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EFFECTS OF LEARNERS' GENERATED QUESTIONS ON READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT OF MALE AND FEMALE PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of learners- generated questions on male and female pupils' reading comprehension achievement in Anambra state. Two research questions guided the study. The design used in the study was quasi-experimental design involves non-randomized control group pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent control group with an experimental group receiving treatment. The study was conducted in primary schools in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised all the 37,190 primary five pupils (19202 males and 17988 females) in the 1068 public primary schools in Anambra state for 2020/2021 academic session. The sample size for the study consisted of 200 (88 males and 112 females) of primary five pupils drawn from four intact classes. 101 pupils for experimental group (42 male and 59 females) and 99 pupils for control group (46 male and 53females). Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 40 public primary schools while simple Random sampling was used to draw four intact from the forty public primary schools in the area of the study; two schools each from Awka south L.G.A and two from Anaocha L.G.A. The researcher used Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT) instrument for collection of data in this study. Three experts validated the instrument, the RCAT, lesson plan with the title of the study, purpose, scope, research questions and hypotheses before distribution. Two from Early Childhood and Primary Education, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The validators examined the items, language and ascertained the extent to which the languages were clear and items suitable for responses. In establishing the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study with 25 primary school pupils in Enugu State. The obtained scores were used to estimate the reliability co-efficient of the instrument using Kuder Richardson (k-R-20) and will be yielding a reliability index of 0.91". The experiment lasted for 6 weeks. The extraneous variables which could have affected the result of the study were effectively controlled. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation The study found that female pupils performed better than their male counterparts in reading comprehension using the learners'

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generated questions in the rural area. Part of the recommendations was that government and curriculum planners should inculcate use of learners' generated questions in teaching difficult concepts in urban and rural located schools in the states.

keywords: Learners' Generated Questions; Reading Comprehension; Achievement; Male Pupils; Female Pupils; Interaction Effect.

Introduction

Education is a lifelong process which begins from birth till death. It starts from the cradle with numerous activities ranging from literacy to numeracy; it is also responsible for the development of societies from generation-to-generation Education is the right of every child and need not be denied for any reason. This is because, through education, learners are not only taught, trained, and adequately guided to acquire relevant skills and knowledge, but also taught how to adapt to acceptable public life. This study focused on primary education.

Primary school education is education given to children between 6-11 years and above (FRN, 2013). Primary school education as the foundation laying level of education in nations of the world improves the mini structural framework on which the quality of other levels of education is anchored, Ogunode et al (2021). Children go to primary school to learn how to read and write; which is the formal environment where education takes place. Anisiobi, wadi and Ushang (2023) opine that basic education is the foundational level where students acquire basic numeric and literacy skills. The objectives of primary education as specified in Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE,2013) are: to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; to lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; to give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; to mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child; to develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment; to give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity and to provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. A child exposed to primary education stand a chance to gain literacy which is more of reading and writing.

The use of reading strategies is one of the significant factors that have an impact on ESL learners' reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text (Nurmalasari 2021). The results of Francois's research (2016) show that in the process of learning reading, teachers can be models in reading comprehension strategies. Teacher can give examples various reading comprehension strategies, for instance, including predicting, activating prior

knowledge, making connections, setting purpose for reading, and making inferences. The successful comprehension of texts by language learners does not occur automatically and frequently, it depends on learners‟ use of reading strategies and their awareness of strategies (Banditvilai, 2020), and refers to reading comprehension as the level of understanding information presented in a written form. In the views of Menakaya, Ulo-Betheis, Nwafor, Ossai, Onuora and Okon (2022) reading comprehension is an activity aimed to understand the message of a particular text. It's also a process that involves understanding ideas, which are symbolized by a written or printed language as a piece of a communication. Teachers employ several teaching methods or strategies to ensure that pupils learn.

Teaching method refers to the style of instructional delivery adopted by a teacher for teaching. Shofoyeke (2014) opined that teaching methods can be defined as practical application of teaching principles based on the nature of the subject and their learning needs. However, most primary school teachers in Anambra state seem to use conventional teaching method for teaching.

Conventional teaching method is a method that is practically used by most teachers in Nigeria to impart knowledge to learners. It is basically a teacher-centered teaching method that pays little or no attention to the learners because teachers' intention is to cover the scheme of work, whether the learners understand the subject or not. Menakaya et al (2022) noted that apart from being teacher centered, the conventional teaching method appears not to activate student's prior reading knowledge of reading. This type of teaching strategy requires little or no critical thinking. It makes provision for limited information, because as long as there are no adequate interactions between teacher and learners, knowledge or experiences are not appropriately shared within them. Conventional teaching method is an instructive process because the teacher gives all the information, required. For Ruiz, Mintzer, and Leipzig in Igbo, Apeh and Ojonugwa (2020), in conventional method, the learners are extrinsically motivated by the desires to get good grades, please the teacher and to acquire rewards. It is basically pencil, paper, board, chalk and textbooks representation. This is supported by Achuonye (2015), who observed that conventional method is very prevalent in primary schools in Nigeria. The reason for utilizing conventional teaching methods includes: it saves time, permits flexibility, adaptability and versatility.

Despite the reasons for utilizing the method, it has some disadvantages. In conventional method, learners are more passive than been active, the cooperation and interactions between the teachers and the pupils are minimal. Yap (2016), stressed that in conventional teaching method, instructor initiate discussions in the classroom and focus exclusively on knowing the content in textbooks and notes. The author added that this method of teaching limit the room for more creative thinking and also rarely consider individual difference. Similar to this Feider and Silverman cited in Farha (2016) argued that conventional teaching method makes pupils uninterested in class,

discouraged, bored and do poorly in test. These short comings of the conventional method have led to some innovative teaching strategies such as learners generated question strategy.

Learners' generated questions are questions generated by pupils which are aimed at stimulating answers to all areas of learning experiences they are about to learn or learnt already. Learner-generated questions simply mean questions generated by a learner from particular school subject or academic discipline Betts, Mulln, Nash & Varadhan (2014). The National Reading Panel (NRP) (2003) defines learner generated questions as a process in which learner ask and attempting to expand existing knowledge of the topic. Taboada and Guthrie further answer questions while reading. NRP further pointed out that the strategic asking and answering questions while reading helps pupils with difficulties engaged with text in ways that good readers do naturally, thus improving their active processing of text and their comprehension. Dubin (2016) defined leaner generated questions as self-generated questions pupil's lifts from a certain topic or domain which relies on assessing what is known and what is unknown about a topic and attempting to expand existing knowledge of the topic. Similarly, Dziuk (2016) referred to learner-generated questions as questions created by students to help demonstrate their understanding of the material being covered. Learner generated question strategy is one component of teaching pupils to carry out higher- level cognitive functions for themselves. It awakens learner's curiosity to comprehend and stimulates information. In other words, this shows that question asking is essential to enhance critical thinking skills. The learner-generated questions play an important role in the learning process as they are potential resource for both teaching and learning.

Ngadiman. (2021) studied the effects of provided and generated questions on the students' reading comprehension. The study adopted a true-experimental study applying a randomized pre-test-post-test control group design. A sample of 99 students were selected from the accessible population of the S-1 students taking the Reading Comprehension Course I. The SS were then randomly divided into three groups (I, II, and III). Each group thus consisted of 33 students. In this study two types of data were collected: the students' scores of reading comprehension and the types of questions generated by the students. The findings proved that both provided and generated questions promoted reading comprehension better than reading-only. The result of the study also proved that self-questioning was the most effective strategy for comprehending reading selections.

The similarity between the reviewed study and the current study is that the two studies focused on effect of generated questions on the students' reading comprehension, as well as effect of learners generated questions on reading comprehension. Both studies use pre-test and post-test for data collection. The two studies are different in terms of geographical location, population of the study; method of data analysis. The current study was conducted in Anambra State. The main

purpose of advocating the learner-generated questions as an innovative teaching method is to improve pupils' achievement in school.

Achievement refers to the accomplishment, attainment or expertise gained following a period of study, training or practice. Tuckman, in Eneh (2015) said that achievement is the realization of one's potential in an activity or task. Achievement is the degree of success or accomplishment in a given area of endeavour and a score on an achievement test. According to Dorgu and Igbojinwaekwu (2016) achievement in academics is the score or grade pupils obtain after a period of academic exercise and assessment. Similarly, Eneh (2015) refers to achievement as success in activities after personal effort has been invested on a goal-oriented exercise. The word achievement is mostly used to measure success in different endeavors such as business, arts, education etc. Bossaert, Doumen, Buyse and Verschueren (2011) defines achievement as success in meeting short- or long-term goals after a programme or activity. This means that academic achievement is built on a child's consistency towards learning. Okpala and Okigbo (2021) defined academic achievement as total of a learner's performance in a given standard test over specified time period of time. In the context of this study, achievement means success in any discipline or given academic area. One of the factors that affect pupils' achievement in schools is gender.

Gender is a socially constructed role, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Myers (2012) defines gender as the characteristics, whether biological or social; influenced by which people define male and female. Menakaya et al (2022) defined gender as a social attribute designated to an individual as male or female. The term gender in this study simply refers to male and female. The researcher also observed that gender plays significant roles in aspects of reading comprehension to comprehend. Identifying gender as a factor in reading comprehension, Pradani (2021) established that, female folks are much good in reading than the male folks. Odual (2013) argues that while the male students are displaying superiority in arithmetic, the female has mathematics phobia but are naturally good in language. Odunuga (2017) presses that it might be difficult to correct this ill among the female gender because these limitations may take its root from the genetic make-up of the female gender. Genetic makeup battles with environment as Junaid (2015) supported the claim and insist that females are doing better in reading than males.

Nnaukwu (2016) investigated cognitive response rate of male and female primary six pupils taught reading comprehension through question generated strategy in Obowu L.G.A of Imo state. The study had 805 (512 females and 293 male) primary school pupils as its population. Being an experimental study, an intact class of 33 pupils (19 females and 14 male) were used for experiment while items that made up the instrument was a proficiency test including a multiple-choice reading comprehension test used based on the target of pre-test and post-test in the forty selected

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questions. Pupils were divided into two experimental groups each group (experimental males, experimental female and two control groups (both male and female). The outcome of the study showed that question-generation strategy had significant impact on both male and female pupils. Scores of male pupils did not differ significantly from female pupils. The outcome proved that both male and female pupils responded positively to reading comprehension through the question-generated strategy which is against mere speculations that female students out-perform male students as it concerns reading comprehension using learner-generated questions.

Observations and experiences by researcher have shown that some pupils have poor reading attitude and skills which make them become easily distracted and lack reading comprehension achievement. The researcher observed that most pupils in Anambra State have poor reading habit and ability which affects their academic achievement. This poor reading ability of pupils most times also depends on their environment, the teaching method adopted by the teachers for teaching and school location. Scholars and researchers also hold the assumption that a child's academic achievement may be greatly influenced either by the environment in which he lives, the school location and method of teaching used by the teachers for teaching. And as a result of the poor reading ability, there is, therefore, the need for instructional approach that make pupils reading comprehension achievers. It is against these backups that the researcher sought the need to examine the effect of learners- generated questions on male and female pupils' reading comprehension achievement in Anambra state.

Research question1: What is the mean Achievement Score of male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learners' generated questions and those taught using conventional method?

Research question 2: What is the interaction effect of gender and method on the pupils reading achievement scores in reading comprehension?

Research Method

The design used in the study was quasi-experimental design involves non-randomized control group pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent control group with an experimental group receiving treatment. The design was used because the experiment was carried out on intact-classes, so as to avoid disruption of normal classes. For this reason, there was no randomization of pupils into experimental and control groups. The design is diagrammatically represented as follows:

Diagrammatical representation of the quasi-experimental design

Group	**Pre-test**	**Treatment**	**Post-test**
Experimental Group	O1	X1	O2
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Control Group	O1	X2	O2

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Where O1 is pre-test
X1 is treatment using Learners-generated question
02 is post-test
X2 is conventional method of teaching (No treatment)

The study was conducted in primary schools in Anambra State. The population of the study comprises of all the 37,190 primary five pupils (19202 males and 17988 females) in the 1068 public primary schools in Anambra state for 2020/2021 academic session. Primary five pupils were chosen to be used for the study because they are not exam class and they can generate questions from comprehension passage. The sample size for the study consisted of 200 (88 males and 112 females) of primary five pupils drawn from four intact classes. 101 pupils for experimental group (42 male and 59 females) and 99 pupils for control group (46 male and 53females). Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 40 public primary schools. Simple Random sampling was used to draw four intact from the forty public primary schools in the area of the study; two schools each from Awka south L.G.A and two from Anaocha L.G.A. The purposive sampling technique was used based on the following criteria: The schools are public schools, in each of the schools, intact-class was selected. One school in Awka South L.G.A was assigned to treatment and the other was assigned to control. The choice was based on the homogenous nature of the schools, gender composition and location of the schools. The researcher used Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT) instrument for collection of data in this study. The instrument consists of 20 multiple choice items with options A-D. One option is correct while the remaining three are distracters. The items are the contents of the comprehension from Macmillan Brilliant Primary English book five, Titled: The visiting day page (58) and Farming page (69). Each correct answer attracted five marks, totaling 100 marks. Marking was done by the researcher. This instrument was used for dual purpose. First it was administered to the experimental group and control groups as a pre-test before the commencement of the experiment and secondly as a post-test to the experimental group after the experiment, to determine whether the academic achievement of the four groups is significant or not. Other materials that were used for this study are lesson plans for learners – generation question strategies, lesson plan for control group, and comprehension passage. Three experts validated the instrument, the RCAT, lesson plan with the title of the study, purpose, scope, research questions and hypotheses before distribution. Two from Early Childhood and Primary Education, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. To establish how reliable the instrument was, the researcher conducted a pilot study with 25 primary five pupils of Community Primary School Agungwu Village, Ugwuoba in Orji school Local Government Area of Enugu State which was not part of the research population. The obtained scores were used to estimate the reliability co-efficient of the instrument using

Kuder Richardson (k-R-20) and will be yielding a reliability index of 0.91". This approach was used because k-R-20 is mostly suitable for multiple choice tests.

Experimental procedure

Introductory letter was presented for permissions from the schools' authorities to enable the researcher use their pupils and their lesson period and class teachers once in a week for 6weeks.

One week of briefing was organized for the English teachers of the sample schools used for the study. For the Experimental group, the English teacher was briefing on how pupils will use learners – generation question strategy for reading comprehension achievement. The briefing was as follows:

Familiarity with Learners- generation questioning strategy and comprehension activities. The instructional process, assessment and evaluation procedures.

Learners generating question prompts identification, interaction patterns and teachers attitudes towards the pupils was made clear to the teacher.

How to administer pre-test to the pupils used in the study and post-test at the end of the experiment period. These involves both the experimental groups and control groups.

The researcher makes use of RCAT designed for the two groups. RCAT Pre-test was administered in the first week on the selected comprehension passage for the study. Afterwards, the two groups received the same lesson based on the learners – generation questions and conventional teaching method.

At the end of the experimental period, pupils in the two groups took the same RCAT post-test which was used to know the deference in learning outcome.

Week 1: Training of the research assistants. Administering of pre-test to the two groups.

Week 2: The teacher introduced the topic of learning as learners –generation question strategies for reading comprehension achievement.

Week 3: The teacher introduced Learners-generating question prompts identification with two lines, one for question and the other for Answer after the teacher must have taught the topic; he/she can engage the pupils in a related activity.

Week 4: The teacher introduced Learners-generating question prompts identification with a stop sign, after the teacher must have taught the topic; he/she can engage the pupils in a related activity.

Week 5: The teacher introduced learners-generated question prompts identification with a stop sign and read aloud. After the lesson the teacher can engage the pupils in the related activity.

Week 6: In this last week the teacher administered post-test to the two groups. After the experiment, the two groups will be tested in order to obtain their understanding and reading comprehension achievement of the learning topic.

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The item was scored as follows:

The total number of items was 20 in number, the pupils respond was score as five (5) when they correctly get the answer and was zero when they fail it. The comprehension Achievement score was the total number of questions correctly answered. The maximum score was hundred. (100)

Control of Extraneous Variables

In order to ensure that any change in behaviour of the pupils would be as a result of training, the researcher adopted the following strategies to ensure that extraneous variables, which could affect the result of the study, were controlled:

Experimental bias: To avoid experimental bias, the pupils were taught by their regular teachers, to prevent the researcher from being personally involved in administering the research materials.

Pre-testing: Pre-test, is the act of administering research test to pupils before the commencement of a study, which may sensitize them to become aware of or suspicious of the purpose of the post-testing aspect of the experiment. Therefore, research assistants were disallowed to read the test questions.

Teacher variable: Errors that might arise as a result of teacher differences were controlled by organizing a pre-experimental conference for the research assistants. Separate conference was organized for teachers in the same groups. The research assistants were exposed to practical demonstration of the training strategies, especially in the use of learners-generated questions in teaching. The essence of the conference is to enable the research assistants acquire the competencies for presenting the experimental conditions, thereby establishing a common instructional standard among research assistants. The research assistants conducted the experiments in their respective schools and during normal school English periods in the timetable. The study was monitored and supervised by the researcher to ensure a uniform approach as specified in the lesson plan for each group.

Inter-group variables: The intact-classes were used for the study in order to eliminate the errors of non-equivalence arising from non-randomization of subjects. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used for data analysis; further corrected the non-equivalence among research subjects.

Subject's interaction: The researcher was not select treatment and control groups from the same school to ensure that the pupils in the treatment and control groups would not mix-up at all. This is to reduce the errors that might arise from interaction and exchange of ideas among research subjects

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation as well as ANCOVA. The Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research question while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at (0.05) level of significance. The extraneous variables were controlled by the ANCOVA from the dependent variables. For hypothesis testing,

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if the p-value is less than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), then hypotheses was rejected, this shows that, the effect of the learner-generated question strategy and conventional teaching method on pupils reading comprehension achievement is significant at a certain level, however, if the p-value is greater than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), the hypotheses were accepted.

Presentation of Results

Research question: What is the mean Achievement Score of male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learners' generated questions and those taught using conventional method?

Table 1: Mean Achievement Scores of male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learners' generated questions and those taught using conventional method.

		Pretest			Posttest		
Gender	N	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	diff
Male	42	33.02	11.15	42	41.29	15.75	4.21
Female	57	33.65	11.76	57	49.88	16.77	5.08

In Table 1 the result showed mean achievement score of male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learners' generated method. The males scored 33.02 and 41.29 for pretest and post-test respectively with mean difference of 8.27 while females had mean achievement score of 33.65 and 49.88 for pretest and post-test respectively with mean difference of 16.23. The result revealed that female primary school pupils improved in their achievement score more than their male counterparts when learners' generated question was used in teaching them reading comprehension.

Research question 2: What is the interaction effect of gender and method on the pupils reading achievement scores in reading comprehension?

Table 2: Mean interaction effect of gender and method on the pupils reading achievement scores in reading comprehension

Method	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Interaction effect
Conventional	Male	46	36.78	11.81	
					1.11
	Female	55	35.67	13.65	
Learners generated questions	Male	46	41.29	15.75	
					8.59
	Female	55	49.88	16.76	

Table 2 revealed that the interaction effect of gender when taught reading comprehension with conventional teaching method was 1.11 in favour of the males while interaction effect when taught reading comprehension learner's generated questions was 8.59 in favour of the females.

Summary of the findings

Findings of the study were summarized as follows:

1. There was an improvement among male and female primary school pupils taught reading comprehension using learners generated questions than those taught with conventional method.
2. There was improvement mostly among female students in reading comprehension using the learner's generated questions than male pupils.
3. Female pupils performed better than their male counterparts in reading comprehension using the learners' generated questions in the rural area.
4. Interaction effect did exist on method and gender of the pupils in reading comprehension.

Discussion of findings

Efforts were made in this study to ascertain mean achievement scores of male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learner's generated questions. Findings showed that male primary school pupils scored 33.02 and 41.29 for pretest and post-test respectively with mean difference of 8.27, while females had mean achievement score of 33.65 and 49.88 for pretest and post-test respectively with mean difference of 16.23 in favour of the female primary school pupils taught reading comprehension using learners' generated questions. By this, the result maintains that female pupils improved more than their male counterparts in performance when taught reading comprehension using leaner's generated questions. However, the above result from the experiment is in line with the findings of Poswati and Aisyah (2018) who in their study on student reading comprehension between male and female students' analytical exposition discovered that female students were more vibrant than male students in reading comprehension in analytical exposition text. He emphasised that a speedy improvement of female students than male students in assessment. The above findings are also in-line with the findings of Shakurnia, Aslam and Bijanzadeh (2018) who in their study reported that though students generated questions promotes learning when effectively implemented, but that female always take the lead. However, the mean achievement scores in the results indicates that there is statistical difference. The result from the hypothesis confirmed the above statement as it revealed that, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean achievement scores of primary five male and female pupils taught reading comprehension using learner's generated questions, this is because, the p-value (.032) is less than the level of significance (0.005). Based on this the null hypothesis was rejected. And the researcher concluded that there is significant difference.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that learners' generated question strongly has effect on the reading comprehension achievement of male and female primary school pupils in Anambra State. It had significant effect on reading comprehension achievement of pupils in Anambra State. Both male and female pupils that was subjected to the test improved after the treatment but the females improved more when learners generated questions were used.

Educational Implication

The study established that male and female pupils improved in reading comprehension using the learner generated strategy and that female pupil maintained a lead. This would mean that the girls will be good in English language, surpassing male pupils who different studies had said that they were good in mathematics. The implication is that female pupils if not challenged by male pupils, will continue the lead not only in English language but other content areas that are not related to mathematics. The curriculum of primary schools would by this, need to be restructured to bring in academic activities that would ensure that both male and female pupils participate in the same academic exposure to ensure that this perceived gap of female pupils dominating English language is filled. If nothing is done, it implies female students will continue the lead, performing academically better than male pupils in academic subjects that are not related to mathematics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and curriculum planners should inculcate use of learners' generated questions in teaching difficult concepts in urban and rural located schools in the states.
2. Learner generated questions should be used in teaching other subject especially science subjects in various school locations.
3. Teachers should strive to develop themselves in knowledge-diverse instructional strategies in order to keep learners engaged and motivated throughout the learning process.
4. Teaching facilities that can aid teaching and learning in rural schools should be improved like their counterparts in the urban areas.
5. Primary school curriculum planners should bring in learning experiences that would ensure that male and female pupils are exposed to different activities mostly in English language to ensure that male pupils compete favourably with female pupils.

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