ARABIC STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF ARABIC EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Language is the parameter for effective communication in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. Language has contributed massively in turning the world into a global village and as well plays a significant role in the formation and upholding national and international values. Arabic as a language plays a prominent role in the facilitation and promotion of inter-cultural communication and sustainable development. This study investigated the perception of Arabic students on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria. Arabic students in the study consisted of all undergraduates and postgraduates in the state. These groups of students constituted the population for the study. 270students were sampled using a purposive sampling technique. Researcher's designed questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts in Arabic Education, Measurement and Evaluation and yielded a co-efficient of 0.72 when subjected to a test-retest reliability procedure through the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient. The data collected was analyzed with the percentage, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level. Findings from the study revealed that Arabic students held positive perception on the role of Arabic education in sustainable development. The study recommended that multilingual education (which embeds Arabic Education) should be encouraged and promoted across the nation via the re-branding of language education policy. This could help to promote the role of Arabic education in the national sustainable development.
Keywords: Perception, Arabic education, Arabic students, Sustainable development

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s in response to a growing realization of about the need to balance economic and social progress with a concern for the environment and stewardship of the earth natural resources. The aim of sustainable development is to define viable schemes combining the economic, social and environment aspects of human activity. According to the international institute for sustainable development in Canada," sustainable development is the development that meets the need of the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". United Nations Secretary General's High level panel on global sustainability recently wrote that "sustainable development is not a destination but a dynamic process of adaptation, learning and action. It further states that, sustainable development is about recognizing, understanding and acting on interconnections above all between the

economy, society and the natural environment. The term was used by the Brundtland commission which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 reports that "our common future" defines sustainable Development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs". United Nations Secretary General's High level panel on global sustainability recently wrote that "sustainable development is not a destination but a dynamic process of adaptation, learning and action. It further states that, sustainable development is about recognizing, understanding and acting on interconnections above all between the economy, society and the natural environment.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is interested in sustainable development. This means making the necessary decisions on how to realize our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficits, maximizing wellbeing and protecting our environment, without affecting the ability of future generations to do the same. The government takes account of sustainable development as a part of how it develops its policies, how it runs its buildings and how it buys its goods and services. All departments are responsible for making sure that their own policies and activities contribute to sustainable development. Today, development has got to do with improving the wellbeing and increasing their economic security. And the key of all these is language.

Language is the vehicle through which people's culture is transmitted. It is an index of identity which serves as a repository of a people's culture, industry and exploits. It is language that differentiates the homo-sapiens from other animals. The most effective engine of a people's culture is their mother tongue (MT). Indigenous languages are treasures of culture and self-identity. In other words, language is the indicator of history and self- identification (Solanke, 2006). It is an indispensable cultural legacy with which all forms of human interactions are carried out. According to Nwadike (2004) it is the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the key and keep it safe, it will unlock the door to wealth or affluence, thus bringing about national development.

It is worth mentioning that language is an indispensable tool for national development and rebranding. This development ranges from growth in education (i.e. intellectual growth), politics, economy, science and technology. In educational process, language is the main pillar through which man has to plan, instruct and evaluate programmes. The development of individuals in respect of their aspiration in the society means development of a nation. Individuals develop educationally, socially, economically, politically and culturally through their interaction with government agencies that disseminate ideas and policies through various media in the language that the individual's best understands. As submitted by Olaoye (2013), national development is a gradual and advanced improvement through progressive changes in the socio-political life of the nation. National development refers to the growth of the nation in terms of internal cohesion, integration, unity, economic well-being, mass participation in government, and educational growth (Olaoye, 2013). While people who are multilingual in communication strategies can have a greater appreciation for the inter-connectedness of modern life. (Anyanu, 2017).

Language is an avenue to sustainable development in Nigeria. It is a necessary prerequisite for employment. This underlines the fact that language skills enhance business and trade, while also improving an individual's academic condition. As emphasized by Ifeyina (2015) that language is the only sustainable weapon that can bind a multilingual nation like Nigeria together. It occupies a very significant role in the formation of national values and integration of Nigerian nation.

Given the roles of Arabic education for sustainability and development, Arabic education is the most fundamental and important tool for youth empowerment most importantly the Muslim youths. It is a weapon for the uplift of the underprivileged, the marginalized, the un-informed or the illiterates in the society. This is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that runs through the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). Youth empowerment is a re-branding enterprise, as the empowered youths are likely to shun corruption, and make positive contribution to national economic growth, peace, security and political stability. Empowerment is the process whereby people are given the opportunity to improve in order to contribute to positive change. It takes varied forms and dimensions which include activities like individual self-assertion, self-improvement, collective bargaining or resistance in order to challenge existing power relations (Ishima, 2004). Indigenous languages and technological development: Issues and perspectives. Language, literature, education and democracy in Nigeria. Self-empowerment takes varied

forms such as education, apprenticeship, usurpation, domination and force. Education is the most fundamental and important tool for empowerment or for the achievement of social justice and equity. Social scientists prescribe education as a tool for the up-lift of the underprivileged, the marginalized, and the oppressed within the society (Graham-Brown, 1991). Education is therefore a veritable instrument for promoting empowerment, and this is best done through the medium of languages. In this respect, the role of Arabic as a foreign language in sustainable development cannot be overemphasized.

Language and language studies empower those who are engaged in them. Language as a means of communication is the corner stone of any educational process (Ige, 2000). It plays a vital role in education as a subject and it is also a medium of instruction. Education, whether formal or informal, is carried out through the medium of some languages, and learning at any level is largely verbal (Awoniyi, 1978). Language, whether spoken or written, is the vehicle through which knowledge is motivated, and knowledge is power. One of the cardinal points in the Federal Government's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is education, and language education is a key tool and bridge to our future (Olaoye, 2004). It empowers children and the youth to take charge of their lives. This involves acquisition of skills and knowledge that would prepare them for the world of work. Arabic is a Semantic language. It belongs to the West Semantic sub-division of the Afro-Asiatic family of language (Opega, 2004). The history of Arabic language in Nigeria can be traced to the periods before the colonial era. The contribution of the then existing empires in the Western Sudan towards the development of Arabic language is notable in their socio-economic transactions. Those empires included Mali, Ghana, Songhai and the Kanem-Bornu. Kanem-Bornu Empire encompassed a larger portion of the present day Northeastern States of Nigeria. The religion of Islam, which has its original divine scripture (*Al-Qur'an*) revealed and preached in Arabic, enables the spread of the language to cut across the Muslim World (Galadanci, 1993). The then Western Sudan,

the old Sokoto Caliphate, the old Hausa Kingdom and the then old Ilorin Emirate used Arabic language as a medium of record keeping (Galadanci, 1993; Abdulraheem 1994, Abdullahi, 2005 and Jimba, 2019). This is corroborated by the fact that Arabic is required and spoken as a mother tongue by Shuwa Arabs of Bornu State of Nigeria (Oladosu, 1995; Raji, 1991).

Before the coming of Western education to Nigeria, Arabic occupiedand still occupies a very special place in the history of Nigeria because it is spoken as a first language by way of religion through the Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad of 19th century and the Sokoto Caliphate; through literary and intellectual endeavours between Northern Nigeria and Egypt through the Kanem-Borno Empire with Maiduguri as the centre; and at the socio-cultural level, through the Islamic religion, mode of dressing, literacy and personal names(Abdelali, 2003).

The above is some justification to buttress the role of Arabic education in sustainable development. Language is a cultural heritage, not just cultural but also an intellectual heritage. Language conveys knowledge and is therefore irreplaceable tool for sustainability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined:

1. The roles of Arabic education in sustainable development as perceived by Arabic students in Kwara State, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following questions were answered:

1. What is the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria.
2. Is there any difference in the Arabic students' perception of on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development based on gender?
3. Is there any difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development based on levels?

4. Is there any difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development based on school ownership?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

Ho$_1$: There is no significant difference in the male and female Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria

Ho$_2$: There is no significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on levels.

Ho$_3$: There is no significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on school ownership.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey type. The population for the study comprised all Arabic students in Kwara State, while the target population consisted of all Arabic students of University of Ilorin, Ilorin, (Federal Institution); Kwara State University, Malete, (State Institution) and Al-Hikman University, Ilorin (Private Institution) in Kwara State. Two hundred and seventy (270) Arabic undergraduate and postgraduate students out of whom 67 were sampled from the University of Ilorin, 59 were sampled from Kwara State University and 144 were from Al-Hikma University using purposive sampling technique.

A researcher's designed questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. This instrument was validated by three experts: 2 specialists in Arabic from Department of Arabic, Faculty of Arts and 1 from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Department of Social Sciences Education Faculty of Education University of Ilorin, and yielded a co-efficient of 0.72 when subjected to a test-retest reliability procedure using a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Three research assistants were engaged in the administration of the instrument, each from the sampled institutions. The data collected was analysed using the percentage to answer the research question while corresponding hypotheses and the hypotheses were tested with the use of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Out of 270Arabic students sampled for the study, 209 (77.4%) were males while 61 (22.6%) were females. This implies that Arabic male students are more than the female students in the study.

Research Question: What is the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Given that the questionnaire contained 10 items structured in a four-likert-type scale. The minimum, maximum and range scores were 10, 40 and 30 respectively. The range was divided into two (30/2=15). Thus, participants' whose score fell within 10 – 25 and 26 – 40 were categorised as holding negative and positive perceptions respectively. The statistics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Arabic Students' Perception of the Roles of Arabic Education in Sustainable Development in Kwara State, Nigeria

Perceptions	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	26 -40	197	72.9
Negative	10 -25	73	27.1
Total		270	100.0

Out of 270 (100.0%) Arabic students sampled, 197 (72.9%) of them held positive perception while 73 (27.1%) held negative perception. Thus, the majority of the Arabic students in Kwara State held positive perception on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses postulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the male and female Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria

Table 2: t-test Statistics of the Difference in the Male and Female Arabic Students' Perception of the Roles of Arabic Education in Sustainable Development in Kwara State, Nigeria

Gender	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Male	209	17.821	3.409				
				268	1.714	0.002	**NS**
Female	61	13.975	3.454				

*Insignificance at p<0.05

Table 2 shows that the t-value 1.714 is obtained with a p-value of 0.002 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.002 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis one is rejected. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the male and female Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria (t $_{\{268\}}$ = 1.714, p<0.05).

This implies that male with the highest mean score (17.82) were positive in their perception on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on their levels.

Table 3: ANOVA of the Difference in the Arabic Students' Perception of the Roles of Arabic Education in Sustainable Development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on their Levels.

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	331.248	2	165.624			
Within Groups	29584.345	267	110.802	1.494	0.71	NS
Total	9815.593	269				

*Significance at p>0.05

As shown in table 3, the F-value of 1.494 with a p-value of 0.71 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.71 obtained is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis two is retained. This, thus implies that there is no statistically significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on their levels (F $_{\{2, 267\}}$ = 1.494, p>0.05).

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on School ownership.

Table 4: t-test of the Difference in the Arabic Students' Perception of the Roles of Arabic Education in Sustainable Development in Kwara State, Nigeria Based on School Ownership

Gender	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Public	126	15.793	2.617				
				268	1.492	0.231	NS
Private	144	16.418	2.622				

Table 4 shows that the t-value 1.492 is obtained with a p-value of 0.231 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.231 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis three is rejected. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on school ownership (t $_{\{268\}}$ = 1.492, p>0.05).

Discussion

The first finding from the study revealed that majority of the Arabic students in Kwara State held positive perception on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria. This could be attributed to the fact that Arabic Language serves as the most fundamental and important tool of empowerment. It is a weapon for the uplift of the underprivileged, the marginalized, the un-informed or the illiterates in the society. Arabic Language as a means of communication is the corner stone of any educational process as it plays a vital role in education as a subject and a medium of instruction. This corroborates Ige (2000) who submitted that any language and/or language studies socially, politically and economically empower those who are engaged in them as it involves acquisition of skills and knowledge that would prepare students for the world of work. This also corroborates Olaoye (2013) who submitted that language is an indispensable cultural legacy with which all forms of human interactions are carried out. In the same vein, computer appreciation is now being made easy through the construction of Arabic language keyboard which has linguistic facilities such as tone markers-diacritics, circumflex, tildes, cedillas, umlaut, special orthographies, etc. As submitted by Solanke (2006), the youths become empowered through all these linguistic facilities.

The second finding showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the male and female Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that male students were more positive in their perception than their female counterpart on the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria. The finding corroborates Abdullahi (2016) who found that there was a significant difference between the academic performance of male and female students of Arabic language taught with visual resources and their counterparts taught without the use of visual resource. This result corresponds with the findings of Amadi (2010) and Adebayo (2010) who, among others, found that there is no gender difference in the academic performance of students. This finding, however, disagrees with the assertion of Larsen –Freeman & long (1991) who found that females are better than males in both first and second language acquisition.

The third finding revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on levels. This signifies that no discrepancy exists in the way Arabic students perceived the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State based on their educational levels. The finding is in support of Musa and Abdullahi (2018) who reported that there is no significant difference in the Arabic Syllable Patterns that constitute pronunciation problems for Upper Basic Hausa – speaking students of Arabic in Public and Private Basic Schools in Kano State. The fourth finding from the study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the Arabic students' perception of the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State, Nigeria based on school ownership. This signifies that no discrepancy exists in the way students from public and private owned universities perceived the roles of Arabic education in sustainable development in Kwara State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, I, therefore, submit that the role of Arabic education in sustainable development is worthwhile and cannot be overstated as it is perceived as a means of empowerment as well as a catalyst for national development. Thus, students of Arabic Language regardless of their gender, academic levels and school type hold positive dispositions to the potentialities and benefits of Arabic language in the national growth and development.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings obtained from the study, the following recommendations are proffered: Government should abrogate the current elective status of Arabic education at the Basic and Senior Secondary classes and make it a compulsory subject. Multilingual education should be encouraged and promoted

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across the nation via the re-branding of language education policy. This could help to promote the role of Arabic education in the national sustainable development. Parents and students, Muslims and Christian should change their mind and attitudes towards the teaching and learning of Arabic.

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