
Indigenous Language Implementation and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v18i1.9>

Abstract

The National Policy on Education has done well to cover education levels ranging from the early childhood/pre-primary, to the primary and the secondary school levels. It even emphasized the use of mother tongue at the kindergarten and nursery school levels. Yet our educators at the kindergarten and nursery school merely pay lip-service to it. Despite the fact that the language policy on education emphasized the use of mother tongue at these levels as a medium of instruction, the English language continues to dominate our indigenous languages because it has been adopted at the kindergarten and nursery school levels. The study is a survey of Nigerian indigenous language implementation and use in the pre-primary schools in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Thirty-five pre-primary schools were selected for the study. They represented three categories of pre-primary schools in Ekiti State as follows: government-owned/public schools, missionary schools and private schools. A six-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the three categories of pre-primary schools. For proper presentation, the paper focused on quest for national integration, ethnicity and dialectal differences, the policy, why the kindergarten and nursery schools, a study of sampled pre-primary schools in Ado-Ekiti, and the challenges of indigenous language policy implementation in Nigerian early childhood/pre-primary schools. The study identified some problems, which include lack of teachers specialized in Child Education, proliferation of private schools, and lack of adequate

supervision by the appropriate body. The paper concluded by giving suggestions and recommendations towards the proper implementation and use of Nigerian indigenous languages in pre-primary schools via in-depth and focused supervision.

Keywords: Indigenous languages, Policy implementation, Nation building, Early childhood, Nigeria

Introduction

This paper dwells on the use of indigenous languages in the Nigerian education sector. The Nigerian Government at various times has proposed various forms of language policies to encourage and stimulate the growth and development of her over 400 indigenous languages, in order to free its citizens from the yoke of English, an imperial language. Obafemi (2008) maintained that a people cannot talk of national growth and development without language at the fore front:

If you imagine today the power of language as a sole vehicle of ethnic identity, in a multi-lingual country like Nigeria, it will become obvious that language is central to national growth and development. The question continues to linger as to which language to adopt to propel our nationhood and motivate our citizenship towards development. (p. 8).

Therefore, in a bid to build our nation, we have not only adopted the English language but have allowed it to gradually eclipse our indigenous languages, starting from the minor to the so called major indigenous languages. Because of this, Adeniyi (2007),

using Matthias Brenzinger's theory of Language Contact and Language Displacement, cried out that:

The overbearing influence of English in Nigeria is so prevalent and pervasive that it has caused the death of some minority languages and is also threatening the so-called majority languages. (p. 1)

As a result of this influence, Adeniyi (2007) advocates the effective implementation of language policies that would positively affect the growth and development of the indigenous languages. Notably, the language of a people is a definite way of identifying such people apart from their culture. Put in another way, language is the identity card a people travels with for proper identification. When one loses one's identity card, it becomes a difficult task to identify such person's root/family.

A Yoruba man can say something in his language and when asked to interpret it, will tell you, "If I say it in English, it will not mean the same thing as in Yoruba." On the same vein, how does the Igbo person interpret "*Umu Okpu*" or "*Nwadiana*" to a non Igbo person? This illustrates that there are some expressions one can give in one's language, which may be hard to convey in a foreign language, even after they have been translated and/or transliterated. This is the man's identity. No wonder theologians will say that the old King James Version of the Bible is the only rendering that is very close to the original Greek/Hebrew writings of the Bible. Most words are not accurately represented semantically when they are translated from one language to another. Some may argue that since some meanings are lost while translating from an indigenous language to a foreign language for expression, why use the indigenous language in the first place? One's language is one's identity; that someone showed you his/her

identity card does not make you a bona fide owner of the identity card. Therefore, one learns other languages in order to have access to the habits of thought of the owners of the languages. This leads us to the notion of bi/multilingualism. According to Ile (2013) “bilingualism or even multilingualism is not a vice, but a virtue.” (p. 64). Ayakoroma (2011) citing Ikara submitted as follows:

A genetic classification of African languages in terms of their origin and development from earlier languages shows that out of the four major language families, three are present in Nigeria. This clearly shows the multilingual diversity of the Nigerian society. The large number of languages and ethnic groups and the absence of clear and coherent national language policy are some of the main factors for this. Nevertheless, the three major languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, are recognized constitutionally as national languages and are taught (along with a few other languages) at primary and secondary school levels. The official language is English, though in recognition of the fact that the country is surrounded by French-speaking countries, the learning of French has also been encouraged. (p. 11).

The above quotation brings a holistically more embracing idea of the multilingual diversity of the Nigerian society. From what Ikara is saying, as quoted in Ayakoroma, several languages and ethnic groups exist in Nigeria; yet there is no clear and coherent national language policy to cover its multilingual nature. Emenanjo concurred with Ikara in Ayakoroma (2011) as he reiterates that “it is common knowledge that Nigeria does not have a well-articulated and explicit national language policy that can be found in one document.” (p. 1). There cannot be a well implemented

policy if there is not first a policy put in place. Now, if only Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba are recognized constitutionally as national languages, what happens to the rest of the languages? Again, these languages are taught or rather implemented to a reasonable extent only at the primary and secondary school levels; what about the early childhood years – kindergarten and nursery school levels?

It is pertinent to know that one can learn as many languages as possible as Vildomec clearly stated that:

Multilingualism is a purely socio-linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon in which more than one language co-exists simultaneously. It is also possible to have multilingual individuals like Harold Williams who is said to have spoken 58 languages, Ziad Farrah who could speak and read well over 50 languages. (In Anyogo and Odey, 2002, p. 85).

Since it has been proven that one can master as many languages as possible, it is suggested that one learns more languages, if one desires to share in the intimacy of the semantic import of those languages. This helps one to enter into the habits of thought of the native speakers.

Looking at the importance of language under paragraph 10(a) of the National Policy on Education, we are told that it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French for smooth interaction with our neighbours. Accordingly, French has become a second official language in Nigeria and has been made compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but Non-Vocational Elective at the Senior Secondary School. Is it not rather off the wall that the policy encourages the study of the French language and the compulsory mastery of the English language in our school systems, while we gradually send our indigenous languages into extinction?

The argument may therefore arise that in order to build a nation, a national language is imperative. We are not looking at building *just* a nation; what kind of nation are we building? No matter how fluently we speak the English language, we would still be referred to as the non-native speakers of the English language, the second language learners (L2) and a multilingual nation. Is it not better then to take pride in our multilingualism by teaching our indigenous languages to our children at the early childhood/pre-primary school levels? It is worthy to note that children do not easily forget or forsake values and standards, which were imparted in them during the early childhood stage. Therefore, if the language policy that stipulates the implementation and use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction is properly supervised at this early stage, then the nation would have achieved a future with dignified linguistic identity.

Quest for National Integration

Obafemi (2008) stated that

if we are talking ... about national integration..., it is because our cultures, especially our languages, endure in spite of the fact that the imperial education system made valiant effort, not only to banish the indigenous cultures and languages, but to erect a 'standard' form of the metropolitan languages (be it French, English or Portuguese) as the model. (p. 27).

Nevertheless, Ayakoroma (2011) has noted the fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society; he therefore asserts that there is no doubt that there is a near absence of national integration. This lack of national integration, he says, is clearly "manifested in the neglect of our rich cultural values, arts and

gradual extinction of our indigenous languages as a result of westernization.” (p. 14). Whitehead argues on behalf of the Economists that “[English] is the language of globalization – of international business, politics . . . it is the language of computers and the Internet . . . it is the dominant international language in communications, service, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy . . .” (Adamu, 2010, p. 162). While this may be true, the Graddol report demonstrates that the global spread of English will lead to serious economic and political disadvantages in the future: “A future in which monolingual English graduates face bleak economic prospects as qualified multilingual young people prove to have a competitive advantage in global companies and organizations.” (Adamu, 2010, p. 162)

Consequently, Orjime maintained that language and national development are discussed with little or no attention paid to how the use of language can have serious implication on national development or underdevelopment. He argued that when carefully and diplomatically used, language brings about co-operation, while the misuse of it brings about confrontation. (56). According to Orjime, proper use or misuse of language can integrate or disintegrate a nation, respectively. Hence this paper considers the representation of indigenous languages in the Nigerian education sector and how their implementation in the early childhood/pre-primary schools can help foster national integration and nation building.

Adamu proposed that all languages are a work in progress but the globalization of English is a process the world has never seen before, a change whose effects we can only imagine. To this extent therefore, Ostler asserted that “English has emerged as a preeminent world language and being ‘indicted’ by linguists for the loss of several indigenous languages . . . It qualifies to be

characterized, therefore, as the ‘killer language’ per excellence.” (qtd. in Adamu, 163) The knowledge of the fact that one is appreciated and included in society gives one a sense of belonging. If we say because English is a world language and therefore should be our national language, we have not only succeeded in wiping out our indigenous languages but also built our nation on a foreign culture. Albert Gerard, quoted in Ile (2013), noted that language is “a set of symbols which embody, beyond their plain literal meaning, all the customs, feelings, beliefs of the group [people].” Ile therefore reiterated that “all forms of development will revolve around the values, beliefs, customs/culture and orientation of the people” (2013, p. 65 – 6).

As a result, whatsoever becomes of our character, personality and thought pattern would be given as credit to the English language. Are we therefore building an English nation? An adage in Igbo says “*O bu nani osisi ka a ga-agwa na a ga-egbutu ya, o kwuru ebe okwu*” (meaning, it is only the tree that would be told that it would be cut down and it still remains stationary). How then would Nigerians fold their hands and watch their indigenous asset being “assassinated”? Would it be as a result of our ethnic and dialectal differences?

Ethnicity and Dialectal Differences

Nationhood is a phenomenon that is achieved with much work. Most often, the different ethnicity that make up a nation struggle and compete for prominence. The issue is further compounded if the supposed nation in question is one that has been colonized for a very long period with culturally as well as linguistically diversified neighbouring countries roundabout it. Linguistic diversity tends to lead to a low level of communicative integration, making modernization a long and difficult process in these countries. This

is as a result of the potential conflict between loyalty to one's ethnic community and loyalty to the wider national community.

Nigeria is one of such multiethnic countries in West Africa. Consider the case of state creation, where up to fifty (50) ethnic groups are foisted together, with each ethnicity vying for prominence. Envy, wrath, dissension, rage, conflict, clashes, battles, killings and bloodshed become prevalent in such areas. But Anyogo and Odey (2002) disagree with this. Having conducted a research on Benue State as a case study, they conclude that when people co-exist, speaking several languages together, there is bound to be greater unity. The unity is brought about by the mutual intelligibility they enjoy of the several languages that exist in the community. This also could be said of Nigeria as a nation state if Nigerians, in addition to their mother tongue, learn to speak two of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. This will further enhance a collective loyalty to the wider national community. It is worthy to note that implementation of policies that support this quest will facilitate the actualization of Nigeria as, not just a country but, a nation.

Furthermore, in order to facilitate the stance of this study, ethnic groups should more or less forget their differences, join forces together and achieve a wholesome nation by ensuring that indigenous languages spoken in any area where there are diverse languages and ethnicities are given prominence in the environment of their existence. This could be done when the schools (especially the pre-primary schools) in those areas use such prevalent indigenous languages as their medium of instruction. In this situation, a child from another ethnicity could find great pleasure to relate with the other child whose dialect/language he has learnt instead of acquiring low self-esteem which may give rise to envy, jealousy, hatred and vicious attacks. Therefore, the provision of

the policy, when properly supervised and implemented would have accomplished as well as engendered unity in diversity.

The Policy

The National Policy on Education documented the following in Section 2:

- (11) Early childhood/pre-primary education as referred to in these documents is the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten.
- (12) The responsibilities of government for pre-primary education shall be to promote the training of qualified pre-primary school teachers in adequate number, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, supervise and control the quality of such institutions and establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools.
- (13) The purpose of pre-primary education shall be to:
 - (a) effect a smooth transition from the home to the school;
 - (b) prepare the child for the primary level of education;
 - (c) provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc);
 - (d) inculcate social norms;
 - (e) inculcate in the child 'the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc;
 - (f) develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit;
 - (g) learn good habits; especially good health; and

- (h) teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, numbers, rough play.
- (14) **Government shall:-**
- (a) establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encourage both community/private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.
 - (b) make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood education;
 - (c) ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will:
 - (i) develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages, and
 - (ii) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages;
 - (d) ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this; regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education. To this end the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:25;
 - (e) set and monitor minimum standard for early childcare centres in the country; and
 - (f) ensure full participation of government, communities and teachers associations in the running and maintenance of Early childhood education facilities. (NPE, pp. 6–7)

The policy has helped to give light to the concept of kindergarten on paragraph (11) in Section 2 and has gone further to explain the responsibilities of government for the pre-primary education, otherwise known in this paper as the kindergarten and nursery school. It should be noted here that although government has

started establishing pre-primary sections in existing public schools, it is far from being achieved. There are more private owned pre-primary schools than government/public ones (as evident in this study). The private owned pre-primary schools are using the Montessori system of teaching, where the English language is given prominence, instead of the indigenous languages as provided in the NPE.

That there is a policy cannot be doubted; how can this policy be achieved? How do we go about implementing the policy that says it shall ensure that the medium of instruction shall be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community? The policy solicited for community as well as private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education without making due arrangement on how to supervise them, or building adequate curriculum to concretize the plan. Therefore, these agencies construct diverse kinds of curriculum, which hoist them to a competitive level where children who speak the best kind of the English language are raised.

Anyogo and Odey (2002) suggested that the English language should not continue to enjoy the high status and esteem it does today, since it is alien to us and foisted on us by the colonialists. Therefore, it follows that something must be done and urgently too to promote our own indigenous languages. They are equally of the strong opinion that a multilingual is a greater asset and that multilingualism is a unifying factor in nation building. They envisage that multilingualism should be a catalyst for language policy formulations in the future (p. 88). It is worthy to note here that what we have always had is National Policy on Education and not National Language Policy on Education. Nigeria will be saved a lot of difficulties if we begin the implementation of this policy from the pre-primary school stage.

Why the Kindergarten and Nursery Schools?

The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. This presupposes that a nation with a great percentage of its population as children between ages 0-12 has a future. The culture of a nation will die if such a nation fails to transfer its cultural heritage down to the younger generation. Duruaku (2001) has noted that:

It is estimated that several hundreds of cultures are dying out and in a few years, many more would join the growing rank of dead languages. Indeed, over four hundred and seventy-three languages are classified in the Ethnologue as nearly extinct. These are languages that ‘only a few elderly speakers are still living. (p. 4)

Consequently, an indigenous language can become extinct when the number of old people using it is very few with little or no young persons in possession of it.

Our fathers may have made the mistake; we too may have independently made similar mistake; but do we have to continue doing the same thing and expecting a different result? For this reason, we seek to make it right with our children in the early childhood/pre-primary stage. Some linguists such as Noam Chomsky, David Crystal, Jean Aitchison, and Jean Piaget, posited that the child should be taught their mother tongue or indigenous language from early childhood (between 0 – 6 years), when the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is at its most functional stage. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) agrees with this when it says in Section 2, paragraph 14(c) of the National Policy on Education concerning the early childhood/pre-primary education that Government shall “ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will: (i) develop the

orthography of many more Nigerian languages, and (ii) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.” (p. 7)

Therefore, it is pertinent to inculcate our values, cultures, and arts in our children starting from the early childhood stage, using our indigenous languages. The Bible has asked those who are stewards of children in Proverbs 26 verse 6 to “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is equally true of our rich cultural heritage which can be passed down through language. A community that has more elderly people than children will soon be wiped out of the surface of the earth; so also is a language spoken by more elderly people than the young ones.

This study concentrates on the early childhood for the above reasons. Children speak what they have learnt by imitation mostly from their immediate environment and then among themselves. As they grow, relationships are made stronger in groups that not only understand themselves, but also communicate in the same language and manner. Hence the adage, “birds of a feather conglomerate in the same vicinity”. An Itsekiri child whose immediate environment speaks Yoruba can pick Itsekiri from his home, Yoruba from his immediate environment, and learn Igbo and Hausa from school. By the end of the secondary school, this child can relate with the Itsekiri, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. There would therefore be no more fear of intimidation; the child becomes free to express himself anywhere around the country because of the intelligibility of the different languages at his/her disposal. The child will also be free to indulge in an inter-tribal marriage, which will foster a stronger relationship towards nation building.

The issue of nation building is something that has to begin as early in years as possible. Teaching nation building through

inculcation of the indigenous languages in the early childhood/pre-primary schools is therefore very appropriate.

A Study of Sampled Pre-primary Schools in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State

According to Social Infrastructure (2003), “there are 541 public primary schools and about ninety registered private nursery and primary schools.” From the above statistics, it is recorded that there are more public schools (though primary) than there are private and the like. But based on established pre-primary/nursery schools, there are more private/mission pre-primary schools than there are government/public pre-primary schools. This assertion is based on the investigation carried out by this research. Contrary to the number of public primary schools in Ekiti, the study was able to locate about five (5) government/public pre-primary schools in Ado-Ekiti and sampled the five of them. These include:

- LA Nursery/Primary School Okesa, Ado;
- Ekiti SUBEB Model Nursery and Primary School, Ado;
- Ado Grammar School, Poly Road, Ado;
- Community Nursery and Primary School, Ado;
- Olorunda Community Nursery and Primary School, Ado

Seven missionary pre-primary schools were also sampled and these include:

- Mission School, Ado;
- Shepherd Anglican Nursery and Primary School, Ado;
- St. Mary’s Catholic Nursery and Primary School, Ado;
- Methodist Nursery and Primary, Ado;
- Muslim Community Nursery and Primary School, Ajilosun, Ado;

- Christ Anointed Anglican Nursery and Primary School, Opopogboro Rd., Ado;
- Oluwatobi Muslim Nursery and Primary School, Ado

There is a proliferation of private pre-primary schools in Ado-Ekiti. Based on the study conducted in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, there are 60 private pre-primary schools, out of which 23 were randomly sampled. The ones selected include:

- Bravford Assda Group of School, Adebayo, Ado
- Fulfilled Children Nursery/Primary School, Ado
- Metropolitan International Group of Schools, Ado
- Golden Treasures Schools, Ado
- Rose Bud Nursery/Primary School, Oke-Ila, Ado
- Living Spring Group of School, Ado
- Precious Seed N/P School, Ado
- Kingdom Heritage Model School, Ado
- God's Will Nursery/Primary School, Ekute Quarters, Ado
- Academy Success Nursery & Primary School, Ilejemeje, Ado
- Gift and Faith International School, Ado
- Goldmark Model School, Adebayo, Ado
- New Model International Group of Schools, Ado
- Beautiful Beginning Integrated Ideal School, Ado
- Bright Foundation School, Ado
- Goodness & Mercy Academy Nursery School, Irewumi Quarters, Ado
- Delightful Oak, Adehun, Ado
- Blue Crest International School, Federal Housing Rd., Ado
- Palace Schools, Adebayo, Ado
- God's Covenant Nursery/Primary School, Oke-Ila, Ado
- Happyday Group of School, Adehun, Ado

- Glory Tabernacle, Adehun, Ado
- Petoa Group of Schools, Basiri, Ado

In 2012, Ekiti SUBEB Model School, one of the public sampled schools, emerged the best primary school in Nigeria. The school is comprised of both nursery and primary schools. This presupposes that even the nursery school had a fair share of what made the primary school the best in the whole nation. Ekiti State government, reporting says “SUBEB Model Nursery and Primary School, Ado-Ekiti has been rated the best primary school in the country.” This school, when investigated, was proud to show that they use Yoruba, one of Nigerian’s indigenous languages, as a medium of instruction. Despite this fact, they emerged the best. This shows that it is not the incessant use of the English language as a medium of instruction that produces the best school, especially at the pre-primary and primary school levels.

Although there are several public primary and secondary schools in this area, the government of the state has not considered the full implementation of the part of the policy that requires that “government shall establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools”, but instead has encouraged both missionary and private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education. This may be consequent on the fact that the environs of Ado-Ekiti is made up of people from different ethnicity and tribe, as it is the capital of Ekiti State and Ekiti is known for its abundant forestry (hence a business enterprise-prone area for wood dealers), and so most private/missionary schools resort to using the English language, instead of the indigenous language/language of the immediate environment, which is Yoruba, to lure parents into registering their wards in their schools. This however undermines the issue of indigenous language policy implementation in this area.

Below is a table representation of the sampling distribution based on the three categories of pre-primary schools in Ekiti State.

Table 1: Sampling Distribution

Categories of Pre-primary Schools	No. of Schools	Raw Scores	Percentage
Government/Public	5	5	14.3
Missionary	7	7	20
Private	60	23	65.7
TOTAL	72	35	100

A six-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the 3 categories of pre-primary schools. Results of the data analyzed are presented below. The three categories are divided into the following:

- Category A - Government/Public Pre-primary School
- Category B - Missionary Pre-primary School
- Category C - Private Pre-primary School

The data was analyzed based on the six-item questionnaire and percentage representation of the three categories of pre-primary schools.

Table 2: Percentage of Government/Public Pre-Primary Schools Responding to the Use of Indigenous Language as a Medium of Instruction and Factors Affecting Indigenous Language Policy Implementation

PROPOSITION	TRUE		FALSE	
	NO	%	NO	%
1. There is 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction	4	80	1	20
2. It is better to use 50% indigenous language and 50% other language as a medium of instruction	1	20	4	80

3. The use of indigenous languages alone as a medium of instruction slows pupils' rate of comprehension	1	20	4	80
4. It will be hard to achieve 100% implementation of policy in the State	5	100	0	0
5. Teachers in this school are professional in Child Education	3	60	2	40
6. Lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy	5	100	0	0

The table above shows that for item numbers 1, 4, 5, and 6, 80%, 100%, 60% and 100% of the government/public schools accept that they can achieve 100% success using indigenous language as a medium of instruction; it will be hard to achieve 100% implementation of policy in Ekiti; teachers in their schools are professionals in child education and lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy, while 20%, 0%, 40% and 0% government/public schools rated false such claims, respectively.

The result is that a majority of the government/public pre-primary schools accept that the presence of professional child educators can result in 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction, if external supervision is maintained. On the other hand, for each of item numbers 2 and 3, 20% of government/public pre-primary school accept that there should be equal distribution between the use of indigenous language and other languages as a medium of instruction and the use of indigenous language alone as a medium of instruction slows pupils' comprehension rate, while 80% rated false to such claims, respectively.

The result is that majority of the government/public pre-primary schools did not accept the proposition that there should be equal distribution in the use of indigenous and other languages and the use of indigenous language alone as a medium of instruction slows pupils' comprehension rate.

Table 3: Percentage of Missionary Pre-Primary Schools Responding to the Use of Indigenous Language as a Medium of Instruction and Factors Affecting Indigenous Language Policy Implementation

PROPOSITION	TRUE		FALSE	
	NO	%	NO	%
1. There is 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction	3	43	4	57
2. It is better to use 50% indigenous language and 50% other language as a medium of instruction	5	71.4	2	28.6
3. The use of indigenous languages alone as a medium of instruction slows pupils' rate of comprehension	5	71.4	2	28.6
4. It will be hard to achieve 100% implementation of policy in the State	6	85.7	1	14.3
5. Teachers in this school are professional in Child Education	3	43	4	57
6. Lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy	6	85.7	1	14.3

The table above shows that for item numbers 2, 3, 4, and 6, 71.4%, 71.4%, 85.7% and 85.7% of missionary schools accept that there should be equal distribution in the use of indigenous and other languages as a medium of instruction; the use of indigenous language alone slows pupils' rate of comprehension; it will be hard to achieve 100%

implementation of policy in Ekiti and lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy, while 28.6%, 28.6%, 14.3% and 14.3% did not accept the proposition, respectively.

The result is that more missionary pre-primary schools accept that lack of external supervision is a major factor why achieving 100% policy implementation in the state seems like an almost impossible task, while maintaining that they would not be able to adhere to a 100% use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction as it slows pupils' comprehension rate. On the other hand, for each of item numbers 1 and 5, 43% of missionary pre-primary schools accept that they can achieve 100% success using indigenous language as a medium of instruction and teachers in their schools are professionals in Child Education, while 57% of missionary school (for each of the items) rated false to the propositions, respectively.

The result is that majority of the mission schools did not accept that the presence of a professional child educator can result in 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction.

Table 4: Percentage of Private Pre-Primary Schools Responding to the Use of Indigenous Language as a Medium of Instruction and Factors Affecting Indigenous Language Policy Implementation

PROPOSITION	TRUE		FALSE	
	NO	%	NO	%
1. There is 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction	3	13	20	87
2. It is better to use 50% indigenous language and 50% other language as a medium of instruction	18	78.3	5	21.7
3. The use of indigenous languages alone as a medium of instruction slows pupils' rate of comprehension	18	78.3	5	21.7

4. It will be hard to achieve 100% implementation of policy in the State	15	65.2	8	34.8
5. Teachers in this school are professional in Child Education	10	43.5	14	56.5
6. Lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy	20	87	3	13

The table above shows that for item numbers 2, 3, 4, and 6, 78.3%, 78.3%, 65.2% and 87% of private pre-primary schools accept that there should be equal distribution in the use of indigenous and other languages as a medium of instruction; the use of indigenous language alone slows pupils' rate of comprehension; it will be hard to achieve 100% implementation of policy in Ekiti and lack of external supervision prohibits implementation of policy, while 21.7%, 21.7%, 34.8% and 13% did not accept the proposition, respectively. The result is that more missionary pre-primary schools accept that lack of external supervision is a major factor why achieving 100% policy implementation in the state seems like an almost impossible task, while maintaining that they would not be able to adhere to a 100% use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction as it slows pupils' comprehension rate.

On the other hand, for item numbers 1 and 5, 13% and 43.5% of private pre-primary schools accept that they can achieve 100% success using indigenous language as a medium of instruction and teachers in their schools are professionals in Child Education, while 87% and 56.5% of private pre-primary school did not accept the propositions, respectively. The result is that majority of the private schools did not accept that the presence of a professional child educator can result in 100% success with the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction.

The Challenges of Indigenous Language Policy Implementation in Nigerian Early Childhood/Pre-primary Schools

Nwagwu (2008) recognized the following as the challenges in the National Policy on Education: language to study, science and

technology, gender equity, professionalization of teaching, free compulsory UBE, free mass literacy and adult education, financing of education programmes, open and distance learning, special education, educational services provision, private participation, and quality assurance in education. (p. 442 – 444). It may be argued that most of the challenges listed above should have yielded positive results but Nwagwu identified the reasons why this is not so by further highlighting the challenges facing the implementation of the NPE in the education sectors starting from the primary to the tertiary institutions.

Of interest to this chapter are the challenges prevalent in the early childhood/pre-primary schools such as professionalization of teaching/teacher supply, private participation/proliferation of private schools and supervision.

Professionalization of Teaching/Teacher Supply:

This presupposes that most teachers in the early childhood/pre-primary schools do not take the job as a profession. Some of them are there because of the high unemployment rate, pending when they get a mouth-watering job.

Nwagwu (2008) has noted that “the issue of teacher supply and demand in the Nigerian education system is a complex one” (p. 447). Most trained teachers go into the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. This may be partly because the Education departments of our higher institutions hardly provide trainings for students towards the teaching profession in the early childhood/pre-primary schools. Although there is an aspect of education known as Child Education, most trained teachers under this area of specialization choose rather to be in the primary schools than the pre-primary schools. To this extent therefore there are insufficient supply of teachers, unavailability of qualified teachers and unprofessional teachers in both the government-owned/public and the private early childhood/pre-primary schools. Nwagwu (2008) is of the opinion that the:

Teaching profession has not been attracting many youths, especially in terms of high achievers dedicated to teaching as a

career. Secondly, it is capital intensive in that it is expensive to recruit, train and retain good teachers through attractive salaries and other conditions of service. Thirdly, states with acute shortage of teachers are reluctant to hire non-indigenes from other states, and when they employ them, the “foreign” teachers are subjected to all kinds of discrimination (FME 2004) (p. 447).

From Nwagwu’s point of view, high achieving youths are not dedicated to teaching as a career. Most schools recruit ‘already-made’ teachers to avoid extra expenses; hence we see criteria such as “applicants must have 10 years experience in the position they are applying for from a notable institution/organization”, when such schools advertise for teachers. Who are expected to train such teachers that they want to recruit, since they cannot do the training? If this is so prevalent in the “acceptable” areas (primary to tertiary institutions), what then is the fate of the “undesirable” pre-primary schools?

Concerning the issue of hiring non-indigenes from other states, it would require training such individuals to first learn the language of the community since the medium of instruction in the early childhood/pre-primary schools should be the mother tongue or indigenous language of the community. This may not be achievable considering other simpler issues befalling the system.

Private Participation/Proliferation of Private Schools:

According to Nwagwu (2008), “the policy has been welcomed and organizations and entrepreneurs have opened institutions at all levels, but there are concerns of quality and cost to parents” (p. 444). Most private kindergartens and nursery schools pay high tuition sufficient to cater for two sessions’ fees in the higher institutions. This is because the proprietors who are rather businessmen/women than educators are seeking for avenues to enrich their pockets more than providing quality education. It is worthy to note here that a good number of proprietors are not trained teachers.

Hence, people who are not passionate about educating these little ones, erect several kinds of building in the name of crèche/nursery schools. Again, we should be reminded that there are now more crèche/nursery schools springing up in the country than before. In Edo and Delta States alone, there are about 90 and 41 public pre-primary schools, respectively (Olubor, 2008, p. 168), not to mention the private pre-primary schools and then those in other states. Although the former is to the credit of the government, the latter leaves much to be desired with respect to supervision.

Supervision

The Federal Government of Nigeria promised through her education agency to ensure the supervision of both private and public pre-primary schools (Paragraph 12 of NPE) but the Government is far from achieving any positive result. This is supported by Olubor (2008) who maintained that “the inspectors in the Ministry of Education that have been involved in the supervision and inspection of private pre-primary schools ought to have ensured the provision of a basic facility like the curriculum” (p. 172). Olubor’s argument reveals government continued nonchalant attitude to the education sector. She laments that poor funding has continued to be the bane of public schools and it is quite unfortunate that this is being extended to young ones (2008, p. 173).

The private pre-primary schools have not been consistent in following the provisions in the National Policy on Education which stipulates that the medium of instruction in the early childhood/pre-primary schools should be the mother tongue of the child or the indigenous language of the immediate environment of the school. Most parents who can afford the cost send their wards to these private crèche/nursery schools (also referred to in this paper as kindergarten, nursery, early childhood, and pre-primary schools) in order to learn the ‘Queen’s English’ and not to be taught any indigenous languages. Because of fear of being the least patronized in this competition, other affordable private pre-primary institutions adopt the method of teaching their pupils using the Montessori education pattern. It is a shame that

even the teachers who use the English language as a medium for instructing these early pre-primary school pupils have no mastery of the language of instruction and therefore produce half-baked pupils who suffer from a case of linguistic anomie. These are cases of non-implementation of the already enacted National Policy on Education. Consequently, our indigenous languages gradually go into extinction and we face the horror of building our nation on a culture and language alien to us.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals the following findings. It was found that a good percentage from all the categories (A-C) accepts the proposition in item numbers 4 and 6. While there is a high level of unacceptability of item numbers 1 and 5 among categories B and C, there is also a high level of acceptability of item numbers 2 and 3 among the said categories. On the other hand, while there is a high level of acceptability of item numbers 1 and 5 in category A, there is also a high level of unacceptability of item numbers 2 and 3 in the said category.

From the findings, both mission and private pre-primary schools are not in support of 100% use and implementation of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. They believe that a 50 – 50 distribution would do them more good than harm. They are of the opinion that the use of indigenous languages alone as a medium of instruction can slow pupils' rate of comprehension in the metropolis, since Ado-Ekiti is an entrepreneurial city. They also strongly believe that achieving 100% implementation of the language policy will be a hard nut to crack as most of the pre-primary school teachers are not professional child educators. But the situation is redeemable if there is constant external supervision that promotes the implementation of the policy.

It is worthy to note that, since the school that won the best nursery and primary school award in the country (2012) came from one of the schools that believe in the implementation and use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction, implementation of indigenous

languages as a medium of instruction in the pre-primary schools in Ado-Ekiti in particular and Nigeria in general will help inculcate more values and standards, which will elevate the face-value of any pre-primary school instead of ruin its educational quality and standard.

Conclusion

An indigenous language is defined in the web dictionary as “a language that originated in a specified place and was not brought to that place from elsewhere. It is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people.” (Wikipedia and vocabulary.com) Although Nigeria has well over 400 indigenous languages, most of her indigenous languages are being spoken by very few elders and a handful of younger adults. Because of this, those languages are said to be going into extinction. The language spoken in the stead of our indigenous languages is the English language, which has become the *de facto* language. We have indeed seen that language can be a tool that fosters nation building. Nation building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run.

For us to build our nation, we do not need a foreign language. We cannot express our numerous rich cultural heritages in the English language and our language is our identity. When we talk about building Nigeria as a nation, we do not need foreigners to do that; we do not need English to build Nigeria. Hence, we fall back to our indigenous languages. Relationships become stronger when we understand one another. When someone from another ethnicity and with a different language can communicate with another from an entirely different background using a common language, a close kind of relationship is built. This gives way to trust and subsequent friendship. Now, if an Igbo man can speak Hausa very well, he does not struggle with relating with an Hausa man. The same is applicable to a Yoruba man who can speak Igbo. This does not stop the Igbo man or the Yoruba man from being

fluent in their indigenous languages. Consequently, the Igbo man as well as the Yoruba man is already a bilingual, free to interact and build strong relationship with each other.

Let us suppose that Nigeria is a nation of three indigenous languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba). The Igbo can learn Hausa and Yoruba; the Hausa learns Yoruba and Igbo, while the Yoruba learns Hausa and Igbo. With this scenario, communication is made easy and relationship, smooth. There is usually peaceful co-existence experienced and a sense of brotherhood and belonging attached to it. No one feels cheated and therefore irritated to the point of violence. Then we would realize that we must do something to grow from one level to another. Instead of competing with one another for supremacy or prominence, we join hands together to defeat the outside world. This is when our nation takes form and is built.

This can be achieved with a laid down rule which guides all and sundry. This laid down rule can come in the form of a policy, which should be implemented. Hence it could be said that policy implementation is the stage where the government executes an adopted policy and it usually occurs after a bill becomes law. It involves translating the goals and objectives of a policy into action in an on-going program. At the policy implementation stage, the stipulations of that policy must be put into action, administered and enforced to bring about the desired change sought by the policy-makers. DeGross and Cargo (2014) agreed that “in general, policy implementation can be considered the process of carrying out a government decision.” (p. 49). That is why such policy as the one mentioned below has been formulated for onward implementation.

- 10(a) Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one

of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. (NPE, p. 5)

The policy here advocates that as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment in addition to one of the three (3) major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in the interest of national unity. It is good to formulate such policy but it is best to implement it. If I am Igbo and the language of my immediate environment is Igbo and I learn Igbo in the interest of national unity, how do I communicate with an Urhobo man that knows Urhobo and Yoruba only? After all, both of us have learned one of the 3 major Nigerian languages for the interest of national unity. So, Graddol in Adamu (2010), Anyogo and Odey (2002) agreed that a multilingual is an asset.

We cannot build a nation by going our separate ways and forming solidarity to our diverse ethnicity. It is rightly said that unity is strength. Let us therefore revisit our National Policy on Education or institute another policy known as the National Language Policy on Education, which makes a provision where a child learns two of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, in addition to the child's mother tongue and the language of the immediate environment. The one who learns Igbo and Hausa meets the one who learns Yoruba and Hausa and both are able to communicate on the common ground of Hausa and vice versa. Two of the three major languages are learned together with one's own indigenous language to avoid the issue of minority – so that one is represented well anywhere in the country.

According to Orjime (2002), many people, including our leaders ignore the role of language in all human interaction and as a consequence risk healthy relationships. (p. 64). The knowledge that one can be understood within the country using any of the indigenous languages in one's possession makes it easier to interact with other indigenous speakers and consequently learn one another's culture. Following this fact, this chapter recommends that a National Language Policy on Education be put in place, vis-a-vis the indigenous language usage stated

in the policy. A language policy because this unity is made possible via language; and on education because it is the vehicle through which knowledge is transmitted from one individual to another. It further recommends that wherever a child is from, in addition to learning the mother tongue, the child should learn the language of the environment and any two of the national languages; and that government should endeavour to implement this language policy on education in the early childhood schools as it will help foster an early sense of belonging and national identity.

It suffices here to say that teaching different indigenous languages prevalent in Nigeria would not be out of place if it starts from the early childhood schools. By the time the child is out from the secondary school, s/he must have had a good command of at least three indigenous languages. This can foster inter-marriage; hence a stronger relationship is initiated towards nation building. At this juncture, we begin to relate as one people, with one purpose – to build a nation of different people, with different languages, who are altogether united in diversity.

With this in mind, the study suggests by way of recommendation that constant external supervision of policy implementation and use be put in place to check and enforce the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction in the pre-primary level of education in Ado-Ekiti in particular and Nigeria in general. This study further recommends that similar study be done in other metropolis in Ekiti and other states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to ensure adequate enforcement of the provision made for indigenous language in the National Policy on Education.

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