education office. Five (5) out of 11 focus groups emphasized the importance of provision of adequate resources for teaching and learning ESL in their schools. Participants from 2 focus groups further argued that the resources are not only textbooks, but all necessary things that reinforce teaching and learning of ESL. The participants highlighted that apart from textbooks; stationaries, computers, printers, and internet should be provided to the ESL teachers to reinforce teaching. Pande (2013), Graves (2016) and Bandhana
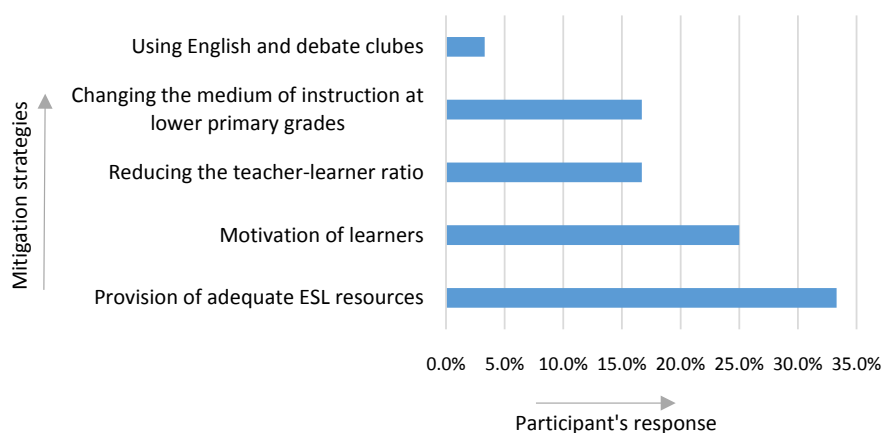
Figure 9. Participants' responses (to questionnaire) on the strategies to mitigate ESL teaching challenges in the study area.

Figure 10. Focus group discussions on the strategies to mitigate ESL teaching challenges in the study area.

(2011) variously opined that ESL teachers should be equipped with the right tools that include textbooks, teaching aids and reading materials for them to effectively deliver their duties as at when due. Al-khairy (2013) is of the opinion that the condition and availability of teaching facilities have an effect on the learner's attitude towards learning any subject including ESL. By extension, ESL teachers can equally be negatively affected if relevant teaching and learning facilities are readily available. Teaching ESL requires a teacher to be equipped with the right tools particularly for those who teach in rural schools where English language exposure is limited. Resources for teaching ESL encompass not only textbooks but also include reading materials, access to photocopiers, computers and projectors (Manasreh, 2010; Khassawneh, 2011). ESL teachers should be capacitated to provide their learners with a wide variety of reading materials and integrate technology in their lessons to make the lessons more interesting to the learners. During the observations however, it was noticed that some of the senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena Region lack facilities such as electrical power supply and internet and these could hamper the use of technology in ESL teaching in the area. More also, the participants suggested that the teachers and parents need to work together to motivate the learners. In one of the focus groups, the participants added that the teachers need to engage the learners with more activities that enhance creativity and promote discovery learning as this motivate learners more. Another participant who looked highly motivated stressed that, "It is high time we move from traditional content and teacher-centered approaches that do not motivate learners to learn this foreign language. Let us move on with the modern approaches to teaching". Harumi (2011) argued that the motivation of learners is necessary if the learners are going to succeed in learning English as second language faster. Bahrani and Sultani (2012) conducted studies about challenges in teaching ESL and recommended that motivating learners to speak and practice speaking in English language can result in improved performance of learners. Thus, the teachers should keep on encouraging learners to practice speaking English language. If a learner is motivated towards a subject, it becomes easier to develop interest in the subject.

The findings from the questionnaire further revealed that participants recommended reducing the number of teacher-learner ratio in the classrooms. A total of 16.67% of the participants who responded to the questionnaires recommended the reduction of class size to suit the normal teacher-learner ratio, which is 1:30 in secondary schools in Namibia. During the focus group discussions, the participants also highlighted that class sizes should be small for effective teaching of ESL and monitoring of learners' progress. They suggested that the government should build more classrooms and employ more ESL teachers in schools with high teacher-learner ratio to reduce overcrowded classes. Bandhana (2011), Al-Khairy (2013), as well as Bahrani and Sultani (2012) reported that small class sizes allow the teacher to have good classroom management and control as well as enable the teacher to give individual attention to every learner.

When the teacher has a small class size, he/she tends to pay attention to individual learners especially the slow learners who might need special attention of the teacher. Furthermore, in a small class size, learner tends to be well-behaved as opposed to frequently observed indiscipline cases that are mostly evident in big classes. Therefore, reducing the class size might reduce the teachers' challenges and help them towards effective class management, less noisy classrooms, and providing individual learner's attention.

In addition, some participants recommended that there is need for changing the medium of instruction for junior primary grades from the local dialect, Oshikwanyama to English language. This was indicated by 16.7% of the participants who responded to the questionnaire. Cummins (2017) and Bhattacharya (2015) reported that using English language as a medium of instruction right from the junior primary grades leads to learners grasping vocabulary at an earlier age. In addition, using English language as a medium of instruction from junior primary grades could improve the eloquence of learners in English language. This is in line with the findings of Graves (2016) who concluded that the stage at which English language is used as medium of instruction had a strong bearing on the achievement level of learners in learning vocabulary. The report further revealed that learners who uses English language as a medium of instruction from junior primary grades had richer vocabulary than those who use English language as a medium of instruction from senior primary (Graves, 2016). Therefore, there is correlation between the stage at which learner's uses English language as a medium of instruction and richer vocabulary acquirement.

During the focus group discussions, three different groups emphasized the need to use English and debate clubs to enhance English language communication skills of the learners and promote ESL learning. They argued that learners can learn from each other when they are in their clubs. Manasreh (2010) opined that if learners are in their clubs, they are more comfortable to learn from their peers. Some learners develop their English language skills when they are speaking with other learners and clubs could be a good environment for learners to learn from each other. Five different focus groups also stressed the need for the subject education officers to organize capacity building workshop for the English second language teachers to enhance their skills in content delivery. Pande (2013) and Fatiloro (2015) in their studies about problems and remedies in teaching English as a second language, established that refresher workshops help teachers with new ideas and strategies of teaching ESL. The ESL teachers who are struggling with teaching the subject could get assistance during refresher workshops as such forum provides avenue for more experienced teachers to share relevant experiences related to content development, delivery and assessment. In fact, in the study area where there is general poor background of most teachers in English language, the importance of using refresher workshop to improve teachers' productivity and efficiency cannot be overemphasized. Most importantly, refresher workshop can be used to further identify the teachers' knowledge gaps and training needs and hence, develop their ability and readi-

ness to teach as subject experts.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the English Second Language (ESL) teachers in senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia are faced with several teaching-related challenges such as limited resources for teaching and learning ESL, overcrowded classes, learners' absenteeism, lack of parental involvement in their children's education, lack of refresher workshop for teachers, lack of advisory services from the subject advisor, and learners' lack of motivation and negative attitude towards ESL tasks. Considering that the study location is a predominantly rural setting with limited access to English language media, the identified challenges could pose serious setbacks for the teachers to mediate effective teaching and learning of English second language. This is because the lack of adequate teaching and learning resources to support research and private study by both teachers and learners could add to the growing frustrations of the teachers, and demoralizing learners who have been described as overcrowded and lacking motivation towards ESL. Thus, there is an urgent need for government and stakeholders' intervention to equip the schools with adequate and relevant resources to permit effective teaching of ESL according to the requirement of the syllabus. Furthermore, there is a need for government to build more classes to reduce overcrowded classrooms. With the dynamics of the current teaching environment following the COVID-19 pandemic, the subject advisor should step up the advisory services in the study area and provide targeted capacity building workshops to the teachers to equip them with innovative pedagogical skills needed by the 21st century English language teachers.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors hereby declared that there is no any conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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