



Implementation of the Mother-Tongue/Language Component of the National Policy on Education In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the implementation of the mother-tongue/language component of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE). 720 schools comprising 442 urban and 278 rural schools selected from the thirty-six States of Nigeria through multi-stage random sampling were studied. Data collected through a questionnaire were analyzed using the mean and t-test. Findings revealed that contrary to this policy's statements/requirements, there were no government guidelines for the implementation of the mother-tongue/language policy; curriculum materials were not supplied in schools for mother-tongue instruction; specialized teachers were not trained for mother-tongue instruction; English and not mother-tongue was used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6; mother-tongue was not taught as a subject in primary 4-6. However, English was taught as a subject in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6. Findings also revealed no significant difference in the level of implementation in urban and rural schools, and showed that inadequate funding, lack of interest in the policy by pupils and teachers, the confusion caused by the disparity between the home and the school in the language of communication, and lack of needed textbooks, teaching aids, and specialized teachers were major constraints at implementation.

Keywords: Assessment implementation mother-tongue/language policy.

INTRODUCTION

Educational engineers the world over agree that mother-tongue is very useful in the educational process in a multilingual society. Since the educational process builds upon the entering behaviour of a learner at any level into the classroom, the use of mother-tongue as the initial medium of instruction in pre-primary and primary schooling can never be overemphasized especially

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in a multilingual society where mother-tongue is one of the numerous experiences which children bring to the classroom. Besides, the necessity for mother-tongue programmes as a strong unifying factor in culturally and linguistically diverse populations like Nigeria amongst other numerous usefulness has been enumerated by researchers like Fishman (1991), Bernard (1995), Lao and Krashin (1999), Cummings (2002), Ozuru and Okoh (2007) as follows:

- Bilingualism has positive effects on the linguistic and educational development of children;
- A child's level of development of mother-tongue is a strong predictor of his/her second language development;
- The promotion of mother-tongue in schools helps to develop not only the mother-tongue but also the majority school language;
- There is no damage to children's academic development in the majority school language where some instructional time is spent through a minority language. Rather, mother-tongue facilitates higher-level learning;
- Mother-tongues in children are yet fragile and easily lost in the early school years;
- A rejection of the child's language in school translates to a rejection of the child;
- Children in a mother-tongue medium of instruction are active, creative, and convivial in class discussion while achieving relaxed atmosphere as against a second language class medium where children are mostly passive and their verbal responses limited to short phrases or single words.

It is obvious from these benefits that a strong point has been made for education which enhances the diversity of ability, culture, and experience of children in a multicultural society. This type of educational process therefore affirms the linguistic and cultural capital of children rather than uphold the negative attitudes and ignorance about diversity ordinarily existing in society (Hau, 2002). Furthermore, the bilingual educational system also succeeds in challenging the coercive relations of power evident in forced linguistic relations thereby upholding a positive and affirming image to bilingual children for who they are and who they can become in future in their communities or societies. Also, considering that Nigeria's educational system was founded on the philosophy of education for self-reliance and equality of opportunities, it is believed that the mother-tongue/language policy is one of the means of achieving self-reliance and equality, and encouraging especially, equality cross-culturally.

It is pertinent to note here that the structure of Nigeria's education was changed from the 6-3-3-4 system to the 9-3-4. The former runs six years of primary education, three years each of junior and senior secondary and four years of university education. The latter combines the six years of primary and three years of junior secondary into a continuum of nine years of basic education at the primary level, three years at the secondary level, and four years of university education. The duration in years for pre-primary education is not included in this structure but represents the form of

education given to children between the ages of three and five years (plus) before proceeding to primary school.

The mother-tongue/language component of the National Policy on Education specifies that (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2004):

- For pre-primary education, the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community (Section 2.14c: i, ii).
- The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years (now Basic 1 to 3), during which English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth to sixth year (now Basic 4 to 6), English shall progressively be used as the medium of instruction while the language of the immediate environment shall be taught as a subject (Section 3.17e, f).
- For Junior Secondary School (now Basic 7 to 9 of primary school), English is the medium of instruction while the language of the immediate environment shall be taught as a subject where it has orthography and literature but where it does not, it shall be one of Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba (i.e. one major Nigerian language) taught with emphasis on oralcy (Section 4.21: ii).
- For Senior Secondary School (now three years of secondary education) English is the medium of instruction, and one of Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba studied as a major Nigerian language (Section 4.23b).

The National Policy on Education (NPE) specifies that Government shall ensure that the medium of instruction in the pre-primary school is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate environment while English is studied as a second language at the lower levels of primary school (years 1-3) and mother-tongue at the higher levels (years 4-6). To accomplish these, the Nigerian government resolved to develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages, produce textbooks in Nigerian languages, and train specialized teachers. It is the extent of implementation of these aspects of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE in the pre-primary and first six years of basic primary education that this study attempts to assess as well as the constraints.

Parents, teachers, students and the general public seem to be uninterested and some are unaware of this component of the NPE especially in the urban areas where the 'vernacular' is rarely spoken let alone written. It appears that efforts at implementation of these in the States have met with certain limitations resulting in the unpopularity and neglect of this laudable education policy. For instance, Afiesimama, 1995, Alagoa, 1995, and Ozuru and Okoh (2007) reported that in Rivers State of Nigeria, efforts at developing orthography in *kalabari* language died as a result of reduced interest and poor funding despite the fact that the University of Ibadan, the Ford Foundation and UNESCO were initially involved in funding the project. Afiesimama (1995) noted that the contributions of the Rivers Readers Project (RRP), a major landmark in the development of local languages in Rivers State, could be accounted for by the seminars and workshops organized to familiarize people with the importance of local languages in building the

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education sector and the textbooks (readers) it produced which were distributed by the State Ministry of Education to schools and libraries. He lamented that the RRP had been grossly neglected in the past many years because it was no longer being funded, successive governments never gave any encouragement, and there had not been any language planning at the State level since the early eighties. In the same vein, Ogomaka (2007) found in his survey in Imo State of Nigeria that the stipulations of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE were rarely followed and declared the ugly situation a great challenge to Nigerian linguists calling out for proper and serious 'homework' to produce/write rhymes in indigenous languages that present local/indigenous realities in pre-primary and primary schools. Also, Okediadi (2007) found that in Anambra State of Nigeria the stipulations of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE were not adhered to because teachers and pupils/their parents found them unnecessary, problematic, cumbersome, and useless in this digital globalization era. No wonder Kimiebi (2010) laments the inability of Nigeria to implement government policies thus:

Is this the hardy days of public policy implementation in Nigeria? Why it is that public policy implementation in Nigeria cannot record remarkable success in Nigeria? The Nigeria nation belongs to the league of underdeveloped states in the world. Despite the lofty public policies initiated by different administrations to promote development, success in most cases has been elusive due to low degree of implementation attributable to bad policy designs, lack of political will, corruption, misplaced priorities, ethnic biases and sectionalism among others which have continued to militate against public policy implementation success in the country.

It would be recalled that the need for a national policy on education came about as a result of the 1969 national Curriculum Conference which had in attendance a cross-section of Nigerians from all walks of life. It was a culmination of grave expressions of general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which was considered irrelevant to national needs, aspirations, and goals. To follow this up, a seminar of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within the country was convened in 1973. The seminar which included voluntary agencies and external bodies deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign nation like Nigeria should be. The outcome was a draft document which, after comments received from the States and other interest groups were duly considered, led to the final document titled the National Policy on Education (NPE), first published in 1977 and revised trice in 1981, 1998, and 2004 for relevance to the needs of the individual and the society in consonance with the realities of our environments and the modern world (FRN, 2004). Government also set up a National Education Policy Implementation Committee to translate the policy into workable blueprints that would guide

the bodies whose duties it would be to implement the various aspects of the policy, and to develop monitoring system for educational plan as it evolved (FRN, 2004). In view of these, one would expect that all was set in place to implement effectively and efficiently all aspects of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE. But this appears not to be so, and this, is the problem of this study. The investigator has observed with dismay that very little has been done in Nigeria concerning the implementation of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE at the pre-primary and primary levels. It is the empirical evidence that this study set out to investigate. Thus, the purpose of the study is to determine whether there were government guidelines for the implementation of the policy; whether there were specialized teachers trained to teach the mother-tongues; whether curriculum materials were supplied to public pre-primary and primary schools for the teaching of the various mother-tongues; whether mother-tongue was used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary and primary 1-3, and taught as a subject in primary 4-6; whether English was taught as a subject in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6. It also sought to compare the extent of implementation in urban and rural schools. Thus, the following research questions were raised from which one null hypothesis was formulated, for investigation.

Research Questions

1. Were there government guidelines for the implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE?
2. Were there specialized teachers trained for mother-tongue instruction?
3. Were curriculum materials supplied in schools for the teaching of mother-tongue?
4. Is mother-tongue used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary schools?
5. Is mother-tongue used as the medium of instruction in primary 1-3?
6. Is mother-tongue used as a medium of instruction in Primary 4-6?
7. Is mother-tongue taught as a subject in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6?
8. Is English used as medium of instruction in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6?
9. Is English taught as a subject in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6?
10. What are the major constraints to the successful implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE?
11. Is there any difference in the extent of implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE in urban and rural schools?

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Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the extent of implementation of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE in urban and rural schools.

METHODOLOGY

The research design is the ex-post facto design of a descriptive survey since the information sought has already occurred and there was no manipulation of variables. The population was all the public pre-primary and primary schools in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The population was delimited to those public primary schools that run both pre-primary and primary schools and are administered by an overall head-teacher. The sample was a total of 720 such schools selected through multi-stage random sampling to admit twenty schools from each of the thirty-six States of Nigeria with the Federal Capital Territory grouped under Niger State which is its geographical location. This was made up of 442 urban and 278 rural schools. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, scrutinized by experts in educational planning and administration and found valid in measuring what it intended to measure. Sixteen items elicited relevant information on the problem of the study with a four-to-one-point response option of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making. The internal consistency of the instrument was established through the split-half method with a satisfactory reliability index of 0.93.

The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of well-briefed third parties to the 720 head-teachers of the sampled schools who were the certified implementers of educational policies and programmes. It was not only convenient to wait and retrieve the completed forms same day in the schools visited but also tactical in eliciting immediate un-manipulated and un-discussed answers from the school administrators. Furthermore, the researcher supported the responses from the head-teachers by the informal interactions with teachers, supportive staff, and pupils regarding the problem of study in each school visited. These informal interviews were recorded by a hidden pocket recorder for obvious reasons. The exercise lasted for six months. The mean and t-test were used for data analysis.

RESULTS

The data collected were analyzed using mean ratings and the t-test, and the results presented in Tables 1 and 2. The result in Table 2 showed that the calculated value of $t = 0.047$ was lower than the critical value of $t = 1.960$,

therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there was no significant difference in the extent of implementation of the mother-tongue/language policy in urban and rural schools in Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean scores of responses on the mother-tongue/language implementation questionnaire (N = 720).

S/N	Items related to the Research Questions	Mean Score	Criterion Mean	Decision
1	There were government guidelines for the implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE.	1.12	2.50	Rejected
2	There were specialized teachers trained for mother-tongue instruction.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
3	There were curriculum materials supplied in schools for the teaching of mother-tongue.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
4	Mother-tongue is used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary schools.	1.15	2.50	Rejected
5	Mother-tongue is used as the medium of instruction in primary 1-3.	1.22	2.50	Rejected
6	Mother-tongue is taught as a subject in primary 4-6.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
7	Mother-tongue is taught as a subject in primary 1-3.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
8	Mother-tongue is taught as a subject in pre-primary school.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
9	English is used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary schools.	3.97	2.50	Accepted
10	English is used as the medium of instruction in primary 1-3.	3.98	2.50	Accepted
11	English is used as the medium of instruction in primary 4-6.	4.00	2.50	Accepted
12	English is taught as a subject in pre-primary schools.	4.00	2.50	Accepted
13	English is taught as a subject in primary 1-3.	4.00	2.50	Accepted
14	English is taught as a subject in primary 4-6.	4.00	2.50	Accepted
15	Mother-tongue is progressively dropped for English as the medium of instruction in primary 4-6.	1.00	2.50	Rejected
16	Major constraints to the successful implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE include:	4.00	2.50	Accepted
	Inadequate funding.	3.99	2.50	Accepted
	Lack of interest in the policy by pupils and teachers.	3.98	2.50	Accepted
	Confusion from disparity in the language of communication at home and in school.			
	Lack of needed textbooks, teaching aids, and specialized teachers.	3.97	2.50	Accepted

Table 2: Assessment of mother-tongue/language policy implementation in urban and rural schools

Variable	N	X	SD	df	t _{calculated}	t _{critical}	Decision p > 0.05
Urban Schools	442	1.32	0.73	718	0.047	1.960	Not significant
Rural Schools	278	1.37	0.78				

DISCUSSION

The results in Table 1 which answered research questions one to ten revealed the following findings:

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- 1) There were no government guidelines for the implementation of the mother-tongue component of the NPE.
- 2) There were no specialized teachers trained for mother-tongue instruction in schools.
- 3) There were no curriculum materials such as syllabus, textbooks and teaching aids, supplied in schools for the teaching of mother-tongue.
- 4) English and not mother-tongue was used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6.
- 5) Mother-tongue was not taught as a subject in the pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6.
- 6) English was taught as a subject in pre-primary, primary 1-3, and primary 4-6.
- 7) The major constraints to the successful implementation of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE were inadequate funding of the policy, lack of interest in the policy by pupils and teachers, confusion caused from disparity in the language of communication at home and in school, and lack of needed textbooks, teaching aids, and specialized teachers for the teaching of mother-tongue/language in pre-primary and primary schools.

The result in Table 2, which tested the only hypothesis formulated in the study, compared the extent of implementation of the policy in urban and rural schools and showed no significant difference between the two. However, the slightly higher mean score for rural schools indicated that mother-tongue was better used, especially in States where the same language was spoken by all. This was observed in the core northern States of Nigeria where everybody spoke the Hausa language.

The findings in this study tallied with those of Ozuru and Okoh (2007) who carried out a similar study in Rivers State of Nigeria, and also agreed with those of Ogomaka (2007) and Okediadi (2007) whose studies focused on the use of the Igbo mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in pre-primary and primary classes in Imo State of Nigeria and Awka South Educational Zone of Anambra State of Nigeria respectively. They all concluded that the stipulations of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE were not followed since inception in 1977. Besides, Oyetunde and Umoh's (1991) and World Bank's (2000) Report on Nigeria's primary education, cited in Tsumba (2004), noted that the vast majority of Nigerian children who pass out of public primary or secondary schools were neither literate in English nor in any Nigerian language. This typifies the hap-hazard manner in which the implementation of the language policy was carried out in schools as was observed in these studies. Teachers and students chose to do what pleased them while school authorities indulged them. The implication is that there is no commitment by educators, administrators, teachers, pupils and their parents, and the implementation/monitoring bodies set up by government, in actualizing the requirements of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE. There is also the likelihood that indigenous Nigerian languages could be facing extinction.

Although the constraints found in this study which also tallied with those by other researchers in Nigeria (Ogomaka, 2007; Okediadi, 2007; Ozuru and Okoh, 2007) seem genuine, a deeper thought tends to see them as being accepted by educational administrators and the generality of Nigerians as the status quo. Take for instance the dilemma between using English language and the vernacular or native language as the medium of instruction in schools in Nigeria. People still blame the colonial masters for all the failures in our educational system. How did the white man teach his English language to native Africans, Nigerians inclusive, who never knew an alphabet in English language, and succeeded? Did he use English to teach English or the vernacular to teach English? Historically, English language has been promoted since the Education ordinances of 1882, 1896, 1919, and 1926 which were all enacted to regulate educational practices of the time, making the teaching of English imperative for training all forms of auxiliary staff to assist the colonial administration. To this end, the study of English was highly emphasized and enforced in formal schooling. A pass in English in the colonial days was an essential prerequisite to obtaining a certificate in all examinations and being appointed in government service and commercial firms. The outcome was that English was held in high esteem to the attainment of set educational goals. Yes, because the white man was totally committed to achieving its goals of education and supported implementation with attractive incentives! The researcher vividly recalls her primary school years in the sixties when “laughing in vernacular” not to talk of “talking in vernacular” was a grievous class offence which attracted punishment by either paying a fixed amount of money as fine or doing menial punishment.

Today, fifty years after independence, knowledge in spoken and written English remains paramount in education since a fail in English language stagnates any learner at any point or level in the educational process. Students must have a credit score in English Language in certified external examinations to qualify for admission into higher institutions in Nigeria. Furthermore, students must pass English at the stipulated grade to earn any certificate or to move to the next education level in Nigeria while failure in mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community presents no threat whatsoever in the education process. This probably explains why most learners and teachers do not bother themselves at all with studying in the mother-tongue while they go to any length, including all sorts of examination malpractice, to ensure that they passed English language at all levels of education.

These revelations in Nigeria are quite worrisome since some other countries have successfully implemented the mother-tongue in schools and are still pursuing its perfection in spoken and written aspects. For instance in Italy, Paciotta (2009) reports that the Italian-Slovenian border represents a dynamic vantage point from which to observe how cultural and linguistic contact takes place and how minority groups have created educational strategies to preserve their cultural and linguistic diversity while striving for respectful coexistence with the dominant society. Slovene-medium schools,

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according to him, have been in existence since the 1800s, and, since 1961, they were recognized as K-13 Italian public schools devoted to the promotion of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Slovene national minority and have successfully educated generations of ethnic Slovenes in both their mother tongue and the national language. His study unveils teachers' and students' positive language attitudes and ideologies that have permitted the language minority-based schools to persist and function as a viable alternative to the national mainstream schools thus contributing to the debate on the benefits of bilingual education in academic achievement in the minority and dominant language and in minority language maintenance. Schools in the United States that have always conducted classes in an ethnic language were studied by Fishman and Markman (1979) in an attempt to correct a long-standing oversight in the development of bilingual education theory. They critically examined five of the assumptions that have guided ethnic communities in institutionalizing ethnic-language education: (1) Our language is responsible for our greatness and our authenticity (2) Since our language fosters our ethnicity it is morally and vitally necessary for us to maintain our language (3) Bilingualism and biculturalism are not only necessary but feasible societal arrangement for us in the USA (4) means of planning and organization we can strengthen our language and (5) Our school can make a significant independent contribution to the maintenance of our language.

However, as reported by De Korne (2010), the vitality of most indigenous languages in North America, like minority languages in many parts of the world, is at risk due to the pressures of majority languages and cultures. The transmission of mother-tongue through school-based programs is a wide-spread approach to maintaining and revitalizing threatened languages in Canada and the US, where a majority of indigenous children attend public schools. Policy for Indigenous language education (ILE) in public schools is controlled primarily on the regional (province/state/territory) level, and there is a lack of shared knowledge about policy approaches in different regions, as well as a lack of knowledge about effective ILE policy in general. While no ideal policy model is possible due to the diversity of different language and community contexts, there are several factors that have been identified as closely linked to the success of ILE. They include immersion approaches to education and community control of education. Using these two factors as an analysis framework, De Korne (2010) documents regional policies impacting ILE in Canadian and US public schools, showing that although there are many regions lacking ILE policy, there are a growing number of supportive ILE policies currently in place. He offers several recommendations for the development of future ILE policy, including the importance of diverse policy approaches, support for bilingual education in general, and further development of Indigenous language teacher training and Indigenous control of ILE.

Africa's educational systems are undergoing a quiet revolution. As these systems move away from working exclusively in the old colonial languages,

usually English or French, bilingual schools which use local indigenous languages are springing up in many regions of Africa. In 1997, for instance, a school's parent association in Burkina Faso was able to transform the unilingual school in their community to a bilingual school. Bilingual education means a transitional system starting with the children's first language and gradually transferring to another like English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, etc. Another characteristic of bilingual schools is that they add cultural activities (story-telling, songs, dance, music) and productive activities (agriculture, cattle rearing, wood/metal-working) to the basic curriculum. It is believed that bilingual education improves student and community participation and student-teacher relationships (Lavorie, 2008).

Perhaps this fascinating account of Yupanqui (2008) and the Quechua language in the Americas might throw some light on the need to keep the mother-tongue alive. Yupanqui, a theologian, professor, adviser to Peru presidents and, who at 85 now, still appears before his pupils in the Quechua language class each day in a tailored dark suit, has this to say about saving the Inca's mother-tongue: "When people communicate in Quechua, they glow; It is a language that persists five centuries after the conquistadors arrived; We cannot let it die...". Once the lingua franca of the Inca Empire, Quechua has long been in decline. But thanks to Túpac Yupanqui and others, Quechua, which remains the most widely spoken indigenous language in the Americas, is winning some new respect. Yupanqui's elegant translation of a major portion of "*Don Quixote*" has been celebrated as a pioneering development for Quechua, which in many far-flung areas remains an oral language. While the Incas spoke Quechua, they had no written alphabet, leaving perplexed archaeologists to wonder how they managed to assemble and run an empire without writing. Since the Spanish conquest, important writing in Quechua has emerged, but linguists and Quechua speakers hope that the new version of "*Don Quixote*" will be a step toward forming a public culture in the language, through Quechua magazines, television and books, that will keep its speakers engaged with the wider world. Microsoft has released translations of its software in Quechua, recognizing the importance of five million or so speakers of the language in Peru and millions elsewhere in the Andes, mainly in Bolivia and Ecuador. Not to be outdone, Google has a version of its search engine in Quechua even if some linguists say that these projects were carried out more for corporate image polishing than for practical reasons. The workings of Andean democracy are also reminding the world of Quechua's importance. The government of President Evo Morales of Bolivia, for instance, is trying to make fluency in Quechua or another indigenous language mandatory in the civil service. In Peru, two legislators from the highlands have begun using Quechua on the floor of congress. And President Alan García signed a law prohibiting discrimination based on language, even though its precise workings remain unclear.

These are small steps for a language threatened by the dominance of both Spanish and English amid Peru's feverish link-up with the global economy following a bloody civil war in the last decades of the 20th century. Few

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people have toiled as long and hard as Mr. Túpac Yupanqui to give Quechua a fighting chance to survive a few centuries longer. In 1968, a group of leftist military officers led by Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado staged a coup. General Velasco's government, an anomaly in an era when right-wing dictators ruled much of South America, promoted equal rights for indigenous groups and decreed Quechua to be on an equal legal footing with Spanish. "A language cannot become official if a country is unprepared to train its school-teachers to lecture in it; No language is given life through something as fleeting as a decree" said Yupanqui, who advised General Velasco on some of the policies. He soldiered on after that earlier idealistic push for Quechua, and after a stint in politics as spokesman for President Fernando Belaúnde Terry in the early 1980s, he returned to teaching Quechua at his one-room academy on the second floor of his home, where he still lives with some of his nine children. He also continued making translations into Quechua, completing his work on "Don Quixote," in 2006, a rare accomplishment in what has essentially been an oral language for more than a thousand years. "The translation of *Quixote* is important not as a curiosity, but as a sign of what is to be done on a broader scale in the Andean republics if Quechua speakers are to be brought fully into their respective national communities," said Bruce Mannheim, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan who specializes in Quechua. Indeed, the intricacies of the translation were celebrated by linguists and literary critics alike, recognizing the challenges involved in translating the antiquated Spanish of Cervantes into a living language that, somewhat like Chinese or Arabic, has diverging dialects that can be mutually unintelligible. Yupanqui's eyes still light up when he discusses the grammar of Quechua (seven pronouns!) and what can be done to make it more resilient, like more radio projects and teaching it in schools alongside English. He said, "If Latin is said to be the language of the angels, then Quechua is the language for expressing the subtleties of existence on earth, and, that is why it is still alive."

It appears that sufficient homework was not done especially with regards to feasibility before the mother-tongue policy went into operation considering also the conclusion of Ogomaka (2007), Okediadi (2007), Ozuru and Okoh (2007), who all declared the dismal state of the implementation of the policy/programme in Imo, Anambra, and Rivers State of Nigeria respectively. Ogomaka (2007: 8) in concluding his paper on 'Some reforms in pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria' declared that "the use of mother-tongue as a medium of instruction is a mirage." This becomes worrisome when Nigeria's educational system was founded on the philosophy of education for self-reliance and equality of opportunities, with the belief that the mother-tongue/language policy is one of the means of achieving self-reliance and equality as well as encouraging equality cross-culturally. The present study which assessed the whole of Nigeria is of the view, just as indicated by Ozuru and Okoh (2007), that there is need to begin now to support the programme with materials, relevant curriculum, teacher training and supply, consultancy with language planning agencies in and outside Nigeria, and

critical evaluation for useable feedback. It was Aghenta (1998) a professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations, University of Benin, Nigeria, in a forward to the book, *Educational Management for Sub-Saharan Africa*, who wrote that in the face of overwhelming odds in Nigeria today, arising from school population explosion, shortage of personnel (teachers) particularly in critical areas, shortage of funds, teachers' frustration, students' unwillingness to learn and parents' lack of co-operation, educational management which emphasizes planning and administration in a forceful or military fashion so as to be able to control the desperate educational situation (in Nigeria and Africa) is now in vogue. It is therefore imperative that school administrators in Nigeria, with respect to the prevailing school complexities, must begin to act as managers of education who must pursue effectiveness and efficiency militantly to achieve laudable national policies like the mother-tongue/language policy. This policy/programme should not be allowed to die like it seems to be doing now.

CONCLUSION

By reason of the empirical evidence revealed in the results/findings of this study, we can unequivocally declare that the implementation of the mother-tongue/language component of the NPE is a colossal failure in Nigeria. The implication of the findings of this study is that both the practice and preference of the education stakeholders in Nigeria are at variance with the provisions of the mother-tongue/language policy made by government. The major culprit is the Nigerian government who planned the policy but failed to live up to its obligations at ensuring effective and efficient implementation. On the other end, it was obvious that the educational administrators in schools who are the implementers of government policies and programmes did nothing tangible in terms of instructional supervision to encourage the teachers and students at mother-tongue usage while parents posed as stumbling blocks from the home front. It is disquieting to note that this laudable component of the NPE, with its enumerated benefits and cross-cultural potentials of uniting a nation in diversity like Nigeria, attracted a total neglect at implementation. It is our view that the policy be properly revisited to keep it alive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions from this study and bearing in mind the numerous and obvious educational, political, social and cultural reasons for mother-tongue, we make the following recommendations:

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- ✓ A language planning agency should immediately be co-opted or instituted to fine-tune and ensure the three-major-part responsibility of the model language planning process, namely, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This will also take care of the observed un-coordinated use of mother-tongue in schools.
- ✓ There is need for adequate financial backing and support of the language policy/programme so that the human and physical resources necessary for successful implementation could be adequately provided in the right quantity and quality for meaningful achievement. For instance, teachers, textbooks, language laboratories, computer services are today among the major factors that determine the quality and proper implementation of any educational programme. The best of teachers would not yield the best of harvest without the best of tools, and the reverse equally holds.
- ✓ Echoing the suggestions of Ozuru and Okoh (2007) we support and bring to the limelight the following ideas: that popular support is required to implement effectively the mother-tongue/language policy since homes and adults tend to continue to adopt English as a first language and are unwilling to shift grounds. This is necessary because the use to which individuals put a language is very remarkable in the advancement of the frontiers of that language. For instance, many Nigerian families are now grooming the children on English as first language creating a huge disparity between the home and the school. The obvious implication is that the mother-tongue is dying, in fact, threatened by extinction, in an inverse relation to the growth of the younger generation. If they use it in songs, rhymes, riddles, poetry, literary creativity and writing in general, the impact on the entire population will be unsuspecting but effective as it will be pervasive.
- ✓ Speakers of a particular language and philanthropic bodies can form language groups and associations and support the associations financially and morally to develop and promote the language; State and Local Governments as well as NGOs, religious bodies, and the media can embark on vigorous enlightenment and mobilization campaigns to re-orient the people.
- ✓ Professional linguists should study Nigerian languages with genuine interest and moral obligation to develop them to acceptable standards to satisfy the global market and not merely for academic and psychic gains.
- ✓ Political processes could allow state creation on the basis of ethnic grouping to enable them benefit from whole-state-single-language group than states in which there are multiple ethnic groups since it is known that divided efforts yield poor results in language development programme (Ake, 1996; Crozier and Blench, 1992; Saro-Wiwa, 1999). On the other hand it may be feasible to adopt and develop the 'broken English or pidgin English' a corrupt version of the Queen's grammar that almost every adult in Nigeria speaks relatively well, both at home and at work, as the language of instruction.
- ✓ Nigeria should study and learn from other countries who have successfully implemented the mother-tongue.

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