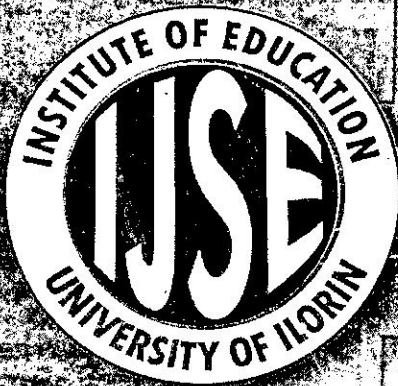


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AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY IN KWARA STATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

BY

ADENIYI, F.O. (MRS)

Abstract

This study evaluated the implementation of the language of instruction policy in both public and private primary schools in Kwara State. The study employed the descriptive survey method and the purposive random sampling technique was used to pick five Yoruba-speaking local government areas of Kwara State. One hundred (100) teachers were randomly selected from twenty public and private schools from the five selected Yoruba Speaking local governments. The responses were analysed using the t-test statistical analysis to find out whether there is any significant difference in the teachers' perception. A five point likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", was used to measure the degree of responses. Findings showed that the language policy is lacking in terms of government, administrative, and parental support. Teachers were not purposely trained towards the implementation of the policy. Also, no adequate teaching and learning materials were provided. It has been therefore recommended that Federal and State Governments should give necessary support for the implementation of the policy.

Introduction

The issue of policy formulation on the language of instruction in the Nigeria educational system, especially at the primary school level, dates back to the Missionary period. Eventhough the motives of the Christian missionaries in developing orthography in Nigerian languages, especially Yoruba, were religious, it is on record that they made efforts in formulating a virile language policy by encouraging the use of indigenous languages alongside English language (Adeodu 1977).

The colonial Government in Nigeria, especially after the amalgamation of 1914, pursued what Awoniyi (1978) describes as "benevolent tolerance" in respect of indigenous languages curriculum development (p.45). The colonial policy then stated that pupils should be given instruction in their mother tongue for the first three years of primary schooling. English medium was introduced to the child in the fourth year. Specifically, the education ordinance of 1926 advised that the child's mother tongue should be the medium of instruction where its use was expected to aid the thorough teaching and learning of other school subjects (Adeodu 1987).

The post-independence period however witnessed an unprecedented development in the area of curriculum development and the teaching of indigenous languages. In 1962, the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian languages was established at the University of Ibadan. In 1971, a mother tongue unit was established at the Department of Education in the same

university. The University of Ife also began to offer Yoruba language at degree level. All these higher institutions have made significant contributions to the development of Nigerian languages. A prominent example is the Ife University Six year project, sponsored by the Ford Foundation to validate the claim that teaching in the mother tongue was more effective than teaching in foreign language. This project led to research in curriculum development, textbook preparation and teacher training programmes in Yoruba language. The result was that the children taught in Yoruba did better academically than the children taught in English (Fafunwa, 1978).

The policy formulation and control in Nigerian education is based on legal provisions, which ascribe responsibilities for the ultimate determination of policy matters to the political authority (Etim, 1988). Based on this, the Minister of Education is the Chief policy maker on matters that are related to education, while, at the state level, the commissioner for education is in charge. It is as a result of this that political officials of government are held responsible for whatever their ministries do in terms of over-all control, determination, implementation, and evaluation of policies with respect to goals, structural development, and operation of the system. For policy formulation below cabinet level during the Secondary Republic (1979 – 1983), the National Council on Education (N.C.E) which was composed of the Federal Minister of Education and all State Commissioners for Education and Joint Consultative Committee on Education (J.C.C) made up of education officials and Educational experts outside of Government, took charge of Educational policy formulation on behalf of the Federal and State Governments (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1977; 1981).

Specifically, the Federal Ministry of Education, under the control of the Federal Minister of Education, is charged with the responsibility of determining national policy on education in order to ensure Uniform standards and quality control. This assignment was carried out through the various decisions of the non-formal education section; international education is under the control of the Commissioner of Education for the purpose of policy formulation and determination. Specifically, the ministry takes charge of policy and controls the administration of Education at primary and secondary levels. This is achieved through the coordinated efforts of the planning and research division, the inspectorate division, educational services divisions, examination branches, and school boards.

The National Policy of Education (FRN, 1981) contains what is now regarded as the Nation's educational language policy. With regard to the primary education, the policy states that: "Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage the English language" (p. 13).

The above policy statement, according to Olagoke (1979), could be regarded as nothing more than a mere statement of intention as no serious efforts have been made to properly implement it. Teachers have not been trained nor have textbooks or other teaching materials been prepared for such a revolutionary language programme in the country. In fact, some identified problems plaguing the primary school system are still much evident long after the policy had been enacted. Adeolu (1977) also observes that the policy does not enjoy positive attitude from the society, especially parents and

teachers who still believe in the superiority of English over the indigenous languages.

Background to the problem

Language development and intellectual development go hand-in-hand because it is through a child's capacity to use language in a wide variety of ways that his ability to think, reason, store, and re-use his experiences develops. Marland (1977) believes that learning is possible only through the personal operation of language, and that difficulties with language hamper understanding and growth in all areas of learning.

Hence, Brann (1980) suggests that teachers should be trained to be sensitive to the role of language in learning. This requires that every teacher should have a comprehensive knowledge of the nature of language acquisition and language learning.

The fundamental issue to consider in the education language policy and development is the concept of language planning which, according to Sotinoye (1981) and Babalola (1988), is the organized and systematic solution to the language problems inherent in multilingual nations. For a language to evolve as a national language, according to Babalola (1988), it has to pass through the process of codification. However, Nwahunaya (1987) suggests the criteria to be considered for an adequate language policy in a multilingual nation like Nigeria. Among the criteria suggested are decision as to whether or not English should be retained as national language, religious tolerance, level of development of each indigenous language, and a consideration of the overall effect the continued use of English language as the official language would have on the future development of the country.

The efforts of the Federal government to formulate a stable language policy in our education system and to effectively implement it so as to raise the status of indigenous language in Nigeria would be much appreciated if the identified shortcomings in the policy are carefully taken care of. For instance, Omojuwa (1971) observes that the pupils might face the problem of language medium and media transition if the existing language instructional materials do not distinguish in content and method between language as a subject and language as a medium.

Bangbose (1977) also pointed out that government cannot enforce the mother tongue policy (MTM) on the school as long as both pre-primary and primary education still remain largely a monopoly of private individuals. He however suggests that government should enforce the teaching as a subject of at least one Nigerian language in such private schools. Brann (1977) and Banjo (1977) observe that government did not indicate the level of formal education at which the bilingual policy is to be implemented.

Also, commenting on the possible effects of this language policy on primary school level, Banjo (1977) asserts that with the re-arrangement of curriculum to accommodate three or four languages, and paying adequate attention to the training of teachers specifically meant to implement the language policy and provision of relevant instructional materials, the policy is likely to have positive effects on the primary school level, and with time, every Nigerian child who passed through the primary educational system may end up as a tri-lingual, i.e., speaking his mother-tongue, an endoglossic language, i.e. lingual franca (which for some, will be the same as their mother tongue), and exglossic language, i.e. English (the world language).

Thus, Bangbose (1977) concluded that the three important experiments in the use of a mother-tongue in Nigerian primary school, i.e. the River Reader Project (1970), Six Year Primary Project (1970) and Primary Education Improvement Project (1971) should be of interest in countries with larger language groups, given the large number of pupils likely to be involved, and the fact that primary education is still terminal for most children. It will certainly be worthwhile to consider providing a more meaningful brand of primary education using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

However, an evaluation of the language policy at all levels of educational system, especially primary school level, is very important as Crombach (1975), Adeyanju (1987), Farley (1984), and Daramola (1995) all agreed that evaluation is an indispensable process in any human endeavour as it helps to determine the effectiveness of a programme, its performance, and the suitability of its goals for short and long term effects on the society.

The Problem of the Study

The policy statement on the language of instruction in Nigerian primary schools could be described as advocating a bilingual system of education. However, no serious efforts have so far been made to actualize the policy. There seems to be a sharp difference between the policy statement and the actual classroom situation in our schools. Also, it is not yet known whether given the necessary atmosphere, the policy could be a perfect transitional arrangement whereby the mother-tongue is used solely in the early years so as to allow the pupils to adjust effectively enough to imbibe English at a later time of instruction.

In effect, a Nigerian language of wider communication could have been used as a medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling and a transition of English effected later.

There are lots of problems facing the policy, especially at the implementation stage which makes it look like a mere statement of intention that fails to achieve the objectives for which it was planned, i.e. enhancing the learner's proficiency in both mother tongue and English language. Some of the problems include the multiplicity of the language situation in the country (which makes the training of teachers in these languages difficult), socio-linguistic problems (i.e. societal attitude to the indigenous language as a medium of instruction), and the existence of a dual system of education (i.e. private and public educational institutions).

There is therefore the urgent need to investigate the strategies adopted by private and public primary schools to implement the language of instruction policy taking into cognizance some of the implementation problems with a view of suggesting solutions to them.

Research Questions

On the basis of the problems identified, the study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions.

- (1) Do private and public primary schools differ in terms of government support for the implementation of the medium of instruction policy?
- (2) Do public and private primary school teachers differ in their perception on the usefulness of the national language policy?

- (3) Do teachers in private and public primary schools differ in their views in terms of the administration support given to them to implement the policy?
- (4) Do teachers in private and public primary schools differ in terms of their readiness to implement the policy?

Research Hypotheses

- (1) There is no significant difference in the government support given to public and private primary schools in Kwara State.
- (2) Public and private primary school teachers in Kwara State do not significantly differ in their perceptions on the usefulness of the national language policy.
- (3) There is no significant difference in the administrative support given to public and private primary schools to implement the national language policy.
- (4) Public and private primary school teachers in Kwara State do not significantly differ in their readiness to implement the national language policy.

RESULTS

Table 1: T-test Analysis of Government support to private & public primary schools

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	14.59	3.09	93	2.05	1.6	0.05	Significant Difference
Public	46	15.74	2.28					

Table 2: T-test Analysis of public and private primary school teacher's perception on the usefulness of the policy

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	9.93	3.28	93	2.91	1.66	0.05	Significant Difference
Public	46	8.26	2.19					

Note – $P > 0.05$

Table 3: T-test Analysis of administrative support given to the public and private primary schools as regards the language policy

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	13.29	3.00	44	1.66	93	0.05	Not Significant
Public	46	13.52	2.13					

Table 4: T-test Analysis of teacher's readiness to implement the policy in both public and private primary schools

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	12.09	1.54	93	4.51	1.66	0.05	Significant Difference
Public	46	14.02	1.64					

Table 5: T-test Analysis of availability of teaching and learning materials
In both public and private schools

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	9.20	2.17	54	1.66	93	0.05	Not
Public	46	9.41	1.49					Significant

Note – $P > 0.05$

Table 6: T-test Analysis of actual classroom practice of the policy
implementation public & private primary schools

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	11.12	2.67	93	2.37	1.66	0.05	Significant
Public	46	10.00	1.82					Difference

Note – $P > 0.05$

Table 7: T-test Analysis of the attitudes of literate and illiterate parents
towards the policy

Variables	No of cases	Means Score	SD	Df	t-value	t. Table	Sign level	Conclusion
Private	49	4.32	1.49	93	91	1.66	0.05	Not
Public	46	4.60	1.54					Significant

Note – $P > 0.05$

Discussion

The finding of this study as revealed in Table 1 indicated there was a significant difference between the view of the teachers in private and public primary schools on government support. The result revealed a calculated Mean Score of 14.59 for teachers in private schools while that of public schools is 15.74. It can be deduced from this result that public primary schools enjoy more government support than their private counterparts because there is occasional inspection from the State Primary Education Board (SPEB) to the public primary school but provision of books are grossly inadequate. Their private counterparts do not enjoy this kind of support due to the fact that the latter are exclusively managed and controlled by private individuals and organizations. They therefore tend to do whatever they like. No wonder, Bangbose (1977) remarks that as long as the monopoly of private primary schools is left exclusively in the hands of private individuals, government cannot have proper control over those schools, and therefore the full implementation of the policy would be hindered.

On whether the policy is useful within and outside the school system. Table 2 reveals a significant difference between the mean scores for private primary schools as (9.30) and that of their public counterpart as (8.26). This indicated that significant difference existed in their views about the usefulness and relevance of the policy. Even though there is a significance in their views, the two groups of teachers agreed on the worth and usefulness of the policy if given the necessary support by the government.

Table 3 shows the mean scores for private primary school teachers as 13.29 while that of public primary schools as 13.52. Thus, the table has revealed that there was no significant difference between the views of the teachers about the administrative support given to them as regards the policy implementation. It could be deduced from this result that the two groups of teachers agreed that they both lack the necessary support from their school administrators.

Table 4 shows the mean score of 12.09 for private public schools while that of public primary schools is 14.02. Thus, this table revealed that there is a significant difference in the teacher's readiness to implement the policy in both public and private primary schools. This result also implied that public primary school teachers are more willing to implement the policy than their private counterparts. This could be as a result of occasional inspection from the state primary school boards. Also, it could be deduced that majority of the pupils in public primary schools are from illiterate homes where Yoruba (mother-tongue) is the only language spoken. The teacher thus finds it easy to communicate with these pupils using the language they all understand. The teachers seem to enjoy teaching them in their mother-tongue, thereby unconsciously implementing the national language policy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results from this study could be summed up with Olagoke's (1979) view that the national language policy on education is a mere statement of intentions as no serious efforts have been made to implement it. This study has revealed lack of government and administrative (i.e., school authorities) support at various levels for the mother-tongue policy, and this has greatly affected the successful implementation of the policy. There is also a sharp deviation of most primary schools, especially the private ones, from the policy focus. Teachers in these private primary schools are not ready to implement the language policy. These developments have had negative effects on the status of indigenous language at various levels of Nigerian educational system. Most private primary school learners cannot read and write in Yoruba except English Language. There are more textbooks in English language than in Yoruba, which has greatly promoted English culture to the detriment of the Yoruba culture. No wonder it is difficult to produce adequate and well-trained mother-tongue teachers who are seriously needed if the policy is going to be successful.

It is recommended that government should give necessary support to the compilation of the existing linguistic studies on Nigerian languages. This is with a view to ensuring proper co-ordination of such studies for further metalanguage development. Also, the body responsible for the recruitment and posting should carry out a survey of the teachers posted to various schools, and balance up where there are deficiencies. Mother-tongue specialists should be sought and recruited. In conclusion, regular references, seminars, and workshops should be organized by language teachers' associations whereby language experts are invited to brainstorm, discuss, explain, and update the existing relevant literature written in mother tongue. These steps would help the teachers in their onerous task of effectively teaching in the mother tongue. The headmasters should also endeavour to release their teachers for any conferences, seminars and workshops on Nigerian languages.

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