

THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM FOR NATIONAL GROWTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Ajisafe Benedict a O.

Abstract

Presently, the world is a global village. Globalization determines the growth of any nation. Language has a lot to do with globalization. It has a fundamental role to play in the process of human existence. The social, economic, technological, religious lives of people are hinged upon language. It is also a very fundamental aspect of education. Education must be a part of an individual's life if development is to take place and language is an instrument or a tool used in educating such an individual. This paper wants to identify the role of the national indigenous languages as tools of education as well as subjects to be taught and learnt in the face of globalizing the school curriculum for national growth and productivity. It goes further to discuss methods that can be used to achieve globalization of the National Nigerian indigenous languages through globalizing the school curriculum

Introduction

Globalization is presently the trend. It is a process that entails enormous transformation linguistically, technologically; politically, culturally, economically etc. To be a part of the global world, we cannot ignore globalization as a developing nation. Globalization comes with its challenges and demands. Language, no doubt has a lot to do with globalization especially as it concerns education in general and the school curriculum in particular. The school curriculum has to be globalised to reflect the global changes in our world today which can be taught and learnt. The national indigenous languages (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba) need to be restructured with regards to teaching and learning to meet the challenges of globalization. Accepting globalization means restructuring our educational system as a whole and the school curriculum in particular. It follows that languages (in this case, the national Nigerian indigenous languages) which can be subjects on the school curriculum or the medium of instruction in schools have to meet the demands of globalization also. The thrust of this paper is to identify the role of the national Nigerian indigenous languages in the face of globalizing the school curriculum for national growth and productivity. It also discusses how this can be achieved. To facilitate the understanding of this paper, some terms used will be explained.

Language

According to the New Webster's Dictionary (2004:554), Language is an organized system of speech used by human beings as a means of communication. From the definition, it can be seen that language aids communication between human beings. According to Wardlaugh (1997), language is the cement of the society. Without language there cannot be any successful breakthrough or globalization in the society. Bicker (1980:106) believes that "a language enables its speakers to relate to (their environment. To describe and identify natural and cultural objects, and to organize and coordinate their activities.

The importance of language in the society explains its importance in education, the school curriculum and globalization. Every aspect of education is tied directly or indirectly to language. English language occupies a vital position not only as a medium of instruction in schools but also as a subject in the school curriculum. This endangers the national indigenous Nigerian languages in the face of globalization, which is taught in schools as a subject in the school curriculum but rarely used as a medium of instruction despite the language in education policies. This situation does not help the indigenous languages to face the demands of globalization in as much as they have been able to cope to a limited extent with the challenges of teaching and learning within the Nigerian society. Globally, the indigenous languages are insufficient. In a nutshell, the first linguistic reality of globalization is that a language or languages develop to become a universal language like the English language and can be used in the latest technology.

Globalization

In talking about globalizing the school curriculum, one needs to understand what globalization is all about. Various definitions and explanations have been given as to what globalization is. According to Akorede (2004:4):

Globalization is the process of rapid economic integration, assisted by the modern process of trade liberalization, investment and capital flow and enhanced by rapid technological changes and revolutions, which has been witnessed in communication and information .. Globalization, therefore, implies a world in which developments in one region can come to shape the life changes of communities in distant parts of the globe.

Globalization is a phenomenon which involves the_ whole world. It fosters among others economic, political, technological growth and development. It mostly involves language as language affects all areas of one's life and fastens development.

Globalization as Giddens (1990:143) succinctly put it, is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa". It is obvious that globalization involves all spheres of life.

The School Curriculum

Hornby (2006), defines the (school) curriculum as the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught in a school, college, etc. It is defined as planned learning experiences that are based on intended learning outcomes which can be acquired from school. These intended learning outcomes are expressed in terms of goals, aims, objectives and the manner in which the outcomes can be achieved to create behavioural change (Tanner and Tanner 1975, Nicholls and Nicholls 1980) cited in Ibrahim (2007:376).

A lot of attention is centred on the education sector and the school curriculum needs to be globalized because education through the school curriculum brings changes, reforms or innovation in a developing world. Therefore, there is this clamour for the improvement in the quality of education which has to meet the demands and the challenges of globalization which is now the trend. The school curriculum is expected to accelerate the transmission of quality knowledge or skills and so has to be renewed to meet the present dispensation.

The Role of the Nigerian National Indigenous Languages in the Globalization of the School Curriculum

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is the statutory body that is saddled with the responsibility of curriculum development nationally. In the face of globalization, it may be pertinent to say that the present school curriculum to an extent is outdated. A lot of changes have taken place and these changes need to be reflected in the school curriculum so that it can be taught in schools thus making Nigerians part of the globalization process. As it relates to the Nigerian national indigenous languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) this statutory body needs to globalize the school curriculum for learning and teaching of these Nigerian languages either as a first or second language (L₁ or L₂)

In globalizing the school curriculum, we need to incorporate the various changes taking place in the world today in the curriculum. Language being part of the school curriculum also needs to reflect these changes both in the way it is taught and learnt. This should take into consideration the fact that language is something that affects every area of globalization. These Nigerian languages need to be developed through the school curriculum to face the challenges of globalization as well as attain the status of a global language like English. Crystal (1997:2) explain that "language achieves a global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." According to Chunbow (1988:21) cited in Akinnola and Wende (2007:231), language as it affects globalization is the means by which skilled and educated professionals are trained so that they can participated in national development.

In globalizing the school curriculum as it relates language, language experts should be employed to planning and mapping out policies and strategies for the development of the Nigerian languages for global use. The Nigerian language have a role to play in the education of the Nigerian child. Through using the Nigerian in teaching and learning activities, Nigeria can become globalized. Globalizing the school curriculum as it relates to language has to do with paying attention to the

changes that are occurring in the Information and communication Technologies that affect the social, economic, political and other processes and incorporate them into the language curriculum for teaching and learning to enhance national growth and productivity. For example, language can be planned in the curriculum to be taught and learnt using inventions or modern machines like the computer, internet, audio video gadgets, machine translation device (MTD), etc. These inventions offer new techniques which empower one with new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, qualitative teaching and learning of the Nigerian national language can be enhanced through connection to the internet which gives one access to information. In other words, Information Communication Technology (ICT) devices should be planned in the school curriculum and used for teaching and learning purposes. The inclusion of ICT-based language teaching in the school curriculum can help bring about national growth and productivity. Supporting this assertion, Eniayeju (1994) cited in Ibrahim (2007:304), states that the bulk of empirical research evidence points to the fact that language plays an important role in the process of acquiring Sciences, Technology and Mathematics (STM) concepts and skills. Added to this, these inventions can be taught and learnt using the Nigerian languages, that is, in using the Nigerian languages to talk about these new concepts and inventions, the new techniques which these concepts and inventions present help in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills in the Nigerian languages as well as making these languages become more developed to talk about or capture global events. Ojo (1995:1) agrees with this when he suggested that

--- the use of our native language as the medium of science instruction in our schools even beyond the primary level. What we need to do is to work out mother tongue equivalence of science terms and also of the new IT terms.

Suggestions

In the era of globalization, the school curriculum has to be globalized as well to be able to impart the knowledge of the new era. The Nigerian national indigenous languages should also be planned in the curriculum to reflect the changes that come with globalization as well as meet up with the challenges of globalization.

The following are some suggestions that could help the process.

1. The Nigerian languages should be developed enough to become relevant to globalization by first having a workable language policy in Nigeria.
2. Authentic, original, uniform, applicable and acceptable orthographies should be developed or devised for international recognition.
3. Nigerian language scholars should endeavour to attend seminars/ workshops / conferences regularly where language issues are addressed.
4. As Ibrahim (2007:311) has suggested, local words should be created to replace the English words of modern ICTs.
5. Modern global items (ICTs) like the computer should be put in place for teaching and learning the Nigerian indigenous languages.
6. The choice of which language to be studied in schools should not be left to schools to decide. Rather, the three national Nigerian indigenous languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) should be learnt together.
7. The Nigerian languages should be taught through the use of ICT devices like the use of self-instructional multimedia language software, language websites, word processors, machine translation device (MTD), etc.

Conclusion

Globalization as a new trend uplifts and serves the people of the world regardless of race, tribe and region. Globalizing the school curriculum especially as it relates to the teaching and learning of the Nigerian languages draws us closer to being part of the global village. Language learnt through modern ICTs accelerates the impact of globalization on a nation's growth and productivity.

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