



Adoption of National Language for Teaching and Learning Vocational Education for Sustainable Development In Nigeria

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Abstract

Naturally, language is the human vocal sounds or the arbitrary graphic representation of these sounds in writing used systematically and conventionally by speech community for the purposes of communication, Osinsanyo (2007). On the other hand, education is seen as the overall round development of individuals, their economic, cultural and spiritual being. The process of molding and shaping personality is facilitated through the use of language as a vehicle; language plays vital roles in most known formal educational systems. This paper among other things discuss the concept of language education, proficiency, vocational achievement, vocational training, multilingualism and its challenges, language skills in vocational education and sustainable national development. It features as a subject in the school curriculum and is used to serve as the medium of instruction in all the subjects globally. Thus, this paper seeks to consider 'adoption of national language education for sustainable development in Nigeria' and made the following recommendations: There is the need to develop a good language education programme for vocational school level in Nigeria, Teachers should jointly help the pupils to develop competence in the use of their language and that of the immediate environment of schooling, and the government should make adequate funds available for the provision of regular and intensive professional capacity development for classroom teachers in the Universal Basic Education.

Keywords: adoption, Vocational, training, skills, Language, Education, Sustainable Development.

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Introduction

Education generally, involves imparting knowledge to people (students) the vehicle of this imparting or the means of imparting knowledge is mainly through the use of language. Language education strictly means the study of all the rudiments of language. The art, the component parts of language especially grammar and literature for the purpose of acquiring skills and knowledge.

The methodology of teaching each particular language, the grammatical and literacy peculiarities are generally involved in language education. The similarities and dissimilarities are also an integral part of language education.

In support of this view, in 1951 UNESCO experts discussed the use of African Language in education and concluded that the mother tongue, which is the language that is acquired naturally in the child's environment is extremely important in learning, they submitted that imparting education through child's mother tongue aids the actualization of his intellectual potentials and this enables him to learn faster ahead of the child who has been taught in a foreign or second language. Language policy without a virile national policy on education there can be no meaningful development in educational sector and without a clear and well integrated language policy, considering the language problem already existing in Nigeria,



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the road to national development via Economic, social, political and education will not be achieved in the sustainable development goal 2030.

The Federal Government had made laudable efforts at developing Nigerian indigenous languages. Apart from the issue of language policy in the National policy of Education (1977); the Federal Government while fashioning a new constitution in 1979/1998/1999 raised the three major indigenous Languages; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba to the status of National Language along with English. It behooves on us to examine briefly some of the provision in the constitution.

- i. The business of national assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequately arrangements have been made therefore (1999 CONS. Sect 55).
- ii. In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of pre serving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of the nation unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the Federal Government considered the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (FGN Para. 8)
- iii. Government ensures that the medium of instruction shall be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community (FGN Para II Sec 3) pre-primary education.
- iv. Government ensures that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and later state, English in (FGN Para 15 Sec 4) upper primary Education. In selecting two Nigerian languages, students should study the language of their own area in addition to any of the three main Nigerian languages Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, subject to availability of teachers (FGN) Para 19 Sec 14) in junior secondary school.

From the above (NPE) statements there is an educational ideology that the enhancement of educational process and the presentation of culture of the individual Nigeria could be effected with imparting knowledge through mother tongue. The unfortunate thing about these provisions in NPE and nation's constitution is that they are not implemented to the letter and added to this is the fact that the issue of a Nigerian child learning his language in addition to one of the three major ones Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba is just a mere policy statement.

The Importance of Language (Mother Tongue) education.

National development is the Nation's human resources acting on its natural resources to produce goods and services necessary to satisfy the economic needs of the community (Hamish 2004). This being the case, the pivot of any national development is the human resources and the human resources rely heavily on the vehicle of language for effective mobilization towards national development and this could best be achieved through the indigenous languages. Mother tongue is a tool for achieving sustainable development goals, considering what countries like Japan and China have achieved through technology as a result of using their mother tongue to impart knowledge. We are stagnant in this country educationally because we have refused to develop our indigenous languages. Jubril (2009) attributed the alarming decline in the educational system to the inability of the country to use the mother tongue for instruction in schools and developing educational curriculum. The further observes that, countries like Japan and China are able to record giant strides in science and technology through the adoption of their indigenous languages.

Also Keresi (2009) blamed post colonial elites for adopting colonial life styles for the detriment of their own language. Similarly, He stated that, "Our state of underdevelopment has remained for so long due largely to our use of English and French. We import knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages while the majority of our people are



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farmers and crafts men who perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Nupe, Ijah etc. The question is why not helping them to improve their social, economic and political activities via the mother tongue? Why do they insist in their learning English or French first before modern technology can be introduced to them. In most developing countries, a few towns and cities operate in English, French etc, while many rural villages and hamlets operate in the mother tongue.

Language Proficiency and Vocational Achievement

The most fundamental and most asked question in the area of language as it relates to bilingualism or multilingualism if it has any effect on the students' vocational achievement? This question is most frequently asked by teachers, policy makers and researchers. Several studies have been conducted with the aim of answering the question. Some of these studies cut across various race, ethnicity and social class, different countries and culture Rosemarie et al, (2004) and students' educational levels. Furthermore, the studies was conducted using different perspectives and approaches such as comparing the following: monolingual versus bilingual students who study under the same medium of instruction; students who study in the medium of a foreign language (English) versus those who study in their local language; and students who study in a language switch mode – in a medium by using both foreign and local languages. Other studies investigate the role of the proficiency level of students in their first language as compared to the language of instruction (Clarkson, 2003); and the students' performance in word problems stated in their first language as compared to word problems stated in the students' second language.

Educational research findings in all these studies, Calderon (2003), Hamis (2004), Clarkson (2007) and Abubakar (2015) though inconclusive, tend to agree that language proficiency is one of the important factors influencing bilingual students' performance in different work force. And bilingualism can be an advantage or disadvantage to the student

depending on the proficiency level of the students in the two or more languages.

However, the deficit model for bilinguals has since been rejected and is now considered to be outdated by many scholar. Findings of a number of studies that looked into the issue since then (Musa, 2017; Calderon, 2003) indicate that the students' language proficiency has an impact on their vocational performance.

Goals in language education

The goals in language in Nigeria can best be addressed by examining these questions:

- a. What kind of language competence do we envisage of the products of our schooling system?
- b. What are the language needs of the educated Nigerians?

The above questions can best be considered in the long term and short term stages. To ask what the language needs of the educated Nigerians are today is an achievement of these core objectives of English language as one of the core subjects in the basic education curriculum in Nigeria. The contemporary issues now are: multi-lingual challenge, poor policy implementation, teacher quality and the problem of curriculum materials.

Multilingualism

The term “multilingualism” refers to a person who can communicate in more than one language be it actively (through speaking, writing, or signing) or passively (through listening, reading or perceiving). Other terms such as “bilingual” and “trilingual” are used to describe a multilingual person or polyglot. “poly” means many “glot” refers to language, i.e. as interpreted in Greeks.

The multilingual challenge

Language is a component of culture along with other elements of values, beliefs and norms. In Nigeria, for instance, the language of education at the basic level has been an issue of debate among scholars for decades. As a multi lingual nation with at least 400 indigenous languages, Gbenedio (2011) noted that only about 65 standardized orthographies and only three major languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba



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have documented efforts of teacher education. One challenge Musa (2017), envisaged, is the lack of adequate vocabulary for most indigenous languages (but the national language is limited to Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). The problem is accentuated with school subjects like mathematics, sciences and vocational education content areas where words in the local language will not exactly name concept except to describe them. The best education a child can get at the basic level is that given in the indigenous language. Children accordingly to Baker (2014), absorb concepts much easily in their own familiar languages and can gain a fundamental understanding of them. However, in a second language (L2) situation, in the case of English language in Nigeria, they simply became words that are learnt but not absorbed. Musa (2017) reiterates that psychologically, the proper development of the child bound with the uninterrupted use of the language in which he has acquired this first experiences in life, the one in which he dreams and thinks and in which he can effortlessly express his feelings and emotions. To ignore this familiar language and begin to teach him a foreign and unfamiliar language and as soon as he comes to school, is like taking the child away from his home and putting him among strangers. (Olagoke, 1975).

The Concept of Vocational Training

There are several different career paths you can take in life. Vocational training can be a desirable option for individuals entering a highly technical or hands-on field, as well as for those who wish to develop new skills. In this paper, we shall define vocational training, explore some of the different types of vocational training available, list skills acquired through vocational training and provide information about jobs one can get with vocational training.

Vocational education can simply be defined as instructional programmes that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade. In vocational education training is organized to prepare students for specific careers, disregarding traditional, unrelated academic subjects. Vocational training

provides hand-on, job-specific instruction, and can lead to certification, a diploma or even an associate's degree. Students typically require vocational training to prepare for trades including, but not limited to, automotive repair, plumbing, culinary arts, graphic design, fashion design, welding, GSM repair

Different Sources of Vocational Education

Accomplishment of vocational training can be done through many channels, and at different times in someone's career. Below are some of the sources open which one can acquire vocational training; Apprenticeship programmes, On-the-job training, Standalone courses Postsecondary vocational school etc.

Apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes are trade-specific and can last as long as four or five years. In these types of programmes, the apprentice, or student, works under the supervision of a professional in their trade and they are compensated for the work. This type of vocational training is most common in highly skilled, hands-on professions.

Apprenticeships typically combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Because some apprenticeships include classroom courses, they can result in a certification or degree. A major benefit of this type of training is the fact that it is an educational programmes in which the student is paid. Due to this, placement in apprenticeship programmes is usually competitive.

On-the-job training

Most on-the-job training is either done through an employer or a third-party training provider sourced by the employer. It's common for companies to provide employees with job-specific training as well as training in general employment skills, such as human resources training, training on how to work well in a team or computer skills training. These skills can prove valuable in an employee's current position, as well as in any future employment opportunities. When learning a skill through



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on-the-job training, new employees are often paired with someone who is more experienced. Classroom instruction may also be utilized for on-the-job training, but it's typically only seen when a company develops its on-the-job training programmes into an apprenticeship programmes.

Standalone courses

Professionals hoping to develop their skills and improve their marketability will often take for membership into professional organizations, Updating knowledge of current skills, standalone courses. These courses are available to non-degree-seeking students. Reasons for people to take this route for continuing their education and professional development include: Fulfilling requirements Expanding skill sets, learning a supplementary trade etc.

Relevance of Language Skills in Vocational Education

Rosemarie, et al (2014) have two focus on communication definition: Communication in the mother tongue: the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in oral and written form, and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of contexts. Communication in foreign languages includes the items mentioned above and also intercultural understanding.

It is generally acknowledged that language and communication skills are crucial for acquiring vocational proficiency, completing successfully vocational training and maintaining employability, as well as for communication and interaction in everyday work. However, how do vocational education and training (VET) polices, trainers and trainees address the issue of language and communication skills? It is assumed that policies, trainers and trainees would attribute different value and relevance to language and communication at and for work. The data presented here are based on the findings of the research project Rosemarie, et al (2014) language and communication requirements in vocational education and training”

Therefore, in some policies, language skills are mentioned explicitly (definitions and operationalizing), and implicitly. Implicit mentions do not correspond to the importance of language and communication requested by VET. The trainers and trainees interviewed are aware of the importance of language for work interactions. The value and relevance attributed to writing, reading, speaking and listening differ considerably within and between the training occupations investigated. In the case of some operations, communication and interaction are directly part of work tasks e.g. selling goods and organising work processes as well expressing oneself in an activity like film or drama. In the case of other operations, they underpin tasks, e.g. reading instruction manuals for repairing cars, manuals for tailoring, film manuscripts etc.

The Importance of Vocational Training and Education in Development

The importance of VTE in National development need not to be over emphasized. This is because vocational and technical education provides the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies for survival and sustainable national development up to the 21st century. Akpan (2004) maintained that VTE is the gateway through which practical competencies can be successfully transferred for the sustenance of the country. Specifically, VTE provides; youth empowerment, consumer education, formation of attitudes, manpower development, training and empowerment for necessary skills, introduction to professional studies, lead to human capital development and career education.

Youth Empowerment: through vocational and technical education the youths would be sensitized, mobilized, motivated and gingered for self-employment and self-reliance. Effective acquisition of vocational and technical skills will inculcate entrepreneurial skills that would help the youths to be self-reliant, this will in turn bring about national development, and hence they will be self-employed.

Consumer Education: consumer education promotes better understanding of individual



relationship with business and the peace of business in our socio-economic system. Vocational and technical education educate the youths in the development of consumer's business and socio-economic competencies. It, therefore, makes the youth's intelligent consumers of goods and services. A good knowledge of consumer education helps to serve every individual in making adjustments in the economic arena. Akpan (2004) affirmed that vocational and technical education educates the public on the consumption of goods and services and foster healthy business communication consideration and discourage exploitation which could deter the socio-economic growth of the society. Formation of Attitudes; vocational and technical education educates the populace with proper knowledge, vocational behaviour and attitude needed for successful vocational and technical career formation. It also aids efficient methods of distribution of goods and services to consumers and desirable social and cultural behaviours needed for sustainable national development.

Manpower Development: vocational education provides highly trained and dedicated vocational education teachers for the production of various levels of business and technical manpower to keep her citizens above subsistence level of poverty. According to Eneyoh, et al (2012) it also provides a solid base for healthy multi-cultural transformation that would eliminate over dependence on foreign economic.

Training and Empowerment for Necessary Skills: vocational and technical education provides the training and skills that will lead to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will assist in transforming the economy for sustainable national development. Introduction to Professional Studies; VTE will provide introduction to professional studies in engineering and technologies which is the bedrock for economic transformation and national development.

Lead to Human Capital Development: vocational technical education will provide the lead to human capital development that enhances empowerment of people and

strengthening economic prosperity of the nation. Career Education; vocational and technical education provides educational experiences and abilities that would enable students to make intelligent occupational decision, specialization and to progress in a chosen area. It provides opportunity for students to make realistic decisions about a successful and satisfying career for economic survival and sustainable national development in the 21st century. Robert (2004) submitted that career education guides individuals to fit into the job opportunities available within the system for national economic development and transformation.

Sustainable National Development

Sustainable national development refers to the ability to harness all available resources, human, material or economic to bring out the potentials of a nation. In his view, Dzungwe (2012) affirmed that National development is the ability to flow along with other nations in terms of effective management and utilization of current development in science and technology. According to Aguele et al (2003) development means "bringing a nation to an advanced or a highly organized state, that is utilizing all the human and material potentials of a nation to bring about growth and development". Development has to do with employment for all the citizens of a nation.

However, sustainable development is attaining and maintaining the height of standard in the developmental agenda of the nation. This include; education, health services, economic, transportation, good road networks, justice and equity, food security and all the social amenities needed for safe and healthy living of citizens in a country.

Role of Vocational & Technical Education in Sustainable National Development

Nation building or development has to be sustainable in practical terms. This, however, is dependent on available resources, beneficially as well as keeping the physical environment safe, healthy, stable and highly conducive. Sustainability, according to the world commission on environment and development



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cited in Okafor, et al (2018) is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generation opportunities to meet their own needs. Sustainability includes a just and peaceful society, gender equality and intergeneration equity. Technical and vocational education and training has been identified as a tool for sustainable and stable economy. In Nigeria, vocational and technical education and training was previously not seen as fundamental to national development or for the economic development, but for school dropouts and never do well individuals. Okafor (2018) asserts that no nation can move forward technologically, industrially and economically without developing a strong partner initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation through technical and vocational education and training.

Conclusion

In conclusion, national language could be adopted for teaching and learning vocational education for sustainable development in Nigeria. This could be effective through training of vocational education teachers using national language. Thus leading to having effective learner support system and effective curriculum delivery process in vocation education. This will also lead to getting more employment opportunities for national development. Provisions of all these will consequently make the individuals self reliant and productive.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendation are:

1. There is the need to develop a good language education programme for vocational school level in Nigeria. This is because the effective functionality of the children in their educational or vocational pursuit is dependent on the solid foundation laid at the lower secondary school.
2. Teachers should jointly help the pupils to develop competence in the use of their language and that of the immediate environment of schooling.

3. The government should make adequate funds available for the provision of regular and intensive professional capacity development for classroom teachers in the Universal Basic Education – Federal Government of Nigeria (UBE-FGN) funded in service training scheme. While the training of teachers is on course, experts who can develop the orthography and prepare content materials in the languages should be mobilized.
4. There is no gain saying that instruction in the indigenous languages will in no small help the child to internalize in his own cultural values if one of the aims of educating him is to mould his character and develop sound attitude and morals in him.

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