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Languages of Education in Nigeria: Extent of Implementation in the (UBE) Schools in Ebonyi State

Adaobi F. Okonkwo *

Ebonyi State University, NIGERIA

Abstract: The study focused on languages of education in Nigeria and extent of implementation in the (UBE) Schools in Ebonyi State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study constituted all the Universal Basic Education teachers in the 13 LGA of the State. A sample study of 555 respondents was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique which reflected teachers in the urban and the rural schools. The instrument used was questionnaire which was validated and trial tested for reliability and a value of 0.84 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t- test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significant. Findings showed that languages in education were implemented to a low extent and that extent of materials that enhance languages' effective implementation were made available to a low extent which were more experienced in schools in rural areas. It was recommended that teachers should embrace stipulations of the Government based on the National Policy on Education and that the government should embark on training and retraining of teachers on different languages in Nigerian Education and provide other resources for effective language implementation.

Keywords: *Languages in Nigeria education, universal basic education, national policy on education, English language, indigenous languages, implementation.*

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Introduction

Language is a weapon for any country's development. Education in Nigeria is an instrument "per excellent" which is meant for effective national development. The philosophy of education in Nigeria is to achieve the five main national objectives of education in Nigeria which are; a just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE,2004). These objectives cannot be realized without language(s). This is because it is the vehicle of communication through which thoughts ideas, beliefs, knowledge and information can be inculcated. The importance and the role language would play in the national development of the country was long observed. The English language was given an official status in Nigeria. The Government also showed interest in the 19th Century in the codification and develop of orthographies for local languages in the country The Government provisions in the National Policy on Education (1970) based on languages were as follow;

- Mother tongue (MT)
- Language of immediate Community (LIC)
- Major Nigerian Languages(MNL) (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba)
- English and foreign languages (Arabic and French)

The functions as identified by Akere (2005) were that Mother tongue and Language of Immediate Community be used in the Lower Basic Education Schools in Nigeria as a medium of instruction. While English should be taught as a subject in the Lower Basic 1-6 but in the Upper Basic One, English should serve as a medium of instruction, the MNL, Arabic and French should be taught as a subject.

*** Correspondence:**

Adaobi F. Okonkwo, Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki, NIGERIA

✉ addyfidel@gmail.com

These language provisions were first drawn in 1977 and subsequently were made strong by 1979 Constitution and Political Bureau Report in 1987. Languages of Education in respect of the three major Nigerian Languages as contained in Akere (2005:185) include: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba and the Government's stipulations on the languages were as follow;

- Should be adopted as national languages and taught in all the Universal Basic and secondary Education schools
- Government should provide special incentive for teachers trained in these languages to remain in the teaching profession
- Government should take note of the demand for graduates in these languages by professions other than teaching and therefore positively encourage all Universities, Colleges to expand enrolment in their Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba classes.

Still in 2008 article 10, the Government stated the importance of languages as:

The Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, preserving cultures. Thus every child should learn the language of immediate environment. Furthermore in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall require to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Again the Federal Government (2015) included that:

For smooth interaction with our neighbors, it is desirable that every Nigerian speak French. Accordingly, French shall be Compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but non vocational elective at the Senior Secondary Schools.

The English Language and her Role in Nigeria

The English Language began to spread in the 16th Century with the British Empire and was strongly enforced in the World in the 20th Century by the United States of America's economic, political and military domination of the rest of the World as well as the Pervasive influence of its movies Torres in (Okonkwo, 2014). The English Language occupies a unique place in Nigerian Education System because of its significant role and status in the country's national life. English is important in Nigeria because it has become over the years, official language, business and a vital link between various ethnic groups in the country. It is pedagogically important as the language of instruction in virtually the entire school system in Nigeria. Aliyu (2004) expresses that the English enjoys a lot of prestige as language over an above other languages in Nigeria big or small. The language is also taught as a subject in all levels of education and has become mandatory for transition from primary to junior secondary and senior secondary schools and for admission into the Universities and all levels of higher education in the country. Besides, being the language of commerce and industry, admission and political affairs, it provides one an opportunity for a better job.

Indigenous Languages and the English Language

A question to put through is, considering the importance of the English and its position in Nigeria, would the indigenous languages make any head way in educational delivery in the country? Gusau (2016) states that the potentials of the indigenous languages have never been exploited for broad based mass literacy and knowledge acculturation. He maintained that there is need for provocative approach to the issue of development which must involve a sound linguistic policy that sees the utilization of indigenous languages as language of instruction in our schools. The above view definitely seems to show that the Federal Government is yet to fulfill and play her part which she promised in the National Policy on Education concerning languages by training and retraining of teachers of these languages, providing them with incentives which will make them remain in service as language professionals as well as provision of facilities and instructional materials for effective language implementation.

The denial of linguistic element in the acquisition of modern knowledge, science, arts, civics and other field of studies especially in the Primary and the Secondary Schools seems to be dragging the World Global Development backward in Nigeria. The potentials of indigenous languages must be accepted for domestication of knowledge and broad based grass root reach as against narrowing it to English language (Gusau, 2016). Although the English language seems to be accepted by the Nigerian populace especially in Ebonyi State, in most schools, English language is not taught or is taught anyhow. Experience in the State seems to show that because of shortage of qualified English language teachers, teachers who are not specialist in the English language teach it in the Junior and the Senior Secondary Schools. Material resources such as English language textbooks also seem to be in short supply and most students in the public secondary schools are unable to purchase the texts. Evidence is seen as more than ten students cluster around one text book in a reading class and this is mostly found in the rural areas (Okonkwo, 2013). The probable poor translation of the NPE on languages into action cannot help effective implementation of the English language in these schools. These poor implementation in the Senior Secondary Schools may have been responsible for students' poor performances. Students' poor performances in languages have been lamented by West African Senior School Certificate Chief Examiner's report

2010-2014. The reports state that students' performances continue to be poor and the area worst hit is test in the skill of writing, students do not obey the conventions of writing. There are errors in spelling, poor punctuations, loose sentences, poor grammar and tense usage, vocabulary usage and poor concord etc. were observed in students' written essays.

Jowitt (2005), notes that most schools adopt cluster to promote the learning of indigenous languages. However Ugal (2011) affirms that there were no government guidelines for implementation of the mother tongue language policy and further declares that curriculum materials were not supplied in schools which made implementation of the language policy difficult. The prevailing condition of poor resource materials in the Universal Basic Education Schools seems to hinder effective implementation of languages in schools. For example, Gbamgbose (2005) declares that curriculum materials such as inadequate number of qualified teachers in languages, poor classroom conditions, absence of language laboratory, radio, television, absence of standard libraries in schools, poor power supply, shortage of current language textbooks, charts, flannel and bill board were not supplied in schools and this no doubt hinder effective language implementation.

Ezemma (2004), Chukwu (2007) and Ughammadu and Okaforcha (2012) state that resources that enhance implementation of languages in Education were at variance in urban and rural areas and point out that some schools in the rural areas experience poor staffing and that specialized language teachers were lacking in schools. Also, the scholars note that the number of students taught English language was not matched with corresponding number of teachers, and in most cases students were not taught or were not taught by teachers with requisite qualifications. Poor funding, lack of training and retraining of teachers of languages are mostly experienced in the rural areas. Most often fund mapped out for certain projects are diverted for some other things unrelated to education (Gusau, 2016). Also training and re-training of teachers were often not done but even when such opportunities were given to teachers, some head teachers most often only included their relatives, their town's people or their friends disregarding those they call the non-indigene even when such teachers may have come from the same state probable because of the very meager token snack stipends that were paid to participants. This might be why Anikweze (2011) explains that education should serve as a vehicle for enthroning culture of reforms and so prescribed the training and retraining of teachers in comprehensive approaches. However, the Head teachers forgot that all the teachers in the school whether indigene or non-indigene are teachers and they aspire for one goal which is effective education delivery while those who do not benefit from the training and retraining exercise, the effect would be that the pupil become recipient of the effect of poor pedagogy. Eluwa and Akanwa (2013) and Adu and Olaita (2007) point out that Nigeria educational system has suffered some setbacks in terms of adequate qualified teachers. Teachers' knowledge of the subject matter they teach has attracted increasing attention from research scholars and policy makers over the years (Akinsolu, 2010). Adequate training and retraining of teachers especially in languages in education in Nigeria no doubt would enhance effective language implementation in schools.

Fafunwa (1983), points out that vocabulary, speech and grammar compound difficulties in language learning. This no doubt would be made easier to learn with the complement of electronic devices, radio, computer, television and noted that these were conspicuously absent in most schools especially in the rural areas. Ibrahim (2010) and Eluwa and Akanwa (2013) note that instructional materials make teaching learning process easier, interesting and rewarding but despite all the advantages derived from this, most schools lack instructional materials and most teachers are not keen in using them. Although literature has indicated review of implementations in languages in Nigeria, none had been done in Ebonyi state. Most schools are known to perform poorly in the English and most students do not offer indigenous languages in the SSCE due probably that most schools do not teach the Igbo language at the upper Basic Schools and are known to shy away from the use of indigenous language and rather prefer the use of their dialect mixed with the English language. These no doubt lead to students' poor performance. It is on the basis of this that this paper is positioned to investigate extent of implementation of languages in Education in Ebonyi State as stipulated in the National Policy on Education by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses;

1. What is the extent of implementation of languages in education in the Universal Basic Education Schools in Ebonyi State?
2. What is the extent of availability of resources that would enhance implementation of languages in the Universal Basic Education Schools in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at alpha of 0.05 level of significant.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers on the extent of implementation of languages in Education in urban and rural schools in Ebonyi State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers on extent of availability of resources that enhance languages implementation in urban and rural schools in Ebonyi State.

METHODOLOGY*Research design*

The design adopted was descriptive survey design.

The study was carried out in Ebonyi state. The study focused on the Universal Basic Education Schools in the State. The Universal Basic Education Board (UBE) comprises thirteen LGA with the lower and upper basic schools. Teachers from the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB) constitute the population. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select schools to reflect urban and rural schools. Teachers from the Lower Basic and Language teachers from the Upper Basic Schools all together were 555 teachers. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled "Languages in Education Questionnaire (LEQ) which was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A comprised demographic information while section B contained 19 items which were generated based on Very High Extent (VHE) 4- point, High Extent (HE) 3-point, Low Extent (LE) 2-point and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1- point. The respondents were expected to mark X on each of the appropriate option. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts in the field - one from Science Education Department and two others from the Language option in Arts and Social Science Education Department. A trial test was carried out and based on the result, construct validation using factor analysis was carried out and a total of nineteen items were subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha method and a value of 0.84 was obtained as the reliability of the instrument.

Direct delivery was used in administration and collection of the instrument to avoid mortality of the instrument. The decision rule was 2.5 and above as being high and anything below it as being low. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at an alpha of 0.05 level of significant.

Presentation of Data

The result of data analysis are presented in the following tables

Table 1: teachers' mean responses on extent of implementation of languages in schools

S/N	Extent of implementation of languages in Schools	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Rmks
1	English language is taught as a subject at all level in most UBE schools	285	219	32	30	3.35	0.811	VHE
2	English is used as medium of instruction at all levels in most UBE Schools	274	225	35	26	3.32	0.237	VHE
3	Language of immediate environment and English is used as a medium of instruction at lower basic schools	50	63	241	206	1.93	0.913	VLE
4	Igbo language is taught as a subject at all levels of UBE	49	64	297	155	1.02	0.861	VLE
5	Igbo language is used as medium of instruction at lower basic schools	341	134	38	37	3.65	0.942	VHE
6	French language is taught at all levels of upper basic schools	38	48	315	158	1.41	0.761	VLE
7	Arabic language is taught as a subject at lower basic	32	19	329	175	1.94	0.83	VLE
8	Hausa and Yoruba languages are taught at lower basic schools	6	2	241	239	1.47	0.56	VLE
9	Hausa and Yoruba languages are taught in the upper basic schools	6	2	242	205	1.29	0.527	VLE

Result in table 1 indicates that the extent of languages implementation in schools are very poor. All the result have very low extent which is below 2.5 except the first two items English language is used as medium of instruction at all levels of the Universal Basic Education Schools in Ebonyi State and extent of language implementation have mean above 2.5

Table 2: Extent of provision of language resources for implementation

S/N	Extent of provision of language resources for implementation	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Rmks
1	Adequate number of qualified teachers at primary and secondary schools	130	106	210	199	2.42	1.11	LE
2	Adequate number of qualified Igbo Language teachers at primary and secondary schools	101	135	201	108	2.43	1.04	LE
3	French teachers are available at the Junior and the Senior secondary schools	5	11	435	104	1.85	0.469	LE
4	Hausa and Yoruba teachers are available in all secondary schools	5	9	243	298	1.86	0.467	VLE
5	Arabic teachers available at the Upper and Lower Basic Education schools	6	11	435	103	1.85	0.469	VLE
6	Instructional materials such as textbooks in English are in adequate supply in schools	60	240	184	71	2.61	0.823	HE
7	Most Igbo language teachers are specialist in the field.	101	152	285	17	2.73	0.675	HE
8	Other indigenous languages and foreign Language textbooks are available	1	11	438	115	1.8	0.430	VLE
9	All schools both urban and rural have computer in their schools, seats and accommodations	13	135	205	202	1.91	0.863	VLE
10	Schools in the urban have more facilities to accommodate pupils and students much more than schools in the rural areas	257	200	77	21	3.63	0.712	VHE

Result in table 2 shows that resources for language implementation to a large extent are very poorly provided. Item 1, most schools lack language teachers has mean of 2.4. Also materials such as computer, language textbooks are in short supply while accommodations are lacking and the ones available are in very poor state. These are indicated in items 6, 8, and 9 with means of 2.61, 1.82 and 1.91 respectively.

Table 3: t- Test statistics on extent of implementation of languages in education in schools in Ebonyi State

S/N	Variable derision	N	DF	X	SD	t-critical	Value t-cal	Alpha level 0.05	Remark
1	Urban	278	1109	3.33	0.811	1.98	136.8		HE
2	Rural	277	1109	3.33	0.811				
3	Urban	278	1109	3.32	0.790	1.98	140.3		HE
4	Rural	277	1109	3.32	0.790				
5	Urban	278	1109	1.93	0.913	1.98	70.5		LE
6	Rural	277	1109	1.93	0.913				
7	Urban	278	1109	2.02	0.861	1.98	78.32		LE
8	Rural	277	1109	2.02	0.861				
9	Urban	278	1109	3.16	0.941	1.98	111.8		HE
10	Rural	277	1109	3.16	0.941				
11	Urban	278	1109	1.93	0.759	1.98	88.95		LE
12	Rural	277	1109	1.93	0.759				
13	Urban	278	1109	1.95	0.683	1.98	95.05		LE
14	Rural	277	1109	1.95	0.683				
15	Urban	278	1109	1.47	0.565	1.98	86.91		LE
16	Rural	277	1109	1.47	0.565				
17	Urban	278	1109	1.29	0.527	1.98	81.75		LE
18	Rural	277	1109	1.29	0.527				

Significant at 0.05 level of significant

Table 4: shows that the t- critical value is less than the t- calculated value which indicated that most of the respondents agreed that languages are not effectively implemented considering the Government stipulation in the National Policy on Education. There are also differences in implementation between the Urban and the Rural schools. While schools in the

Urban use English as a medium of instruction at all class levels, schools in rural areas seem to use indigenous language, language of immediate environment as well as the English language as a medium of instruction.

Table 4: t-test statistics on extent of availability of resources in language implementation in urban and rural schools

S/N	Location	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
1	Urban	278	2.42	1.11	1109	72.12	1.96	LE
2	Rural	277	2.42	1.11	1109			
3	Urban	278	2.43	1.04	1109	77.71		LE
4	Rural	277	2.43	1.04	1109			
5	Urban	278	1.84	0.46	1109	131.9		LE
6	Rural	277	1.84	0.46	1109			
7	Urban	278	1.85	1.85	1109	131.9		LE
8	Rural	277	1.85	1.85	1109			
9	Urban	278	1.75	0.46	1109	115.2		LE
10	Rural	277	1.75	0.46	1109			
11	Urban	278	2.61	0.507	1109	105.7		LE
12	Rural	277	2.61	0.507	1109			
13	Urban	278	2.73	0.823	1109	134.8		LE
14	Rural	277	2.73	0.823	1109			
15	Urban	278	1.82	0.675	1109	134.8		LE
16	Rural	277	1.82	0.675	1109			
17	Urban	278	1.91	0.43	1109	141.5		LE
18	Rural	277	1.91	0.43	1109			
19	Urban	278	2.28	1.04	1109	76.35		LE
20	Rural	277	2.28	1.04	1109			

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Table 4: shows that the all the t- calculated value were higher than the t- critical Value. This shows significant difference in the availability of resources in the implementation of languages in the urban and rural areas in Ebonyi state.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study were as following:

1. Languages in Nigeria education as stipulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education is implemented to a low extent in Ebonyi State.
2. Resources to enhance effective and efficient implementation are made available to a low extent in Ebonyi State.
3. There is significant difference in the mean response of teachers on extent of implementation of languages in Nigeria Education between schools in the rural and schools in the urban areas.
4. There is significant difference in the mean response of teachers on resources made available between schools in the rural areas and schools in the urban areas in Ebonyi State.
5. It is surprising to discover that even when teachers and schools are aware of the FGN stand on the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction in the Upper and Lower Basic Education Schools, yet schools in the urban persist in using the English language as a medium of instruction.

DISCUSSION

Data on table 1: On mean responses on extent of implementation of languages in schools, item 1, English taught at all levels of classes in the UBE schools and item 2 used as medium of instruction at all levels, have means of 3.5 and 3.32 respectively while items 3 and 4 use language of the Immediate Environment and the Igbo language as a medium of instruction have means of 1.93 and 2.02 respectively, item 5 French taught at the Upper Basic Education Schools has mean of 2.2 and French taught at the UBE Schools has mean of 1.9 .Arabic taught at UBE has mean of 1.47, Yoruba and Hausa Languages taught in schools has mean of 1.29. This shows low extent of implementation of the languages in Nigeria Education System in schools. Despite the Federal Government stipulation on the use of local languages and language of the immediate environment for promotion of our cultural heritage and that foreign languages such as French and Arabic should be taught at the UBE schools so as to help us understand and interact with our neighbours, schools still show preference for use of the English Language. This preference supports Aliyu (2005) who stated that English enjoys a lot of prestige among and above all other languages in Nigeria big or small. The English Language however is not effectively implemented in most schools in the State because most schools do not have English Language teachers.

Table 2 on extent of availability of resources that enhance language implementation, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have means of 2.42, 2.43, 1.84, 1.85, 1.75, 2.61, 2.73, 1.82, 1.91 and 2.28 respectively. These means indicate that resources that enhance language implementation were available to a very low extent. This no doubt hinders effective implementation of languages in Nigeria Education. This finding is in line with Ugal (2010) who declared that there was no government guide line for implementation of mother tongue in schools and further stated that materials for teaching were not supplied to schools which would enhance effective implementation of languages in education.

Table 3 showed significant difference on extent of implementation of languages between schools in the urban and schools in the rural areas. All the t-calculated values were greater than the t- critical value of 1.96. Schools in the urban schools showed preference for English language. English is taught at all levels of classes in UBE schools and it is used as a medium of instruction at all levels in schools in the urban areas not minding the stipulations of the FGN (2004) on languages while in the rural areas most teachers adopt the use of the Mother tongue, language of the immediate environment for those that can speak it, teachers that cannot speak language of the immediate environment adopt the use of English language which most pupil do not understand and this places pupil in disadvantage. Schools in the rural areas do not study Hausa, Yoruba, and French language at all at any level not to mention the Arabic language. Also most schools in the rural areas do not study Igbo language as a course in the Senior Secondary schools. This finding is in line with Gusau (2016) who stated that the potentials of indigenous languages for broad based mass literacy and knowledge acculturation have never been exploited and maintained that there is need for sound linguistic policy that sees the utilization of indigenous languages as language of instruction in our schools.

Table 4 showed significant difference on the extent of availability of resources in schools in the urban and schools in the rural areas. Data indicated again that all the t-calculated were above the t-critical value of 1.96, showing that schools in the urban schools have resources – teachers, more buildings, more electronic facilities, language textbooks than schools in the rural areas. Although, these resources in the urban were meager yet the urban schools were better than the rural areas. For example some schools in the rural areas do not have specialized English and Igbo teacher not to mention French, Hausa, Yoruba or French and Arabic language teachers. Languages in education cannot be effectively and efficiently implemented without human and material resources. This is in line with Ezema (2004), Chukwu (2007) and Iheanacho (2007) who noted that distribution of resources in the urban and the rural areas were at variance and that schools in the rural areas experience poor staffing and fund. They maintained that most times fund that is mapped out for improving education matters are diverted for some other things that are unrelated to education.

CONCLUSION

It would be concluded from the major findings that Languages in Nigeria Education based on the FGN stipulations in the NPE (2004 and (2008) that secondary schools in Ebonyi State implement these languages to a low extent. Schools in the urban areas use English as a medium of instruction at all levels while some teachers in the rural areas use language of the immediate environment to teach at the Lower Basic Schools. Some teachers who teach in the rural areas but are not familiar with the LIE use English to the pupil's disadvantage because the Pupil do not understand English. Also resources for effective and efficient implementation of languages are made available to a low extent in schools. Most schools in the State lack English language teachers, language textbooks, computer, other electronic assisted devices as well as acute shortage of fund. This is most especially experienced in the rural areas and these hinder effective implementation of languages in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers and school authorities should try as much as possible to follow government directives on languages in education based on the National Policy on Education.
2. Government should make available resources that would enhance effective and efficient implementation of languages in education.
3. Government should embark on training and retraining of adequate number of qualified different teachers of languages in Ebonyi State.
4. Resources that enhance languages should be evenly extended to the rural areas for effective implementation of languages.
5. Government should provide incentives for language teachers to make them stay in the profession especially those teachers who are in the rural areas as contained in the NPE.

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