

Multilingual Education in Nigeria: Policy, Practice, Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract

Due to the linguistic plurality of Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) assigned different functions to the many languages in the nation's education. The outcome of this is that more than one language is used both in the classroom and the course of a child's education especially in the pre and lower primary schools. This paper examined the current practice of multilingual education in Nigeria pre and lower primary schools and the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation of the NPE. Questionnaires were administered to answer research questions on the following variables – students' attitude, parental factors and lack of materials. The research instrument was validated with reliability co-efficient of 0.68. Data were analysed using simple percentage descriptive statistics and results revealed that the implementation of the multilingualism provisions of the NPE is particularly poor in the private schools. Solutions were then suggested to the various problems discovered.

Keywords: Multilingual Education, Multilingualism, Mother Tongue, Language of the Immediate Environment.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a West African nation with a population of about 140 million people (Ajulo (2008)). It covers an area of 923,766 square kilometers, with over 200 different ethnic groups. Presently, the country is politically composed of 36 States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. It is estimated that over 400 languages are spoken in Nigeria (Crozier and Blench (1992), Elugbe (1994)). Kari (2002) analysed the linguistic situation of Nigeria by stating that of the four phyla (Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic, Khoisan) to which African languages are grouped, three phyla are represented in the Nigerian linguistic terrain. These language phyla are Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic.

Ogunyemi (2009) while trying to quote the exact number of languages in Nigeria states that there is a lot of controversy on the actual number of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Greenberg (1971) puts the figure at 248, Bamgbose (1976) estimates it at 400 while Hoffman (1975) puts it between 400 and 513 living. Oyetayo (2006) presents a more comprehensive analysis of the Nigerian linguistic situation by identifying 510 living languages and nine extinct languages. This brings the total number of indigenous languages (both living and extinct) in Nigeria to 519. Thus Oyetade (1995) cited by Kolawole (1996) aptly describes Nigeria as a linguistically fragmented country.

As a linguistic heterogeneous nation, Nigeria qualifies as a good example of a multilingual nation with its accompanying problems of language choice, planning and implementation. According to Olagbaju (2009:4), Nigeria is a perfect example of a multilingual nation with the resultant effect of the majority of her citizens having access to a minimum of two languages. Therefore, there are individuals who are bilingual or multilingual either in the indigenous languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) or indigenous languages and the English language (Igbo, Yoruba and English).

When a nation has access to more than a language in her national day – to – day experience, then the reality of a language contact situation cannot be ruled out. Language contact as explained by Ajulo (2008) is a situation which arises whenever there is a meeting of speakers who do not all share the same language and who need to communicate. When the communicative needs of such people go beyond what gestures and other paralinguistic signals can achieve, the use of a second language becomes necessary. Thus, in a bid to cater for all the languages and assign responsibility to each; there is a need for language planning, policy development and implementation. To this end, an official document first published in 1977 (revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004) titled the National Policy on Education (NPE) has made explicit what could be described as a national language in education policy. The policy prescribed the medium of instruction to be used at various levels of education as well as languages to be taught at different stages of Nigerian education and for how long. The policy states that the medium of instruction during the pre-primary school stage shall be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment. At the primary school level, the medium of instruction shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years while English shall be taught as a school subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction while the language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects. At the secondary school level, English shall also be the language of instruction the while language of the environment, one major Nigerian language other than that of the environment (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) and French shall be taught as school subjects.

Languages perform different roles such as official (language of the government), legislative, educational, social (language of the mass media) etc in a nation. The scope of this paper however will be on the role of language in education. Obanya (2004: 153) opines that language in education can either be the languages taught and learnt in the educational system or the languages used for educating at various levels and sectors of a national system. This paper examines the use of three languages or more in education – both as languages taught/learnt and languages used for instructional purposes. Microsoft Encarta (2009) explains multilingualism as a mastery of multiple languages and a person is multilingual if he or she knows several languages. Multilingual education is the use of three or more languages in the educational system.

Although the NPE can be said to favour the use of more than two languages in education but in implementation, very little has been done or achieved in this regard. Scholars (Taiwo (1976), Emenanjo (1985), Obanya (1998), Ogunbiyi (2008), Olagbaju (2009)) have tried to ascertain the different factors responsible for the poor implementation of the multilingual provisions of the NPE and the list include: the negative attitude of students, parental factors, ambiguities in the policy and lack of materials. These variables are some of the challenges facing the adoption and complete use of indigenous languages in modern education

Having presented the prevailing language situation in Nigeria (which is predominantly multilingual), this paper hopes to ascertain the level of multilingual education in Nigeria by finding out the policy provisions, reality on ground, investigating challenges and solutions. To achieve the set objectives of this study, the following questions are raised and answered in this study:

1. Are teachers aware of the multilingual education provisions of the NPE?
2. What according to teachers is the attitude of the students to multilingual instruction or education in class?
3. Do teachers implement the multilingual provisions of the NPE?
4. Do teachers see parents as being supportive of the use of multilingual education in school?
5. Are there enough (text and non- text) materials to implement the multilingual education provisions of the NPE in schools?

Multilingualism Education in Nigeria: Policy Provisions

There are arguments and counter claims as to the availability of an explicit National Language Policy in Nigeria. Scholars (Emenanjo (1985), Oyetade (2003)) opine that Nigeria does not have a well - articulated and explicit national language policy that can be found in one document. From the immediate foregoing, Oyetade (2003: 107) states that:

There has not been a comprehensive language policy for Nigeria as a deliberate and planned exercise. Indeed, language planning as an organized and systematic pursuit of solutions to language problems has remained largely peripheral to the mainstream of national planning. What can be regarded as our language policy came about in the context of other more centrally defined national concerns, such as the development of a National Policy on Education and the drafting of a Constitution for the country. It is in connection with these two documents, i.e. the National Policy on Education and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that we can talk about language policy and planning in Nigeria.

However, some other scholars (Ajibola 2008 and Ogunyemi 2009) in their recent studies consider the provisions of the NPE as being explicit enough. To them the National Policy on Education (NPE) has made explicit what could be described as a national language in education policy. The National Policy on Education (**NPE 2004**),

Section 1, Paragraph 10a states:

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

The (b) aspect of the paragraph states:

For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in Primary and the Junior Secondary Schools but Non – vocational elective at the Senior Secondary School.

The provision of the NPE (2004), Section 4, Paragraph 19 (e) and (f) cited below confirms the existence of multilingual education of the Nigerian educational system:

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of

instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.

The excerpts above confirm that the government is concerned with resolving the issues surrounding multilingualism and its attendant challenges which is a prominent factor in the Nigerian educational system. Onukaogu (2008) opines that the government through the National Policy on Education (NPE) sought to deliberately promote bilingualism/biliteracy and multilingualism/multiliteracy in Nigeria through formal education. Emenanjo (1985) concludes that the NPE advocates multilingualism as the national goal because it has assigned a minimum of at least three languages to be used in the course of educating an individual in the system.

The National Policy on Education allows the use of more than one language in the Nigerian educational system. Although, English later assumes the status of the language of instruction from the fourth year of the primary school education, other languages still function alongside the English language in the school system. By implication, the policy intends to expose an average Nigerian child to be at least three languages in the course of his or her education thereby making the recipients of such system of education multilingual, multiliterate and multicultural.

Emenanjo (1985) describes the NPE as a multidimensional, multi-lingual three tier political statement which tries to capture the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature of Nigeria. The three tier approach of the National Policy on Education provides for the mother-tongue (MT) and/or Language of the immediate community (LIC), the three major (national) Languages - Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (as L2 or the languages of national culture and integration) and English (the official language) as the language of formal literacy, the bureaucracy, government and the law courts etc. The policy also makes provision for French (as the second official language) in order to ensure smooth interaction between Nigerians and their French speaking neighbours.

Awobuluyi (1992) captures the sincerity of the government at making every Nigerian learner a multilingual through the multilingual provisions in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Awobuluyi (1992) cites a portion of the 1989 constitution dealing with the educational objectives of state policy. The subsection in question, viz: sub-section 19(4), states that "Government shall encourage the learning of indigenous languages." Although, it is not providentially cast in such general terms as allows it to be easily read as fully sanctioning everything the Government had done up to that point in time in regard to the teaching of the indigenous languages. But in a way, it sanctions the NPE which requires the teaching (both at the Primary and Junior Secondary School levels) of the child's mother tongue or, in the alternative, some indigenous language of immediate community. Awobuluyi (1992) concludes that since there is nothing specifically said there to the contrary, it can also be readily construed as permitting the teaching of the three major indigenous languages as second languages.

Studies on Multilingual Education in Nigeria

The NPE supports the practice of multilingual education but the reality on ground is far from the provisions of the policy. Olagbaju (2009: 3) opines that although the National Policy on Education supports multilingualism education; in practice, most private nursery and primary schools teach even the pre-primary and junior primary classes using the English language as the medium of instruction without any restriction from the ministry of education officials who are never available. These so called 'private schools' do not allow the use of other languages either as the language of instruction or a school subject apart from the English language in the school system. Ogunbiyi (2008) asserts that despite the provisions of the NPE and the position of the government on the status of the English language and other Nigerian languages in education, some schools still relegate Nigerian languages to the background and promote the teaching of English and French languages.

Emenanjo (1985) opines that the policy is difficult to implement because the statements contained in the NPE are laced with ambiguity. Emenanjo (1985) points out some of the lapses in the National policy on education and these questions are:

- (i) Don't the statements in the policy constitute just a statement of intent rather than a serious programme for implementation?
- (ii) If the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community is considered so important at the pre-primary level as an integral part of a child's culture and the link between the home and the school, why should it be 'principally' and not 'solely' used at this level?
- (iii) How do people identify the languages of the immediate environment in pluralistic settings like the urban centres or international communities like universities?
- (iv) Why is the policy silent on pidgin – one of the country's major languages?

It is rather unfortunate that most of the stakeholders in the education industry are not aware of the multilingual provisions of the National Policy on Education. This is mostly as a result of infiltration of the teaching profession by individuals who have not studied education in their higher institutions of learning. Emenanjo (1985) observes that there is still lack of awareness on the part of highly placed ministry officials:

supervisors/inspectors of education, principals/headmasters of schools and practicing teachers of the multilingual provisions of the National Policy on Education.

This lack of awareness, on its part, is responsible for a number of factors that are militating against the successful implementation of the provisions for multilingual education as contained in the language policy. Some of these factors are: relatively inferior status accorded Nigerian languages in the school system in particular and the society in general, non-sponsorship of practicing teachers to relevant courses, conferences and seminars on languages, lack of incentives by way of in-service courses with attendant incremental benefits for serving teachers, and bursaries, scholarships for would be teachers (Emenanjo (1985)).

Nothing has really changed from the situation described by Emenanjo (1985) above. This is because the system of education in Nigeria places much emphasis on success at credit pass level in the English language in external examinations before a candidate can secure admission into a higher institution of learning. The effect of this is that both parents and students have very low or poor motivation to use Nigerian languages in education. Parents prefer to send their children to schools where they speak or make use of English language only. Osborn (2007) cited in Olagbaju (2009) submits that the language of education even now remains predominantly English.

Emenanjo (1985) citing some of the observations made by the 'Panel on the teaching of Igbo in the Imo State school system and the implementation of the National language policy' states that the panel observed that Igbo is not being taught or tolerated in most nursery schools in the state. Also, Igbo is not seriously and consistently used as the medium of instruction in the 'junior' primary classes nor is it being seriously taught as a 'core' subject in the upper primary classes. The observation by Emenanjo (1985) above is not peculiar to Igbo and Imo State; this is because the percentage of indigenous language teachers nationwide is considerably low when compared with other disciplines. As a result of this, the few schools that want to implement the multilingual provisions of the NPE either lack the teachers or the materials to embark on such lofty ideas.

Although the National Policy on Education provides for the practice of multilingual education in the Nigerian school system, the problem as always, is the implementation. The government is slack in the area of enforcing the multilingual provisions of the NPE in the school and so, there is a total collapse of multilingualism in our system of education especially in the private - owned primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

Multilingual Education in Nigeria: The Challenges.

The multi – ethnic nature of Nigeria is a barrier to the successful implementation of the multilingual provisions of the policy. Oyetade (2003) asserts that the problems associated with the use of indigenous languages as media of instruction or as school subjects as stated in the NPE (that every Nigerian child should be encouraged to learn one of the major languages in addition to his own) has not been implemented. This is supposed to be progressively implemented from the fourth year of the primary school to the Junior Secondary School level, but this provision is being waived in many schools. Oyetade (2003) concludes that a stronger reason for the failure at the level of implementation might not be unconnected with the belief of the minority speakers that their recommendation is an imposition. Thus, non-implementation is a way to certify their opposition.

The use of indigenous languages in education as contained in the NPE cannot be fully implemented. This is because only a few of the languages have enough materials to sustain teaching them as they really ought to be taught at any level. In practice, only the three 'major' indigenous languages - Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba can be said to satisfy this implied criterion of teaching materials for Primary and Secondary Schools, and to varying degrees for the tertiary level also. Other indigenous languages like Efik/Ibibio can satisfy that same criterion for Primary and Secondary School levels, but not for degree level. Awobuluyi (1992) opines that the majority of the indigenous languages in Nigeria have a very long way to go yet in terms of availability of educational resource materials, particularly for the languages that lack standard orthography or are yet to be reduced to writing.

In addition, scarcity of qualified language teachers in indigenous languages is another impediment to the successful implementation of the multilingual education provisions of the NPE. Awobuluyi (1992) and Olagbaju (2009) assert that only the three major indigenous languages can actually boast of enough teachers at all levels. Olagbaju (2009) termed the inadequacy of indigenous language teachers as a product of some attitudinal factors. These factors include: the status of the English language and other foreign languages in Nigeria, negative attitude of the elite parents and other societal – related sentiments.

Methodology

Subjects

A total of 120 teachers from lower primary to the junior secondary school (this forms the nine year basic education plan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as contained in the NPE 2004) in the 11 local government areas of Ibadan were selected for this study. A multi – stage sampling procedure was adopted in this study. The researchers stratified the schools in Ibadan into categories that is, private and public schools, after which three schools, were randomly picked from each of the categories. 20 teachers were then selected through a simple random sampling technique from each of the six schools used in this study. The study used teachers because they

are the core in the process of implementing the multilingual provisions of the NPE.

Instrument

A 20 – item questionnaire that was developed by the researchers was administered to the teachers to find out the students’ attitude to multilingual instruction, level of parental support, teachers’ awareness of the NPE provisions and the level of implementation of the multilingualism provisions of the NPE. The instrument was divided into three parts to cater for the three variables in this study. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha was computed. The Cronbach alpha value obtained for the instrument was 0.68.

Procedure

The teachers were informed on the importance of the study and a copy of the questionnaire was given to the subjects used in the study. The teachers were told to be objective in selecting the attitude of the students, parental factors and availability of materials to the successful implementation of the multilingualism provisions of the NPE by using a scale of ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Not sure’. The data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results

The results of the investigation are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Analysis of students’ attitude to multilingual instruction, level of parental support, teachers’ awareness of the policy provisions and level of policy implementation.

S/no	Students’ Perception of Multilingualism Education	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)
1	Students prefer the use of English language (a global language) to a Nigerian language (vernacular) in class	90 (75%)	27 (22.5%)	3 (2.5%)
2	Students show more enthusiasm to learn when I switch to an indigenous language during lessons.	100 (83.3%)	20 (16.7%)	-
3	Students have better understanding of a topic when I explain in a Nigerian/Indigenous language.	105 (87.5%)	10 (8.3%)	5 (4.2%)
4	Students feel making use of Nigerian languages in formal settings makes one local.	120 (100%)	-	-
5	Students feel teaching with Nigerian Languages cannot prepare them adequately for international examinations.	120 (100%)	-	-
Parental Factors in Multilingualism Education				
6	Parents/guardians insist that their children/wards be strictly exposed to the English language.	105 (87.5%)	10 (8.3%)	5 (4.16%)
7	Parents prefer that their children learn only their mother tongue (MT) and not the language of other ethnic groups.	110 (91.6%)	8 (6.7%)	2 (1.7%)
8	Parents hardly buy the recommended textbooks for indigenous languages.	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	-
9	Most parents believe that the use of Nigerian languages in education is a total waste of time.	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	-
10	Most parents encourage their children to pay more attention to English and French language to the detriment of other indigenous languages.	120 (100%)	-	-
Resource and Material Related Factors in Multilingualism Education.				
11	I lack the materials (text and non - text) to teach or make use of indigenous languages in class.	110 (91.6%)	10 (8.4%)	-
12	There is a need to develop more materials in ‘minority’ languages to cater for the demands of multilingualism education.	97 (80.83%)	16 (13.3%)	7 (5.83%)
13	The students do not have textbooks and other relevant materials in indigenous languages.	118 (98.3%)	2 (1.7%)	-
14	The few materials that I have in indigenous languages are outdated.	89 (74.17%)	11(9.17%)	20 (1.6%)
15	The materials and resources in indigenous languages are scare and not easy to come by.	100 (83.3%)	20 (16.7%)	-
Knowledge and Implementation of the Multilingualism Education Provisions of the NPE.				
16	I am not aware of the multilingual provisions of the NPE.	35 (29.2%)	76 (63.3%)	9 (7.5%)
17	The multilingual education provisions as stated in the NPE are impracticable.	95 (79.1%)	15 (12.5%)	10 (8.3%)
18	I have been implementing the multilingualism provisions of the NPE.	10 (8.3%)	93 (77.5%)	17 (14.2%)
19	I lack the knowledge of more than two indigenous languages to be able to implement the provisions of the NPE.	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	-
20	Implementing the multilingualism provisions of the NPE is not necessary for students’ success in education.	115 (95.8%)	5 (4.2%)	-

From the table above, it can be seen that 75 per cent of the students are reported to prefer the use of English language to any of the indigenous languages in Nigeria however 22.5 per cent of the students feel

comfortable with the use of Nigerian languages in the classroom while 2.5 per cent of the students are unsure. The percentage of teachers who feel that students are motivated to learn when multilingual education is practiced in class is 83.3 percent while 16.7 percent of the teachers feel otherwise. 87.5 percent of the teachers are of the opinion that multilingual education on the use of more than one language in the classroom enhances learning, 8.3 percent feel that indigenous languages do not contribute significantly to students understanding while 4.2 percent of the respondents are not sure.

All the respondents are in agreement that students believe that the use of other languages in education apart from the English language makes them local and 100 percent of the respondents believe that students feel that multilingual education cannot prepare them adequately for international examinations. The view of the respondents on parental factors in multilingualism education is unanimous. 87.5 percent of the teachers state that most parents insist that their children be strictly exposed to English, 8.3 percent believe otherwise and 4.2 percent feel indifferent concerning parental influence in multilingual education issues. 91.6 percent of the respondents believe that ethnicity or ethnic- related sentiments influence the use of multilingual education in schools, 6.7 percent of the respondents state that parents do not attach ethnic sentiments to multilingual education while 1.7 percent of the respondents are unsure.

Concerning recommended textbooks and other materials needed for effective implementation of the multilingual provisions of the NPE, 95.8 percent of the teachers are of the opinion that parents hardly buy the textbooks that are recommended for indigenous languages while the remaining 4.2 percent feel that parents do buy the necessary materials for multilingual education. 95.8 percent of the respondents state that parents have a poor attitude to multilingual education while 4.2 percent of the respondents feel otherwise. All the respondents agree that parents encourage their children to pay more attention to English and French language to the detriment of indigenous languages.

91.6 percent of the teachers do not have the materials to make use of indigenous languages in class while 8.4 percent of the respondents claim that they have enough materials. 80.83 percent of the respondent believes that more materials need to be developed in 'minority' languages multilingualism, 13.3 percent feel otherwise while 5.83 percent of the population are not sure. 98.3 percent of the respondent state that students lack the materials that can aid multilingual education while 1.7 percent of the respondents think they do. 74.17 percent of the respondents are of the view that there is a need to upgrade the materials which can facilitate education, 9.17 percent of the respondents feel that the multilingual education materials that they have at their disposal are up to date while 1.6 percent of the respondents are unsure.

83.3 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that materials and resources for multilingual education are scarce and not easy to come by while the remaining 16.7 percent of the population feel that the materials are available. 29.2 percent of the population are not well informed concerning the multilingual education provisions of the NPE, 63.3 percent are aware and knowledgeable about the multilingual provisions of the NPE while 7.5 percent of the respondents are not sure. 79.2 percent of the respondents however believe that the multilingual provisions of the NPE are impracticable, 12.5 percent feel it is practicable while 8.3 percent of the population for this study are indifferent.

Only a meager 8.3 percent of the population has been implementing the multilingual provisions of the NPE, 77.5 percent of the teachers used for this study have not been implementing the multilingual provisions of the NPE while 14.2 percent of population is not sure if they have been implementing the language provisions of the NPE. 95.8 percent of the teachers used for the study are technically deficient and practically inefficient to implement the multilingual provisions of the NPE while 4.2 percent of the respondents claim that they have knowledge of at least two indigenous languages and English language.

Also, 95.8 percent of the teachers used in this study feel that implementing the multilingual provisions of the NPE is not necessary for students' success in education while 4.2 percent of the population feel otherwise. None of the respondents is sure of the effect of multilingual education on students' learning outcomes.

From the results discussed above, the following deductions or conclusions can be arrived at:

- i. Teachers believe that though students show a strong preference for instruction in English, they learn better when an indigenous language is introduced as the language of instruction.
- ii. Teachers are of the opinion that parents prefer the use of English language rather than multilingual education in the school.
- iii. Teachers lack adequate (in number and quality) materials and textbooks needed for multilingual education.
- iv. Majority of the teachers have not been implementing the multilingual provisions of the NPE in class.
- v. Majority of the teachers are aware of the multilingual provisions of NPE but they have not been implementing it.

Multilingual Education in Nigeria: Solutions and recommendations

A lot has been said about the challenges of implementing the multilingual education provisions of the NPE by 'actively' involving more Nigerian languages in education but this work will not be complete without the suggestion of possible solutions to some of the problems identified. Obanya (1992) lauded the efforts of state ministries of education (as in the Rivers State Readers' Project) and of the NERDC (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council), the Gaskiya Corporation (for the Hausa language) in the development of curriculum materials in indigenous languages but he was quick to note that there is more to be done, especially in the area of non-text materials. Obanya (1998) suggests that more educational resources in indigenous languages outside the school system (traditional poetry and drama and cinematographic resources) still have to be fully developed in order to be able to cope effectively with the demands of multilingual education.

The federal and state ministries of education need to do more (than it is being currently done) in the enforcement of the multilingual provisions of the NPE. There is a dire need for constant inspection of what goes in the private and public nursery and primary schools in order to enforce total adherence to the use of Nigerian languages in modern education. Though Nigerian languages have been described as grossly insufficient to meet the demand of modern education (Taiwo (1976)), they should therefore be developed and the orthography needs to be improved upon.

In addition, Emenanjo (1985) is of the view that something drastic needs to be done concerning the orthography of most Nigerian languages. Taiwo (1976) and Awobuluyi (1992) are of the view that the orthographies of the three 'major' Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been fully developed while Emenanjo (1996) reinstates that more should be done in the area of developing the orthography of the minority languages in Nigeria. It is therefore important that textbooks and educational materials in Nigerian languages should be developed while obsolete ones should be improved upon or upgraded to cope with the present realities of multilingual education.

Olagbaju (2009) asserts the need for national re-orientation and awareness on the benefits attached to making use of Nigerian languages in modern education. Parents, students, teachers and other stake holders in education need to be educated on the dangers of relegating our local or indigenous languages at the expense of a foreign language. It is also suggested that government should come up with a policy that will make at least a credit pass in any of the indigenous languages a pre – requisite for admission into any of the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

Emenanjo (1985) while proffering a solution to the dearth of indigenous language teachers in Nigeria suggested that producing graduate teachers in the right quantity and quality for all Nigerian languages is the only way by which we can meet the demands of multilingual education as contained in the NPE. Emenanjo (1985) concludes that in - service teachers of Nigerian languages need to be updated in content, methods and language technology.

Conclusion

Multilingual education provisions of the NPE should be implemented to the letter in the Nigerian educational system because it motivates students to learn and fosters understanding in class. The government needs to tackle the issue of minority languages squarely by developing more materials for teaching and learning in other indigenous languages so that the ambiguity associated with the choice of a mother tongue (MT) and language of the immediate environment (LIC) in the NPE will be addressed.

There is also a need for a more comprehensive in - service training for teachers in the primary and junior secondary schools on the importance of multilingualism education. Government should improve on the level of supervision or inspection to school so that strict compliance to the provisions of the NPE can be achieved. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) through the mass media and other relevant bodies should sensitize Nigerians on the need to allow our indigenous languages to grow and function in the education of our children.

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