Repositioning Nigeria's Education Through Language Education

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Abstract

Language Education is an integral aspect of education that remains a useful factor for developing education. It has the potential of enriching the people's understanding about themselves and the environment. It has the ability to improve the quality of life and contributes to improve the social advantages of the people in the society. Education has the ability to increase the productivity of the people, however, Nigeria's education has a lot of challenges that call for repositioning. This paper seeks to establish the repositioning of Nigeria's education through language education. The challenges of ignoring language education leads to the destructive and poor nature of education in Nigeria. The functional nature of language education improves the educational success and stability of Nigeria's education. Nigeria's education needs restructuring through Language Education. This restructuring of Nigeria's education will place education in Nigeria in its proper place for the overall development of Nigeria. It is recommended that more attention should be given to language education in all tiers of education in Nigeria by both the government and private sector.

Key words: Language education, Nigeria's education, repositioning.

Introduction

Education is a vital factor responsible for the growth and development of every nation of the world. Nigeria as a nation needs education for her development. It is unfortunate that education on Nigeria is bisected with myriads of problems. These problems according to Birabi et al (2021) includes; lack of functioning language education, poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, inadequate teaching aids, paucity of quality teachers and poor/populated learning environment. Education still remains the engine-room for the growth and development of any nation, including Nigeria. Nevertheless, the decay in Nigeria's education calls for a repositioning to achieve a maximum expectation. This paper considers this repositioning from the perspective of language education. Repositioning is an improve change in the educational sector for the achievement of the expected goal of Nigeria's education. According to Bieswanger (2009) the relationship between language and education is multifaceted and has always been at the art of applied linguistics. The field of language education covers a wide range of topics from language teaching and acquisition to questions of language planning and policy to linguistic/human rights, particularly in the context of linguistics diversity and language change. The diversity of interdisciplinary nature of language and education according to Mbu (2019) consist of the following: i) language policy and

political issues in education 2) Literary concepts, 3) oral discourse and education 4) second language education.

Language

Language refers to a system of communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of sounds, words gesture and/ or symbols in a structured and conventional pattern. Language is a code of communication used by particular language speakers. Language is the ability to learn and use a system of communication to describe a set of rules (Anukam, 1999). Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and needs using voluntarily produced symbols. Obasi and Oku (2002) see language as a system which consists of symbols that convey meaning plus rules for combining those symbols, that can be used to generate an infinite variety of messages.

Besides the numerous definitions of language, language is a supernatural gift from God that portrays the culture, life, attitude and activities of a set of language speakers. In this light, it is language that defines the people and specifies one group of people from another. Language defines the identity of a set of language speakers. A group of language speakers should be able to project and popularize their native language to the world. There are various ways to ensure that language projects the people and their culture. The first language or mother tongue or indigenous language should be spoken by the language speakers without any form of fear or hindrance. It should be used in the naming of their children. The naming and renaming of places, roads, streets, towns, estates, cities etc; should be done by using indigenous languages. Language is the principal and richest means of communication used by humans. It is the foundational tool of communication. It is interacting with every other aspect of human life in the society, Language thus functions primarily as a spoken means of communication.

Language Education

Language education is the teaching and learning of foreign or second language. It has to do with language policy and planning. Language education is an acquisition of specialized knowledge, skills, and other capabilities in language. It is the study of language arts which in effect involves the understanding of the nature and importance of knowledge as a vehicle for communication and insight into the importance of language as a vehicle for the teaching of all course/subject in all field of studies in education.

Language education is not only the teaching and learning of foreign or second languages but also the teaching and learning of indigenous languages as well. Language education is the study of a particular language art which in effect involves the understanding of the nature and importance of language as a vehicle for communication and insight into the processes of language development (Oruwari, 2017). There are four basic skills of language; listening skill, speaking skill, writing skill and reading skill (Mbu, 2019). The four language skills should be intentionally and willfully developed and improved upon by respective communities of language speakers. The successful improvement in these four skills will greatly popularize the respective local languages in Nigeria.

Haddy (2011) posits that the study of language education is based on the general importance of language as an instrument for human activities. Mbu and Nwadua (2023) consider that language is the sole means of inculcating knowledge, skills and competence into the learners. Language learners should be equipped with a deeper understanding of the science and skills of the language. In equipping language learners, Mbu and Nwadua (2023) observe that the pace of learning a language should be accelerated and the younger generation should have a high level of cultural, scientific, political, socio-economic and technological advancement. Language education is a bridge that empowers language speakers to

communicate and share ideas with people of different cultural backgrounds (Usman & Jonathan, 2021).

Language Teaching

Language teaching, according to Mbu and Nwadua (2023) is the essential research resource for language professionals in providing a rich and expert overview of research in the field of both first and second language teaching and learning. According to Iloka (2015), language teaching offers critical survey articles of recent research on specific topics in first, second or foreign languages and invites original research articles reporting on replication studies and meta-analyses. In his submission, Brumfirt (2023) recognizes that language teaching showcases the award of an essay prize which honours the teaching and learning process. Language teaching is teaching learners to speak and understand the language at hand. According to Henry and David (2018), language teaching ensures proficiency on the part of the language speakers.

According to Oruwari (2017), language teaching is not a simple process. A language teacher must have scientific approach to teach a language. Language teaching is beyond a language teacher teaching students first and second language as a course of study but also involves all kind of teaching that are done either through first or second language.

Importance of Language Teaching

The essence of language teaching cannot be over emphasized. Language communication is the essence of man's general infraction on earth. Language communication creates room for intra personal and interpersonal communication, group communication and mass communication. It should be noted that proficiency in language communication could be of no or little effects in the absence of language teaching (Mbu, 2019).

In specific terms therefore language teaching is important hat.

1. It perfects proficiency in monolingual environment.
2. Proficiency is attended in a bilingual community.
3. Multilingual, a multilingual speaker excels prominently in the midst of language teaching.
4. The second language situation is prominent and effective because of language teaching.
5. In Nigeria, English Language as L2 is used for instructional function in all institutions of learning.
6. Second language teaching in the primary and secondary schools makes way for students to stand out as they find themselves in the tertiary institutions and beyond.
7. It improves and facilitates the setting/conducting of almost all examinations in Nigeria. Majority of exams (NECO, WAEC, JAMB, undergraduate and post graduate examination), are sets with the English language as a second language.
8. Most parastatals, establishments and industries etc, ensure that all officials jobs and documentations are done with the second language (English language). If the workers/officials/participants are not grounded in English language through language teaching, the entire system would have been in a serious mess.
9. All national and international relationships are effective and successful through the effective application of English language, as L2.
10. Administratively, from the Local Government Area, the States and to the Federal, English Language (L2) is in effective use.
11. Religiously, almost all churches can testify success because of the proper utilization of English language as a second language. The teaching of language has made it possible for preachers to be efficient and effective in preaching and evangelism.

12. Culturally, the level of inter cultural relationship, understanding and co-operation is increasingly intact because of the effective use of L2. In NYSC, Corpse members from different language and cultural background are transferred to different language and cultural environments/communities (Ani-Ebere, 2004).
13. In business transaction, the major instrument that encourages business effectiveness is language communication. Business sustains the entire world and what sustains business is language communication. Language communication is sustained through language teaching. How then can one underrate language teaching?
14. In education, from the primary through secondary, polytechnic, colleges to the university, second language use is the focus. All forms of teaching, administrations, examinations, entrances, continuous assessments, test, researches etc., are concluded through the use of English language and other languages. The proper implementation of language teaching makes way for effective application of L2 in all the educational levels.

The improvement of Nigeria education is therefore depending on language teaching. Nigeria education is therefore changing on the proper and effective use of language teaching methods. According to Mbu (2019) language teaching is directed towards the development of the individual. Language teaching improves the intellectual ability of the learners. Language teaching encourages the language teachers to provide students with the required knowledge and skills, attitude and values. Language teaching assists language teachers become aware of the importance of enhancing students' learning and their life chances. Language teaching improves learners, academic performances, learners, growth, development and leadership qualities.

Language Learning

Language learning is mainly the development of the ability to communicate in a second /foreign language. It is a productive act which starts at birth and progresses throughout life. Hassan (2004) notes that learners learn languages as they activate and put into use to communicate their emotions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They use it to establish relationships with family members and friends and try to make an impact in their language community and beyond. Ugwuanyi (2012) observes that language acquisition is a subconscious process identical to the process that children utilize in acquiring their first language. In the acquisition of language, much time and energy are not involved as compared to language learning. As the children integrate fully into their language community both in the family and outside, they unconsciously grasp the language as they interact with parents, brothers/sisters, other family members, peer groups, friends, and other community members in the language community. Language acquisition is always attached to the first language while language learning is directed to a second or foreign language (Otagburuagu, 2004).

The consciousness of the importance of local languages is fast emerging, in that some Nigerian languages like Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are studied in school and are even written in WAEC exams. In some states of the federation, local languages are made compulsory both in the primary and secondary schools. More emphasis should be placed on indigenous languages because no language that is better than the other in the entire world. It has been established that some languages are more popular than others because of their popularity in the number of users and the extent of the usage. Examples are English Language, French Language and Arabic Language. In Nigeria, the Hausa language, Yoruba language and Igbo language are considered more popular than the other Nigerian languages. All languages in the world are equal since the basic aim of all languages is for communication and all languages are used by all language speakers for this purpose. All languages in the world are given to us by God basically for communication reasons, thus no language should be looked down on. It is the responsibility of

the language users in their various language communities and beyond to project, popularize and value their respective languages. Nigerian colonial masters have excelled in this direction to the extent of imposing their languages on us. They assigned names to Nigeria, Nigerian towns and cities. Some Nigerian roads are named in foreign languages. Religiously, Nigerian Christians are blindfolded to adopt English and biblical names as best for Nigerian children. This is the doctrine of baptismal names, church or Christian names in the church. By these acts many Christian parents succeed in assigning two names to children; "one is a baptismal name while the other is a local name". Subsequently, such children with two names later in life drop the local name and parade all through life with the church /baptismal name.

By allowing and agreeing to the imposition of a second language /foreign language / baptismal language in naming their children, Nigerian Christian parents and others have subjected themselves to the bondage of modern-day slavery. The three important questions worthy to ask are: How many personalities of British origin, American origin, Canadian origin, Portuguese origin, French origin, Roman origin, Italian origin, Scottish origin, Hebrew origin etc, will name their children with Nigerian indigenous languages? Which of the churches in the above-listed foreign countries will allow the baptismal names of the members' children names be sealed or done in Nigerian local languages? Which of the children from any of the foreign countries named above will grow up to accept names in Nigerian indigenous languages?

Education

Education is derived from two Latin words "educere which means "to lead out" and "educare" which means "to bring up". This implies that education bring out skills and build them up. Education is a social creation, designed to meet the specific needs of the society at any definite point in time. Education plays a role of preparing or nurturing people to live in society and therefore play some functions in the society. Education also is an academic interaction which takes place between the teacher and the student under the supervision of the teacher so as to bring about the expected change in the behaviour of the student. Education is a socializing factor that pus all its beneficiaries together with the necessary tools such as knowledge, skills, attitude, cultural values, language and social skills to enable them conform to the desires and expectation of the society.

Odeleye (2009) stressed that education remains one of the fundamental factors of development as it has the potential of enriching people's understanding. Onwumere (2011) noted that education is the pivot on which national development revolves. It is the springboard for socio-political, economic and cultural development that enhances the production of skilled manpower for national development. In his contribution, Mbu, (2019) considered education as a special discipline that is basically connected with method of teaching and learning in school-like environment. Education is generally geared towards national development. Mbu also emphasized that education is the transmission of values and accumulation knowledge of a society and that education is organized to guide learners in learning a culture, molding the learners' behaviour and leading the learners to occupy their responsibilities in the society.

Nigeria Educational System

The educational system in Nigeria is of four levels. The first is informal and the remaining there are formal educational system. They are as follows according to Birabi et al (2020).

i. **Pre-primary Education:** This refers to the early child care and development education. This level is informal but it is meant for children of the age range of 2 to 5 years. These schools were established under degree No. 16 of 1985 (National minimum standards and establishment of institutions). It is run as day care centers and nursery/

kindergarten schools by private agencies and individuals. The major objectives are to cultivate and inculcate appropriate schooling attitude and awareness into the young child.

ii. **Primary Education:** This refers to the first level of formal educational system which makes provision of a six-year study for children within the bracket of 6 to 12 years. This is the officially recognized beginning point of Nigeria education. The goal of the level of education is to prepare for a broad-based education with concern on the attainment of permanent and functional literacy, numeracy and effective communicative skills.

iii. **Secondary Educational Level:** This level of education in Nigeria that s divided into two stages: The Junior Secondary Stage (JSS 1 – JSS 3) and the Senior Secondary School stage (SSS 1 – SSS 3. The children are required to site for and pass the Junior secondary school certificate examination (JSSCE). Those set of students that could not cope with formal education are to acquire vocational skills. The senior secondary stage of education put into consideration the ability, attitude and interest of the students in the selected subjects. The evaluation and certification of the students are based on continuous basement and external examination like WASC and NECO.

iv. **Tertiary Educational Level:** This is the post-secondary educational level. Students who are successful from the secondary educational level move into this level of tertiary education. This level includes the university, polytechnics, college of health and college of education. The objectives of this tertiary education include the development of intellectual capacity to understand and appropriate the environment and the acquisition of the need skills in selected field of study.

Challenges of Nigeria's education

The challenges of Nigeria's education are indeed numerous. They include not only the following:

1. Poor educational management (2) poor libraries and laboratory equipment (3) politicization of education (4) Poor students' interest to teacher education (5) Poor teachers welfare (6) Placement of value on paper qualification (7) Poor infrastructural facilities (8) Poor attitude of teachers and students to teaching and learning (9) Regular strike actions (10) Poor planning (11) Poor implementation of educational policy (12) Poor utilization of educational research findings (13) Poor payment of teachers salary (14) Poor parental guidance (15) Poor funding by the government.

Repositioning

This refers to a change that is made to meet a target. It is an intentional adjustment that as directed towards achieving a set goal. As it concerns education, repositioning is the various strategies and efforts by all stakeholders of education both private and public targeted improving all sectors of education in all ramifications which to a great extent include utilization of language education, training and retraining of language teachers, compressive classroom management, adequate funding, adequate infrastructural facilities, effective curriculum planning and implementation etc.

According to Onwumere (2011), repositioning of education from the perspective of language education also includes such educational change that leads to complete development of the individual and the society. Teachers' education students in all field of study through the use of language (language education). Among all the factors that affect any nation's education, language factor is prominent thus, language education is needed for educational repositioning.

Language education and Nigeria Education

According to Mbu (2019), language education is a special discipline that is basically connected with methods of teaching and learning in school. Language teaching is an integral part of language education. Language education which embraces language teaching is the basics for the entire process of teaching and learning in the entire educational institution.
All subjects and courses of study are done through the act of language teaching, without language teaching, the act of teaching and learning which is the core activity in the nation's education will not be possible. The relationship between language and education is multifaceted and has always been at the art of applied linguistics. Language and education are International and inter-disciplinary fold of significance and cohesion. (Joda et al, 2019). The education of any nation is strengthened and improved upon by the effective utilization of language education. The effective sustainability of quality education is strongly depending on the comprehensive application of language education in all levels of education (Azikiwe, 2007). Language education is basically he teaching of either first or second language to learners and the teaching of all subjects/courses through language. In this regard, language education is one of the basics of education. They are completely inter-woven and are inseparable.

Conclusion

Nigeria education has over the years been in a state of disarray because of the numerous challenges as noted in the paper. There are always threats of strike actions in Nigeria's educational system. It becomes a general habit that the rich and the opportune prefer sending their children, wards and subject to abroad to study. this act has to a large extent reduce Nigeria's education to a state of mockery. Effective utilization of language education as an act of repositioning will to a large extent improve the standard of Nigeria's education.

Way forward

The following are recommended for a repositioning of Nigeria's education.

1. Language teachers should be properly motivated as it concerns salary, allowances and other welfare packages by the government/employers.
2. Government should provide language teaching equipment and other teaching aids.
3. The government should sponsor language teachers for seminars, workshops and other refresher courses.
4. There should be effective supervision of language teachers to ensure that they are up to standard and teacher education should be improved upon.
5. Government should encourage language teachers in carrying out researches in language education.

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