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Reading and Access Research Activity (RARA)

Hausa Reading Classroom Observations in Bauchi and Sokoto States

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose	1
1.2	Instrument Development	1
1.3	Sample Size & Methodology.....	1
2.	Summary of Findings	3
2.1	General Information.....	3
3.	Lesson Plan & Deployment.....	5
4.	Pupil Engagement, Assessment and Feedback.....	7
5.	Classroom Materials & Arrangement	10
6.	Teacher Open Ended Questions	13
6.1	Teaching methods	13
6.2	Resources	13
6.3	Assessment and Progress	14
6.4	Attitudes and Beliefs	14
6.5	Teacher Training/Professional Development	14
6.6	Challenges	15
7.	Conclusion	16

I. Introduction

I.1 Purpose

The Nigeria Reading and Access Research Activity (NRARA) is developing and testing a pedagogical approach to improving early grade reading skills in Hausa in Bauchi and Sokoto states. The approach includes a specific package of teacher and pupil support materials, as well as a methodology for providing training and in-school support to teachers, which will be implemented in 60 primary 2 (P2) classrooms in Sokoto and Bauchi states during the 2014-2015 school year.

To inform the design and development of teaching and learning materials, as well as the teacher training, NRARA conducted classroom observations in both states to learn about current Hausa literacy instruction practices and available materials. The data gathered from these observations was used by the project team and government partners during a program design meeting held in April 2014, during which time the overarching framework for the materials and teacher training content were developed.

I.2 Instrument Development

A draft classroom observation tool was developed by RARA staff in Nigeria and the U.S. and a technical consultant, drawing on existing tools that have been used for similar purposes. The instrument was piloted in March 2014 in six schools, three schools per state. The pilot exercise provided an opportunity for hands on training to the classroom observers, who were drawn from the project's Reading Technical Working Groups (RTWG) in each state. Their experiences conducting the pilot observations provided information on the usability of the tool, and whether it captured the data needed. The observers' feedback on the instrument and a review of the data captured during the pilot were subsequently used to refine the instrument prior to conducting the formal classroom observation exercise.

The final instrument, which can be found in **Annex 1**, included a list of instructional strategies for teaching reading, engaging pupils, assessing pupil understanding, and providing feedback and corrective reinforcement. It also included a section on the existence and use of various teaching and learning materials (i.e., text, print on walls, etc.) and classroom arrangement and furniture. Observers recorded whether they observed the teacher utilizing these strategies and materials during the lesson. Finally, the tool included open-ended questions, which were posed to the teacher during an interview after the lesson observation to gain additional insight into teachers' knowledge, attitudes and experiences teaching reading.

I.3 Sample Size & Methodology

The classroom observations were conducted by a team of five observers in 10 schools (five in Bauchi and five in Sokoto). These schools were drawn from urban, rural and semi-urban communities and excluded schools that had received UNICEF or NEI support. The observer teams were comprised of members of the RTWG and RARA staff.

In order to ensure that the research process was valid and supported by the states, the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) provided consent letters for the observation team to visit the selected schools. SUBEB also led the process of the school selection based on agreed criteria.¹An explanation of the purpose of the exercise was provided to both Head Teachers (HTs) and teachers in observation schools, and teacher consent was obtained by the observers prior to the conduct of the observations.

¹ The criteria for selecting the schools to be observed are: 3 of the five schools should be rural, 1 urban and 1 semi urban. None of the schools should have received any form of support from the Nigeria Northern Education Initiative or UNICEF in the past, the schools must have a P2 classroom and a teacher that teachers Hausa language.

2. Summary of Findings

The findings are discussed under the following themes as captured in the classroom observation tool:

- General information
- Lesson plan and content deployment
- Pupil engagement, assessment and feedback
- Classroom management and materials
- Open ended interview questions for teachers

2.1 General Information

This section discusses general demographic about pupils and teachers in the 10 schools. This includes average number of pupils attending the P2 classes, information on the qualification of Hausa teachers in these schools, and frequency of Hausa reading instruction in P2 classes.

Class size

The number of pupils in the P2 classrooms visited in both states ranged from 13 (observed in both states) to 101 (observed in Bauchi). Schools in the rural areas had fewer children compared to schools in the urban areas. Generally, Bauchi classrooms had more pupils than Sokoto and in both states there were more boys than girls. The aggregate average number of pupils in P2 classes in the 10 schools is approximately 49 pupils per class. These class sizes are similar to those observed during the state-wide EGRA 2013 data collection, which revealed an average pupil-teacher ratio of 49 in Bauchi and 56 in Sokoto.

Teacher qualifications

Findings show that majority of the teachers are classroom teachers (7 out of 10). This means they teach Hausa and other subjects, while a minority of teachers teach only Hausa language. (These findings are similar to those gathered during the 2013 EGRA exercise.) Teachers in the latter group often teach Hausa in more than one class, and are more common in big urban schools. The fact that the majority of these teachers teach other subjects holds the possibility that teachers in our study schools may be able to apply some of the competencies on effective teaching practices they will derive from the RARA lesson plans, trainings, cluster meetings and schools based support to other subjects.

Finally, all the teachers observed possessed the minimum teaching qualification, Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE).² However, only a minority of them specialized in Hausa as a major during their NCE program. These findings are similar to data gathered from teacher interviews conducted during the 2013 EGRA exercise. Data gathered through teacher questionnaires administered during the EGRA survey indicate that only about half of teachers in Bauchi and a quarter of teachers in Sokoto who teach Hausa for Primary 2 pupils reported receiving specific instruction in how to teach Hausa during their pre-service training. This suggests that RARA may be faced with teachers who have not been trained as Hausa teachers and may not have the basic content and pedagogical knowledge to teach literacy in Hausa. To respond to this need, the RARA materials and trainings have been designed not only to support pupils' literacy skills, but also to support teachers, especially with regards to the main components of a good literacy program mentioned earlier in this report. The RARA approach will also benefit from the fact that

² This is higher than the percentage of teachers found to hold an NCE during the 2013 EGRA exercise. Although the teachers surveyed as part of the EGRA data collection were not necessarily representative of the entire teaching force in the state (due to the sampling framework, as well as the high percentage of teachers absent on the day of the school visit), interviews with teachers responsible for teaching Hausa, English and/or mathematics indicated that only 70% of teachers in Bauchi and 44% in Sokoto held an NCE.

the vast majority of P2 Hausa teachers interviewed in both states (100% in Sokoto and 91% in Bauchi) reported during the EGRA 2013 exercise that Hausa is the language they speak and understand best, and/or they read and write Hausa well.

Instructional time

The number of times Hausa language is taught in P2 ranged from two to four times per week, as per the time table allocation observed in the classrooms. This frequency was almost the same for other primary grades. The findings suggest that the average instruction time for Hausa language in P2 classrooms in both states is three times a week. The instructional time for Hausa language curriculum ranged from 30 to 40 minutes. Specifically, the timetable for schools in Sokoto indicated 40 minutes of instruction 3 times a week, while those in Bauchi ranged from 30-40 minutes. However, although the instructional time allocated was 30-40 minutes, it was observed that the majority of the teachers spent less than the allotted time for the lesson. In general, the average time spent on teaching was 37 minutes, while a few teachers utilized as little as 10-20 minutes for a class that should have lasted 40 minutes. Observations and discussions with teachers revealed that teachers who used less than the allotted time did so because they did not have the content knowledge or the pedagogical skills to engage children in activities that will last 30-40 minutes.

To ensure RARA lesson plans are implementable within the existing instructional time available in P2 classrooms, the teacher's guide has been structured to provide two lesson plans a week, each lasting 40 minutes, as well as an additional activity or exercise (called "Do More") that the teacher can use at any other time within the week. To address the gap in teacher pedagogical knowledge to use the time available, the RARA lesson plans are structured to provide teachers with 40 minutes' worth of instructional content, as well as varied but engaging activities around the five components of literacy: phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

3. Lesson Plan & Deployment

This section discusses data gathered and analyzed from a set of 29 criteria that measures how the teacher delivers the lesson from the beginning, middle and end of the lesson. The two graphs below summarize specific findings on the percentage of teachers observed to be using effective and ineffective reading instructional practices as they deployed content in the classroom.

As indicated in the two figures below, lessons observed were dominated by lecturing, choral repetition and memorization. Only about one-third provided opportunities for pupils to demonstrate understanding, and in turn provided pupils with corrective feedback. A third of teachers called on the same pupils with their hands raised to answer questions.

Debrief sessions with the observers indicate that many teachers included some components of reading in their lessons such as letter names, syllables and sentence reading. Though these were taught by having the children either repeat or recite after the teachers. For instance, Figure 1 shows that 60% of the teachers modelled syllabic reading, while only 40 % modeled sounds. However, none of the teachers blended individual sounds to form syllables or words. Moreover, fewer than half of the teachers directed pupils to finger-point while reading, or asked pupils use an exercise book to practice. Only 1 in 5 teachers used song or a textbook for teaching, and only 1 in 10 used a storybook as part of the lesson. No teachers were observed asking pupils to read to a partner. Some of the practices observed in the classrooms are encouraging on the one hand because they suggest that some teachers will be familiar with the reading skills that the RARA lesson plans will reinforce these skills in a more systematic way. However, taken as a whole, the results indicate that although a majority of teachers taught some component of reading, it was not necessarily taught in a systematic way that will develop strong reading skills (and comprehension), or supported by activities that will engage the children. The RARA lesson plans are therefore designed to assist teachers in providing systematic instruction in these key areas of reading. Taking into account these observations about current teaching practices and needs, the RARA lesson plans will:

- Focus on key reading skills and effective methods for teaching them
- Include simple songs that engage children and support phonological awareness, as well as reinforce some of the themes (drawn from the NERDC P2 curriculum) that the lessons are built on (such as family, health, community, etc.)
- Include a “Read Aloud” section with developmentally appropriate text the teacher can read aloud to pupils, as well questions for assessing pupil comprehension and engaging pupil discussion.
- Provide tips for teachers on instructional routines and practice they can use to foster pupil engagement and improve pupil assessment

Figure 1: % of teachers observed utilizing effective reading instructional practices

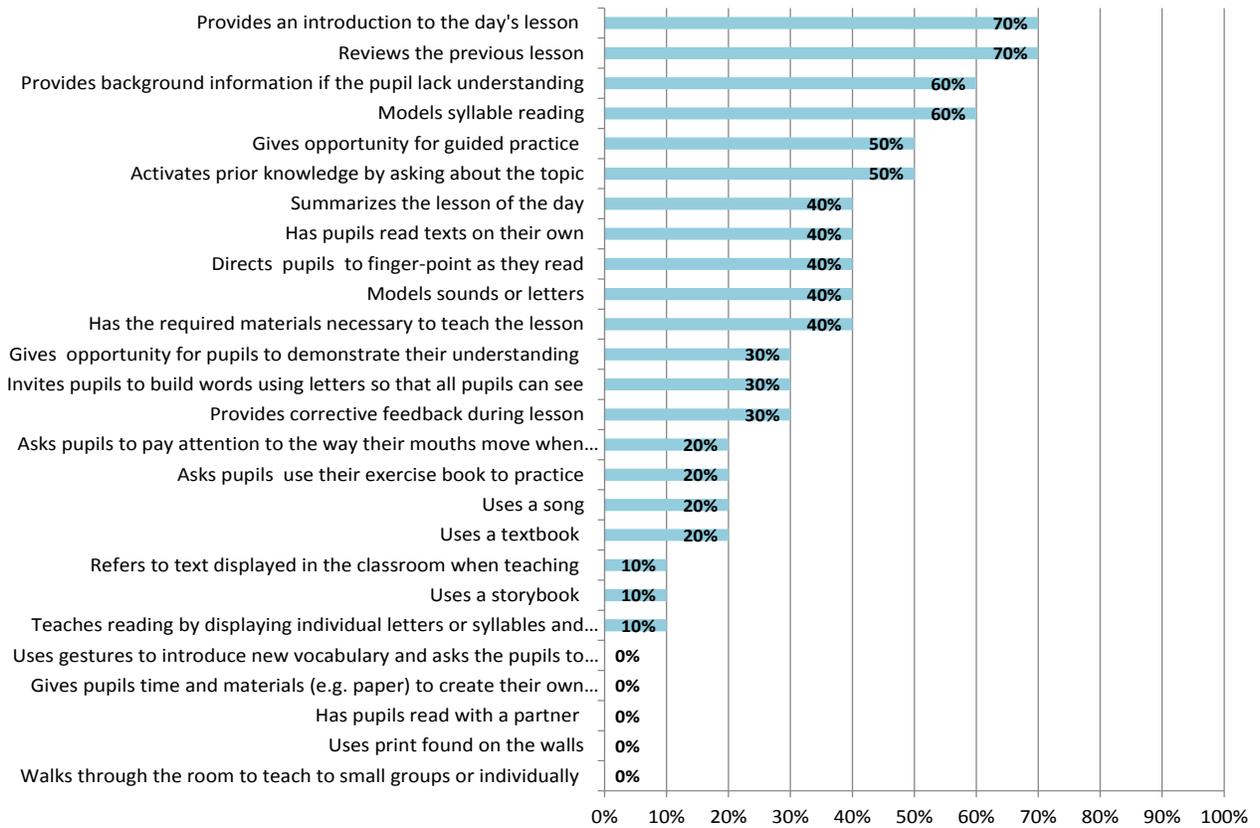
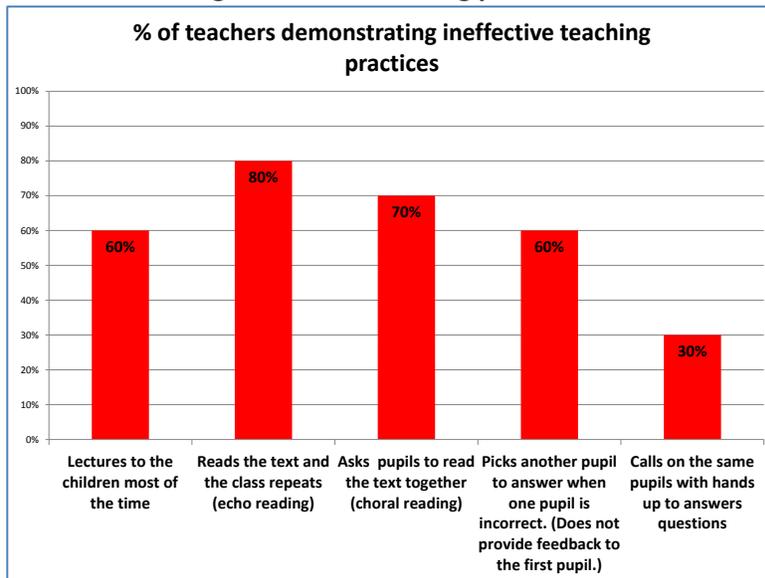


Figure 2: % of teachers demonstrating ineffective teaching practices



4. Pupil Engagement, Assessment and Feedback

Figures 3-5 below illustrate the extent to which teachers are engaging pupils, using assessment strategies and providing corrective feedback to pupils in the classroom. Taken as a whole, the classroom observations suggest that teachers' use of techniques to foster pupil engagement, assess reading competencies, and provide corrective feedback is weak. No teachers were observed circulating amongst pupils, teaching small groups or individuals, or stimulating creative and critical thinking through effective questioning. The observations further suggest that informal classroom assessments practices are weak in the majority of the classrooms. On a more positive note, a majority of the teachers are praising pupils who give correct answers and calling on wide variety of pupils to answer questions.

Figure 3: % of teachers demonstrating effective strategies for engaging pupils

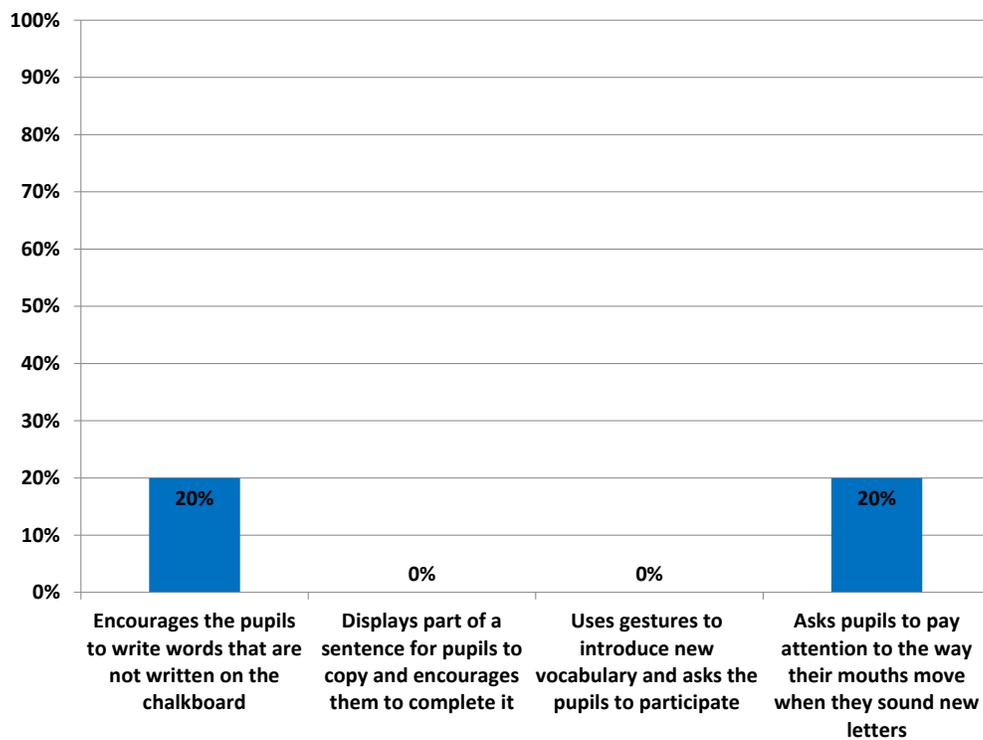


Figure 4: % of teachers demonstrating effective strategies for assessing pupil understanding – Teacher asks....

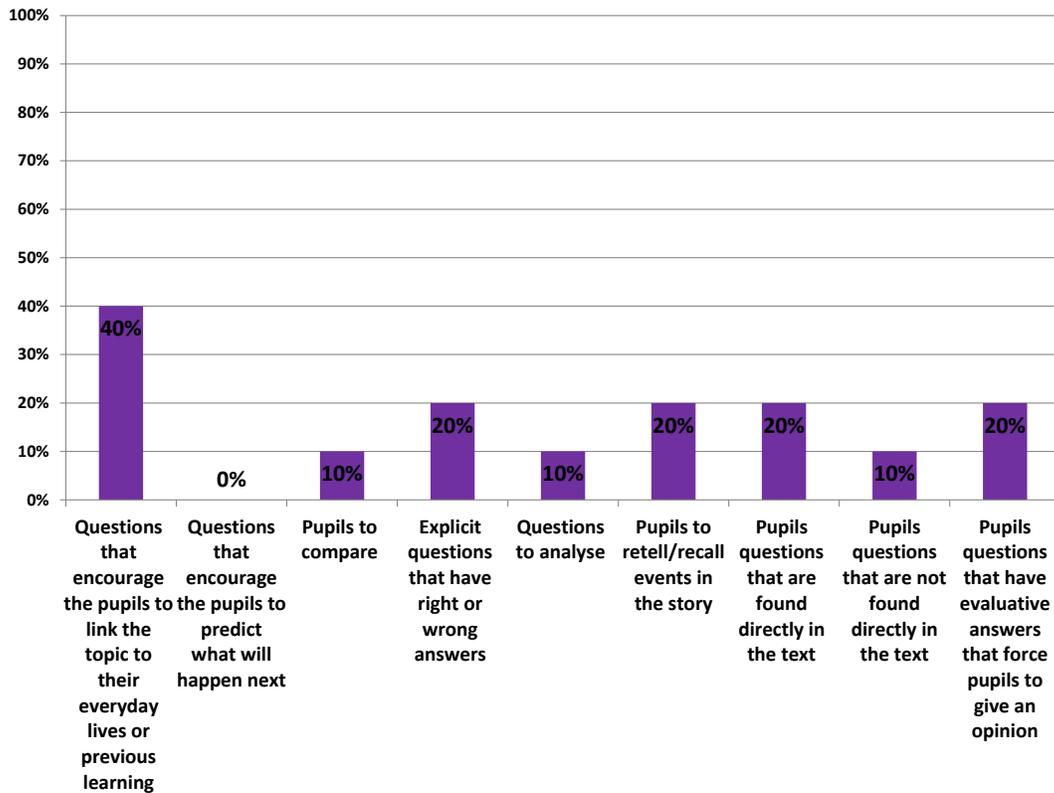


Figure 5: % of teachers demonstrating effective strategies for providing reinforcement/corrective feedback to pupils

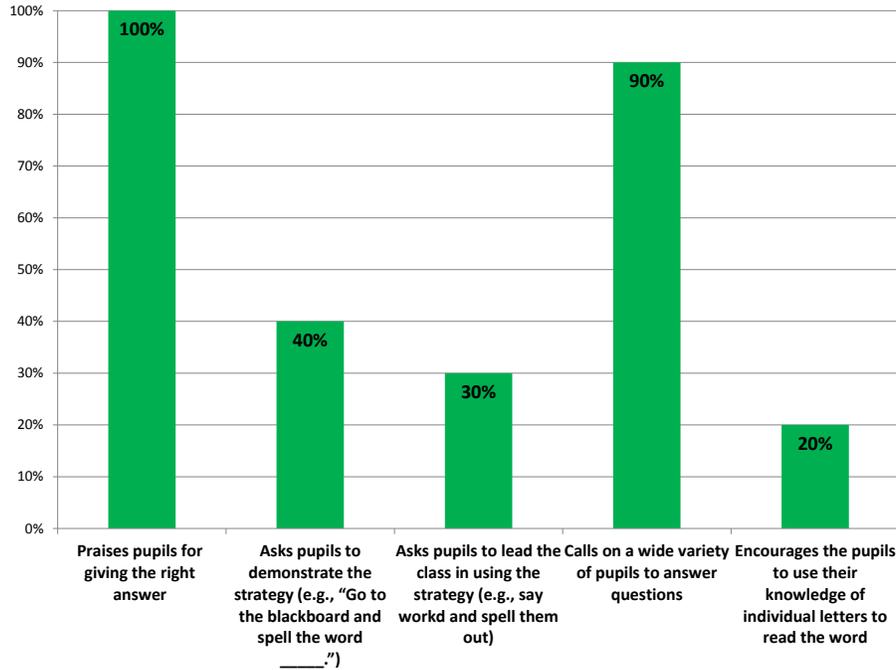


Figure 3 indicates that about 80% of teachers observed did not demonstrate effective teaching strategies, while less than 40% of teachers demonstrated effective strategies for assessing pupil understanding through the use of questions that allow for evaluation, analysis, and comparison and so on, as shown in **Figure 4**. On the other hand, **Figure 5** shows that the majority of teachers praise pupils for giving the right answers and as well as calling on a variety of pupils to answer questions, this RARA lesson plans will reinforce and build on. In order to build on strengths and address needs, the RARA lesson plans will embed simple, informal assessment practices that teachers will practice during the lesson, as well as tips on assessment, classroom management and other relevant areas that will help teachers better engage children during instruction. These will also be reinforced during face-to-face training workshops, schools visits and cluster meetings that will be facilitate by schools support officers at the LGEA/cluster level.

5. Classroom Materials & Arrangement

The graph below summarizes the availability of teaching and learning materials, as well as the extent to which literacy aids are not available or displayed in the classrooms. The majority of the teachers (9 out of 10) did not use any instructional materials during the lessons. Hausa texts are very scarce in the majority of the classrooms observed, while in a minority some Hausa text are available but either in insufficient quantities—or they are not being used at all. The validity of these findings is confirmed by the EGRA 2013 results, which revealed a dearth of teaching and learning materials in both states: Only 31% of P2 (and P3) pupils reported having a Hausa book, while only 12% of Bauchi teachers and 5% of Sokoto teachers interviewed said they had adequate materials for teaching Hausa.

The small minority of teachers who had text reported they bought them themselves or that they were purchased by parents. In contrast to the majority of classrooms that did not have materials, in one classroom a variety of Hausa texts were available in the school library that appeared unused. However, the books were not for primary 1-2, but only for primary 3-6. In addition to the lack of reading materials, none of the classrooms had charts or other forms of instructional materials displayed. Given the lack of text available in classrooms, RARA will encourage, train and provide tips to teachers on how to create a text-rich classroom environment using low-cost and no-cost methods.

It is important to state that the majority of the classrooms had chalkboards and teachers demonstrated good use of this material, which is practically the only teaching aid they have. Thus, the RARA lessons plans sees effective chalkboard use as a practice that can be enhanced to support literacy instruction. Of additional note is that the majority of the teachers also did not have the Hausa curriculum, but relied on sharing with colleagues. In cases where teachers did not have the curriculum, they improvised the lessons using Hausa text books or and borrowed curriculum from other schools. The RARA lesson plans will therefore fill an important gap in providing guidance to teachers on what reading skills they should be teaching.

Figure 6: % of teachers demonstrating effective strategies for providing reinforcement/corrective feedback to pupils

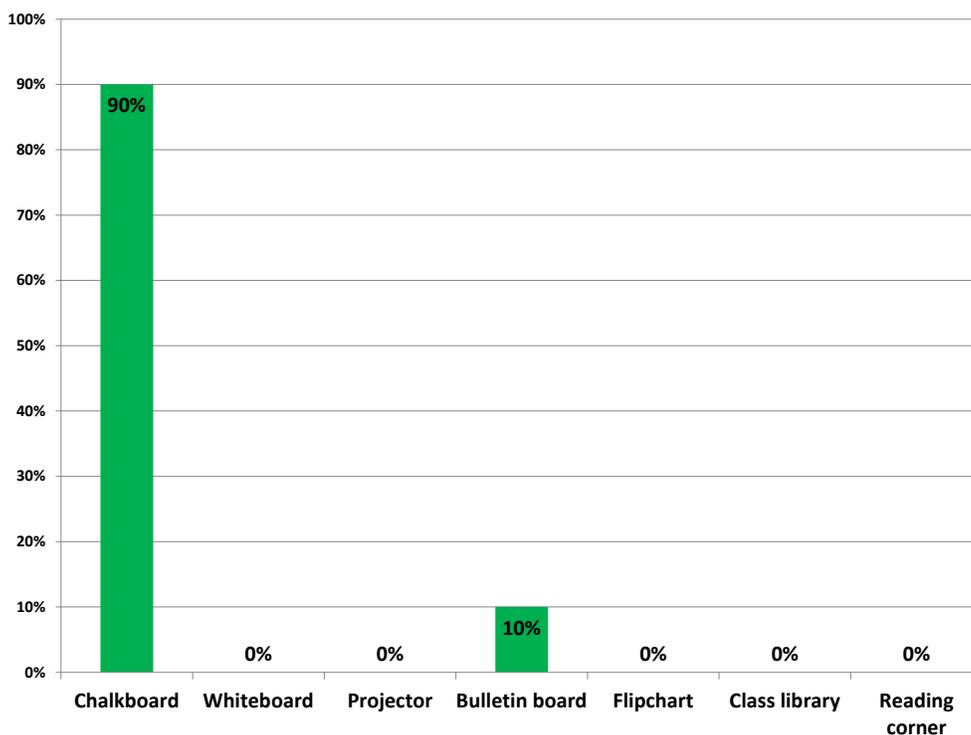


Figure 7: % of classrooms displaying literacy aids

Type of literacy aid	% of classrooms observed
English alphabet	0%
Hausa alphabet	0%
Days of the week	0%
Posters	0%
Calendar	0%
Word lists in Hausa or English	0%
Labelled Charts	0%
Maths posters or charts	0%
Pocket chart	0%
Manipulatives (e.g. plastic letters)	0%
Teacher or school has a copy of the Hausa curriculum	60%

The next figure shows classroom arrangement and availability of furniture for both teachers and pupils. It reveals that the majority of the classrooms were arranged in rows, with benches and desks for pupils. (More classrooms in Sokoto than Bauchi had classroom furniture.) Half of the schools had sufficient seating for pupils.

Figure 8: Classroom arrangement: % of classrooms observed

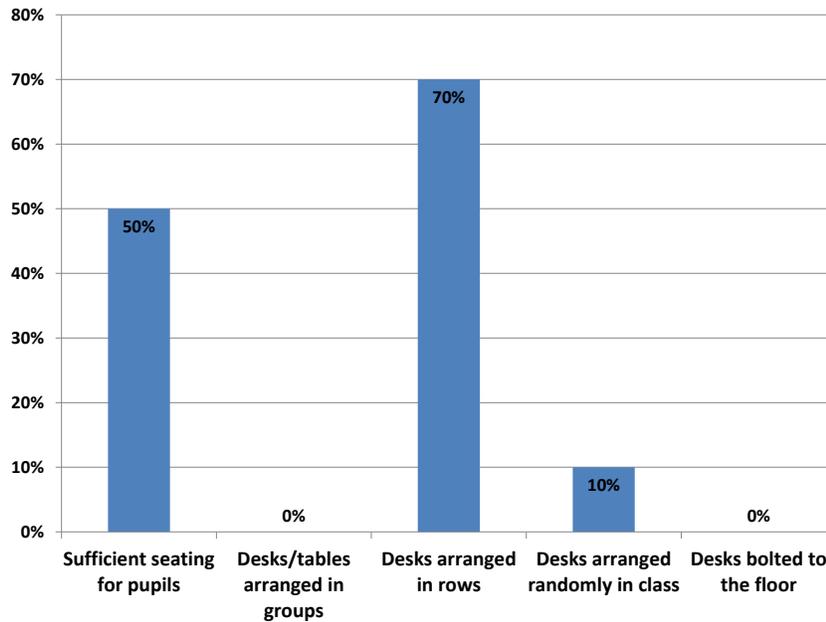
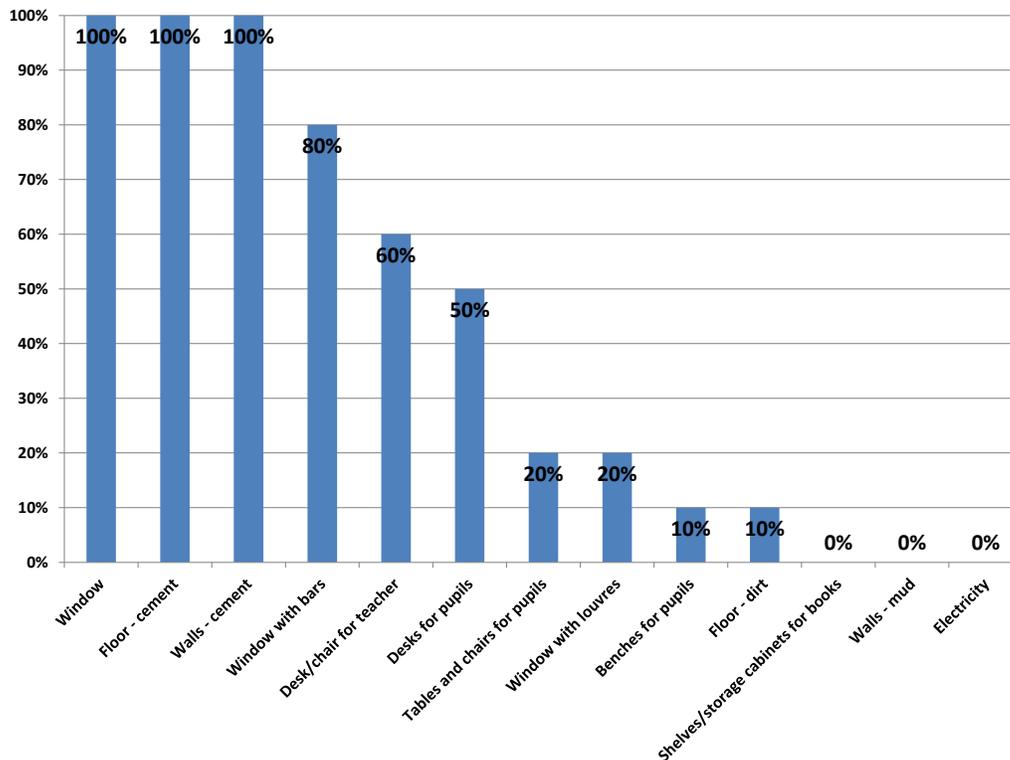


Figure 9: Classroom furniture and structure: % of classrooms observed



6. Teacher Open Ended Questions

The purpose of the open-ended questions was to gain deeper insight and complementary information into various aspects of teaching and learning experienced by the teachers observed. Themes explored included:

- Teaching methods
- Resources
- Assessment and progress
- Attitudes and beliefs
- Teacher training and professional development
- Challenges

6.1 Teaching methods

The goal of this section is to learn about instructional techniques that teachers reporting learning in college, in seminars or trainings.

The majority of teachers indicated that during their training as teachers (pre-service) the method or technique of teaching reading they were taught included: letter names, letter sounds, syllabic reading, oral language skills and reading comprehension. A minority mentioned other items such as lesson planning, scheme of work development and development of instructional materials. However, the majority of the teachers said they frequently used the syllabic method to teach children basic reading such as word formation. The use of individual letter sounds blended to form words is not a common practice amongst the majority of teachers. The most common techniques currently used by the majority of teachers are letter names, vowel sounds and syllable reading. This research could not establish clearly what the teachers felt was the best method for teaching literacy, though we could infer from observations of their teaching practices that they do not really know what makes for an effective literacy instruction. However, the majority of teachers (9 out of 10) believe the teaching methods they use currently are effective, since, according to them, their children are making progress.

To address some of the gaps in Hausa literacy teaching and to help teachers teach Hausa reading in a systematic and more effective way, the RARA lesson plans include structured activities around phonological awareness (letter names and sounds) and alphabetic principle (syllable decoding, word decoding and sentence decoding).

6.2 Resources

The goal of this section is to learn about the resources teachers use to develop literacy skills in the classroom.

In all the classrooms observed, there is a scarcity of teaching resources such as Hausa text books, pupil books and readers, charts, posters story books, reading corners and libraries. Where these are available especially Hausa text, story books and curriculum, they are not enough to for all pupils and teachers. Some of the teachers observed do not own a copy of Hausa text, while those who have one purchased it with their money; it was not provided by the school. Due to the scarcity of literacy teaching materials and aids, the majority of the teachers say they are left with no choice but to improvise. However, observations showed that the majority of the teachers did not use any instructional materials during their lessons, and none of the classes had materials displayed around the room. Finally, the majority of the teachers mentioned they get ideas for their lessons from the curriculum, pre-service training they

have received, and text books, while a minority mentioned listening to the radio as a source of ideas.

6.3 Assessment and Progress

The goal of this section is to learn how teachers know the reading levels of their students as well as the extent to which informal and formal assessments such as tests and exams guide their understanding of students' progress.

The majority of the teachers monitor pupils' progress through questions and answers, providing homework, and administering tests and exams (usually end of term exams). They also reported using their curriculum and text books as reference material in the development of lesson plans. The most common text teachers use to develop their lesson plans in both states is "A Koyi Karatu". This book was reviewed extensively by RARA and found to contain some useful content for teachers, though not enough to build strong reading skills. The RARA lesson plans also reference the Hausa curriculum drawing on some of its content such as the Hausa letters and most especially themes that cut through the curriculum. It is important to note that the key components of reading focused upon in the RARA lesson plans are almost completely absent in the current curriculum used in Sokoto and Bauchi for Hausa instruction, thus the RARA lesson plans will help to fill this gap.

6.4 Attitudes and Beliefs

The goal of this section is to learn how teachers' beliefs and attitudes influence achievement.

The majority of teachers believe their pupils are motivated to learn to read in Hausa, though they could not provide a concrete reason why they believe so. Only one teacher mentioned that her pupils often ask her to teach them Hausa even when it is not a Hausa period. While a minority feel their pupils are averagely motivated or could not really say how motivated their children were to learn to read and write in Hausa language. However, this interviews could not establish or gather enough/the right kind of responses to establish if teachers held any perspectives about how believes influence achievement. All the teachers interviewed felt respected and appreciated by their communities, as the SBMCs often visit to check on teachers' attendance and the children's performance. They also embarked on small projects to help the schools.

6.5 Teacher Training/Professional Development

The goal of this section is to gauge teachers' interest towards future professional development. As indicated earlier, the majority of the teachers observed teaching Hausa were not trained as Hausa teachers during their NCE training, while only a minority majored in Hausa language. All respondents said they needed further training on how to teach Hausa literacy and also indicated that there are no opportunities for continuous professional development or in-service teacher training for them. Where in-service training is offered, it is never in Hausa language but other subjects such as English, math, science and social studies, deemed more important than Hausa language. Majority of teaches felt they did better at teaching subjects they majored in during their NCE program. Some felt they did well in drilling the pupils particularly in memorizing and reading the alphabets.

6.6 Challenges

As noted throughout the report, teachers face numerous challenges to providing effective reading instruction. The interviews confirmed that the majority of teachers are hampered by a: lack of teaching/learning materials; lack of knowledge about teaching methodologies; and low /irregular pupils attendance (particularly in the farming season); and overcrowding, which makes classroom management very difficult, especially in classes with underage children.

Another challenge mentioned by a minority of teachers was inconsistency of the lesson plan format, as various supervisors insist on different formats for the lesson plans. A majority reported that lesson plan development is challenging due to the scarcity of the curriculum and Hausa texts. The RARA lessons plans seek to provide something that is somewhat familiar, but also an improvement over what is used, especially with regards to providing teachers content that may lead to improvement in pupils reading skills. Difficulties pupils face in terms of acquiring Hausa literacy skills is primarily a lack of learning materials. Additionally, pupils have difficulty reading words that have diphthongs in them, such as the words *aiki* and *dauka*. As such, the RARA lesson plans have included the two most common Hausa diphthongs *ai* and *au* in its letter order to be treated along with the other consonants and vowels in the lesson plans. Of note: some teachers report that pupil learning is also affected by a lack of concentration due to the presence of younger siblings to the classrooms. This also RARA will seek to address through its (minimal) engagement with SBMCs in developing messages for parents and communities that may sensitize parents on the effect of having younger siblings in the classroom on their children's ability to concentrate during classes and what they might do to alleviate this challenge.

7. Conclusion

In summary, the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from classroom observations and teacher interviews indicate many teachers are demonstrating effective instructional practices, including:

- Introducing their lessons well
- Modeling syllables
- Providing opportunity for guided practice
- Praising pupils
- Providing opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their understanding at end of lesson

However, the data also show that:

- Teachers do not teach key foundational reading skills in a structured or systematic manner;
- Many teachers are lecturing students most of the time, and rely on echo and choral reading; and
- Teachers are not using print to teach reading—most likely because they and the pupils do not have any.

As described throughout the report, the RARA approach to improving Hausa reading instruction will seek to build on the current, good teaching practices observed while at the same time filling gaps in knowledge and practice by designing lesson plans. Strategies that will be utilized to enhance teachers' ability to provide effective instruction will include providing teachers with: content focused on key reading skills; guidance on how to teach in a systematic way; simple strategies for assessing pupil learning; developmentally appropriate text for pupils to practice reading; and ideas for on how to create a print-rich environment. This will be supported by training and professional development opportunities. Classroom observations and other forms of assessment and evaluation conducted throughout the implementation period of the research study will provide data regarding whether the lesson plans, training and ongoing support result in increased use of effective instructional practices to teach early grade reading in Hausa.