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EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN LOWER PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines and evaluates the implementation of the pronouncement of the Nigerian government on the use of mother tongue (Yoruba to be specific) in lower primary schools. The study employ is a descriptive research method. The study population was primary 1-3 teachers in public primary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select twelve (12) public primary schools with questionnaire given to 3 teachers in each arm of the schools. The questionnaire was styled, "Teacher Questionnaire on Implementation of Language Policy" (T.Q.I.L.P). Research questions were analysed in accordance with the sequential arrangement of questions in the questionnaire with the drawn table featuring the statistical data while analysis of the same data is given thereafter in form of an exposition. On the basis of findings, it was realized that the policy on the use of mother tongue (Yoruba) exists on paper and it is not taken seriously by educational practitioners. For effective implementation, this study recommended that: the government and the policy makers should fully revise the language policy component with a view of correcting the inherent loopholes in it; the production of textbooks, readers, and other literary materials should be attended to by the stakeholders in education industry; the training of teachers in the use of the mother tongue (Yoruba) should be given priority by the government; each Local Government Authority should saddle its supervisory unit with the responsibility of ensuring adequate monitoring of the implementation of the language policy at the basic levels.

Keywords: Evaluation, Implementation, Policy, Language, Mother Tongue.

Introduction

Education is considered the easiest and safest way of bringing about development in any country and this is the reason why countries and organizations, the world over, emphasize and encourage education at all levels in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations had in 2000, set up eight goals for all member-nations to achieve in order to have all-round development by the year 2015 and one of these goals is to achieve universal primary education. This goal is tagged "Education for All" (EFA).

The MDG goal of Education for All reveals the importance that the United Nations, and by extension, its other organ like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) places on primary education among its member countries. It is the education given in institutions for children aged six to eleven years plus. The rest of the education system is built upon it hence, it is the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system. The programme spans six years in Nigeria.

Primary education in Nigeria, according to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013), has as its goal, among others, the 'inclusion of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively; to lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity'. These goals are undoubtedly laudable and will advance the country scientifically and technologi-

cally but scholars have observed that if these goals are to be achieved, it is only possible through the use of the mother-tongue or language of the immediate environment of the child (Fafunwa, Macauley and Sokoya, 1989; Bamgbose, 1986, Awoniyi, 1980; Owolabi, 2007; Adeyinka 2010, 2014).

The National Policy on Education (2013) in Nigeria actually recognises the importance of the mother-tongue in primary education hence, in Section Two, it expressly states that "the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject". Many studies have been carried out in many countries to establish the fact that primary education programs that begin in the mother-tongue help learners gain literacy and numeracy skills more quickly (Summer Institute of Linguistics, n.d.) and that "only those countries where the students' first language is the language of instruction are likely to achieve the goals of EFA"

Again, in Nigeria, the body saddled with the running of primary education is the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). This body collaborates with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to develop school curriculum. A nine-year Basic Education Curriculum was developed by NERDC in 2006 following a directive by the National Council on Education (NCE) for effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in Nigeria. Implementation begun nationwide in September 2008 with primary one and junior secondary school one classes whilst the old curricu-

lum was being systematically phased out in subsequent years. The three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo) recognized by the 1999 Constitution and NPE (2013) are to be used as medium of instruction in lower primary in each of the areas and this study sets out to evaluate the implementation of the language policy in the NPE in lower primary education in selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The Nigerian language policy for primary education recognizes the importance of both the mother tongue and English. It recognizes the appropriateness of the mother tongue to childhood, requiring English to assist the mother tongues at a later stage in the primary school when it believes the resources of the mother tongues may not be sophisticated enough for the expression of concepts and for teaching other subjects (Akindele and Adegbite, 2005). The policy states thus:

...the medium of instruction in the Primary School shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject; from the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects.

Effective language planning is crucial to the success of primary education in a multi-lingual setting in which the language of the home or the mother tongue is quite often different from the school's mother tongue and English are observed to be uncoordinated thereby resulting in a serious medium transition problem (Olaoye 2007). A critical look at the policy statement reveals that the policy does not state precisely when and how at the latter stage the medium of instruction should change from mother tongue to English. At present, it is difficult to pinpoint the medium of instruction at the primary school level.

The transition from the mother tongue to English which is effected in primary four (4) is too abrupt as the pupils are not likely to be sufficiently prepared for the change. The transition might also affect all other subjects on the school curriculum. Olaoye (2007) submits that the pupils are likely to be handicapped because their level of proficiency in English in primary four (4) is such that cannot help them benefit from lessons, all taught in English. Subjects which involve the teaching of many concepts would be difficult to teach in pure English. Olaoye (2007) therefore observes that the situation can be best described as double tragedy in the sense that pupils are

not likely to be well grounded in their mother tongue by the time they change to English language as a medium of instruction nor are they sufficiently knowledgeable or literate in English to enjoy lessons in such areas as sciences taught in English.

Also, the policy does not state specifically the status of mother tongue and English in the curriculum. For instance, while the mother tongue and English are recognized as media of instruction, they are not identified as subjects in the curriculum, hence; mother tongue is not given a peculiar role in the implementation of the curriculum content. Nothing is also said about the other indigenous languages (that is local L2) which pupils ought to begin to learn in the primary school rather than in the secondary school although, it is stated in the policy that the local L2 (as subject) should begin at this level. The 2004, 4th Edition, of the National Policy on Education states:

In addition, appreciating the importance of a language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than their own mother tongue. In the connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (NPE Para 8).

From the above, we could see that the policy states clearly the three major languages which are considered as local L2 but does not state precisely when the local L2 could be introduced and how the child could be motivated or encouraged to learn the local L2.

Despite the pronouncement of the *National Policy on Education* on the usefulness of mother tongue to a bilingual child in the formative stage of life by which his/her attitudes and aptitudes are best developed, it is disheartening that the language policy in the lower primary education has not been properly implemented. Scholars have attributed the improper implementation of the policy to four (4) main factors:

1. **Resource-related factors:** These deal with the human and material resources. The factor is related to lack of qualified or trained teachers in the Nigerian languages and poor incentives for the few available teachers of the languages (Adeyinka, 2010)
2. **Attitudinal factors:** This relates to the attitude of people towards the Nigerian languages. The fact that English language and other foreign

languages enjoy more prestige than the indigenous languages and the negative attitude of most elite parents towards the indigenous languages have affected the proper implementation of the policy (Arohunmolase, 2004)

3. **Legislative/Policy-related factors:** This relates to the problem of the language policy itself coupled with the adoption of English as the language of government in Nigeria. The policy is not also well monitored for proper implementation (Emenanjo, 1998, 2004; Owolabi, 2007)
4. **Orthography-related factors:** The fact that most Nigerian languages do not have a standard orthography and the lack of enough literature in most Nigerian languages hinder the sufficiency of the language as a medium of instruction (Emenanjo, 2004)

Having observed that the language policy contained in the National Policy on Education is not well implemented because of the stated factors and others not mentioned, it is needful to evaluate the implementation of the policy at the lower primary level of education in Ibadan.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that relates to this study is Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The theory stresses the importance of cognition, behaviour, and environment in determining personality. According to Bandura, lasting changes in persons occur within the processes of maturation and learning, or a combination of the two. Maturation is a developmental process within which a person from time to time manifests traits whose "blueprints" have been carried in the person's cells from the time of conception. Learning, in contrast with maturation, is an enduring change in a living individual that is not heralded by genetic inheritance. It may be considered a change in insight, behaviour, perception, motivation, or a combination of these. Learning always involves a systematic change in behaviour or behavioural disposition that occurs as a consequence of experience in some specified situation.

When we learn, we often cognitively, represent or transform our experiences. Bandura (1977) described cognitive learning theory as the theory that involves behaviour, person and environment. Behaviour influences cognition and vice versa; the person's cognition activities influence the environment; environmental experiences change the person's thought; and so on. Bandura (1986, 1997) believes that an important person factor in learning is self-efficacy, the expectation that one can master a situation and produce positive outcomes. Self-efficacy

involves people's success in solving problems. Bandura's use of "social" in his social cognitive theory implies that behaviour, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental influences operate interactively as determinants of each other. His use of cognitive implies that cognition is central knowing process in learning procedures. His theory therefore centres upon how people gain understandings of themselves and their environments and how they act in relation to those understandings.

It should be noted that since education promotes cognitive development and language is used to achieve effective communication in teaching-learning situation, the language of instruction between teachers and learners must be a familiar language which learners can understand (Leung 1998). The chances of learners achieving better results in class due to the use of a familiar medium of communication are higher compared to when a language unfamiliar to the learners is used in class. This is because the medium of instruction in the class is a significant tool in learning. For this reason, Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning theory is of great importance to this study. The fact that the theory lays strong emphasis on the influence of the immediate environment of the learners on their cognitive development shows that the use of the language of the immediate environment of the learners as a medium of instruction will, to a great extent, aid learning. In Nigeria, the languages of the immediate environment of learners in most cases are the indigenous languages of the learners. According to this theory and the stipulation of the National Policy on Education, pupils' cognition will develop faster if they are taught with their indigenous languages at the early stage of their schooling. There will be no dichotomy between the learning in the classroom and what they experience daily in their immediate environment.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study aims at providing answers to the following questions;

1. Are teachers at the Lower Basic Schools aware of the mother-tongue-medium policy as entrenched in the National Policy on Education?
2. Do teachers use the mother tongue (Yoruba) as a medium of instruction?
3. Do Lower Basic School teachers teach all subjects in Yoruba?
4. What are the problems that teachers face in using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction?

Methodology

Research design: A descriptive research method was employed in this study. The method provided the researcher with the picture of the implementation of the language policy in primary schools. It helped to

justify the current practice and make a valuable judgement.

Population of the study: Primary 1-3 teachers of Nigerian public primary schools form the population of this study. For convenience, the researcher made use of the primary 1-3 teachers in public primary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: Twelve (12) public primary schools were randomly selected and sampled out of seventy-four (74) of its type that exists in Ibadan North Local Government. Five (5) of the twelve (12) schools selected have one arm each, four (4) schools have two arms each while the other three (3) schools have three arms each. In each of the arms of the schools, three (3) teachers were sampled by using simple random sampling technique. Thus, sixty-six (66) public primary school teachers were sampled for this study.

Research Instrument: A questionnaire styled; Teacher Questionnaire on Implementation of Language Policy (T.Q.I.L.P) was designed for this study. The questionnaire contains two sections, A and B. Section A contained information about the respondents while section B contained twenty (20) items that seek information on the language of instruction of teachers in the classroom. The options to the items are "Yes" or "No".

Validity and Reliability of the instrument: The instrument was given to curriculum planners and experts in education for face and content validity. Modifications were made and in order to test its reliability, it was administered on ten Lower Basic School teachers in two schools outside the area of this study and a reliability index 0.86 was obtained, using Cronbach Alpha.

Procedure for Data Collection: The researcher visited the sampled respondents personally and administered the instrument. The administration and collection of the instrument lasted four weeks.

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected from the respondents were collated. Thereafter, simple percentage method was employed to analyse the data in relation to the earlier generated research questions.

Results and Discussion of Findings

This aspect of the research work concentrates on the presentation and analysis of the data gathered. All the 66 respondents used for this study responded thus giving a 100 percent response for data analysis.

Research Question 1: Are teachers at the Lower Basic Schools aware of the mother-tongue medium policy as entrenched in the National Policy on Education?

Table 1: Awareness of the National Policy on Education

S/N	ITEMS	Number of YES	Number of NO	Total
1	Have you heard about the National Policy on Education?	66 (100%)	- (0%)	100
2	Are you aware of the language policy in the document?	66 (100%)	- (0%)	100
3	Are you aware of the policy of the use of the mother tongue in lower primary education?	66 (100%)	- (0%)	100

Table 1 shows that all 66 (100%) respondents have heard about the National Policy on Education. They are also all aware of the language policy in the document and aware of the use of mother tongue as a

medium of instruction in the lower primary education level.

Research Question 2: Do teachers use the mother tongue (Yoruba) as a medium of instruction?

Table 2: The Use of Mother-Tongue as a Medium of Instruction

S/N	ITEMS	Number of YES	Number of NO	Total
6	I feel comfortable teaching all subjects in Yoruba than English.	13 (19.7%)	53 (80.3%)	100
7	My pupils contribute well in classroom when I teach in Yoruba than English.	61 (92.4%)	05 (7.6%)	100
12	My pupils speak Yoruba fluently during teaching and learning.	43 (65.2%)	23 (34.8%)	100
14	My pupils express themselves better in Yoruba language during teaching and learning activities.	63 (95.5%)	03 (4.5%)	100
16	I encourage my pupils to interact in the mother tongue during classroom activities.	41 (62.1%)	25 (37.9%)	100
20	I speak Yoruba language fluently.	48 (72.7%)	18 (27.3%)	100

From the data distribution shown in Table 2, it could be submitted that only 19.7% (13 respondents) of the whole 66 respondents teach all subjects in Yoruba than English while 80.3% (53 respondents) of the respondents do not. It could therefore be affirmed that majority of teachers at the lower level teaching all subjects in English because they feel comfortable using English than Yoruba which is the language of the immediate environment. This should be noted as one of the factors discouraging the proper implementation of the National policy on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the lower primary education. Item seven shows that 92.4% (61 respondents) of the respondents established that pupils contribute well in the classroom when taught in Yoruba than English while only 7.6% (5 respondents) of the respondents held an opposite view on the subject matter. The inference can thus be made that pupils contribute well in the classroom when they are taught in Yoruba language than English language. The statistics given in item twelve shows that 65.2% (43 respondents) of the respondents approved the fact that pupils speak Yoruba fluently during teaching and learning while 34.8% (23 respondents) of the respondents disapproved of this. It could be inferred from this result that most of the pupils of the respondents speak Yoruba fluently in the teaching-learning process because Yoruba is their indigenous language. The data distribution in item 14 reveals that 95.5% (63 respondents) of the

respondents upheld that pupils express themselves better in Yoruba language during teaching and learning activities while 4.5% (3 respondents) of the respondents did not. This shows that virtually all pupils of the respondents are able to express themselves better in Yoruba Language during teaching and learning activities, because the language is their mother tongue. The statistical data shown in item 16 substantiate the fact that 62.1% (41 respondents), which is two-third of the respondents encourage their pupils to use Yoruba to interact during classroom activities while 37.9% (25 respondents) of the respondents do not. By variation, it could be further explained that encouraging pupils to use the mother tongue to interact during classroom activities enable them to participate fully in teaching-learning process. Item 20 shows that 72.7% (48 respondents) of the respondents upheld that they speak Yoruba fluently while only 27.3% (18 respondents) of the respondents held a contrary view. Considering the two phenomena, it could therefore be stated that most teachers teaching the lower primary education pupils speak Yoruba language fluently. This is another encouraging and determining factor for the implementation of the National policy on the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Research Question 3: Do Lower Basic School teachers teach all subjects in Yoruba?

Table 3: The use of Yoruba to teach all subjects

S/N	ITEMS	Number of YES	Number of NO	Total
3	I teach all subjects in Yoruba.	08 (12.1%)	58 (87.9%)	100
13	I mix English with Yoruba during lesson delivery.	66 (100%)	- (0%)	100
15	I use Yoruba as a medium of instruction in teaching English language.	14 (21.2%)	52 (78.8%)	100
19	Pupils' examination questions in all subjects are set in Yoruba language.	- (0%)	66 (100%)	100

The statistics given in Table 3 shows that 12.1% (08 respondents) of the respondents teach all subjects in Yoruba while 87.9% (58 respondents) do not. It could therefore be said that all subjects are not taught in Yoruba in the lower primary education level. Item 13 shows that all 66 respondents (100%) submitted that they mix English with Yoruba during teaching activities. One can therefore affirm from this result that teachers use code alternation in order to aid better understanding of the learners because they believed mother tongue facilitates pupils' understanding of core subjects. Item 15 reveals that 21.2% (14 respondents) of the respondents submitted that they make use of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in teaching English Language while 78.8% (52 re-

spondents) of the respondents did not. The result of this item 15 shows that just few of the respondents make use of Yoruba Language in teaching English Language. Having understood this subject matter in relation to the views of respondents, one can further submit that Yoruba Language as a medium of instruction in teaching English Language cannot be employed. Considering the result of item 19, it could be said that the examination questions of pupils in lower primary education level are not set in Yoruba Language. This is because the whole 66 respondents of this study responded "No" to the item.

Research Question 4: What are the problems that teachers face in using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction?

Table 4: Problems faced by teachers in using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

S/N	ITEMS	Number of YES	Number of NO	Total
5	I feel comfortable teaching all subjects in English than Yoruba.	49 (74.2%)	17 (25.8%)	100
8	There are enough text books and teaching aids to teach all subjects in Yoruba.	13 (19.7%)	53 (80.3%)	100
18	Pupils' textbooks on all subjects are written in Yoruba Language.	- (0%)	66 (100%)	100

From Table 4, item 5 shows that 74.2% (49 respondents) of the respondents affirmed that they feel comfortable teaching all subjects in English than Yoruba while just 25.8% (17 respondents) of the respondents had a contrary opinion. This constitutes one of the problems facing the implementation of the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The statistics given in item 8 reveals that 19.7% (13 respondents) of the respondents were of the opinion that there are enough textbooks and teaching aids to teach all subjects in Yoruba while 80.3% (53 respondents) of the respondents submitted a contrary opinion. Having examined the result of this item, it could therefore be said that textbooks and teaching aids are not enough. This also is a major problem facing teachers in using mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Item 18 establishes that the whole 66 respondents of this study accepted that pupils' textbooks on all subjects are not written in Yoruba Language. Invariably, in the lower primary education level, pupils' textbooks in all subjects except Yoruba Language are written in English Language. This makes it greatly impossible for teachers to implement properly the policy on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Recommendation

Having discovered through the findings of this study that the policy on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the lower primary education level is poorly implemented, for effective implementation, it is hereby recommended that:

1. Government and policy makers should fully revise the language policy component with a view to correcting the inherent loopholes in it. For instance, implementation strategies need to be clearly spelled out in the policy for its consumers to be able to implement it properly. In the same direction, all ambiguous, controversial and escape statement or terms should be removed.
2. The production of textbooks, readers, and other literacy materials should be attended to by all stakeholders in the education industry. Government should take workable steps to encourage experts in Yoruba to produce worthy textbooks for teaching in lower primary schools. In the same vein, government should embark on project in which all subjects in lower primary school will be written in Yoruba Language.

3. The training of teachers in the use of the mother tongue (Yoruba) should be given priority by the government. Therefore, seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized for the lower primary schools teachers and head teachers, with a view of educating them on how best they can implement the policy.
4. Each Local Government Authority should saddle its supervisory unit with the responsibility of ensuring adequate monitoring of the implementation of the language policy at the basic level.
5. Educational linguists need to work out the following modalities before the policy can be implemented:
 - a. The need to specify and justify the levels at which the media of instruction (mother tongue and English) will be adopted.
 - b. The need to establish and identify the sequential relationship between the mother tongue and the English language in such a way that early learning of first language (L1) skills will facilitate the later acquisition of second language (L2) literacy skills
 - c. Provision of principal guidelines for the choice of the language to be used for mother tongue education in a geopolitical zone with a diversity of mother tongues, to ensure that the issue is not abused and as a result undermining the desired goal of national unity and national integration through the learning of major national languages as envisioned by the policy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of the language policy in the lower primary education in selected primary schools in Ibadan North Local Government. Having subjected the responses of the 66 respondents of this study to critical evaluation, it could be said that the policy on the use of mother tongue is poorly implemented. This is due to several factors (both human and material) as seen in this study. Despite the poor status of the implementation, one can still commend the teachers of the lower primary schools. This is because efforts were made by most of them to implement the policy but unavailability of resources incapacitated them. One can therefore say that the policy is being implemented to a certain extent. It is realized that the policy only exists on paper and it is not taken seriously by the educational

practitioners. The research, therefore concludes that through effective education and enlightenment of the people, the country will readily accept the policy and our educational system will be worthy of emulation throughout the whole world.

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