

RE-ENGINEERING EDUCATION THROUGH NIGERIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURE: A PANACEA FOR JOB CREATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to establish the role of Nigerian Languages and Culture in education, for job creation, employment and self productivity in Nigeria. The desire of all Nigerians for Nigeria, is to create a virile economy, devoid of wobble. The view of this paper is that if education in Nigeria is re-engineered through Nigerian Languages and Culture with all the variables in Nigeria well harnessed, there will be jobs, employments and actualization of self productivity. One aspect of these variables are Nigerian Languages. It should be pertinent to acknowledge the fact that Language and Culture form an inseparable nexus between science, technology and industry of any Country and its advancement. To achieve the objective of language issues in Nigerian education policies, Nigerian languages are examined and highlighted. Findings are made and ways are suggested on how Nigerian languages and culture would be improved, and sustained for the achievement of employment and self productivity in Nigeria.

There are four possible interpretations of Language in Nigerian Education in this context. Firstly, language in Nigerian Education may be interpreted to mean *Nigeria's Lingua Franca (English Language)* as adopted in the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria as noted by Elugbe (1990:12). Secondly could be discussing 'Language in Nigerian Education' in the same sense as made by education experts in the *National Policy on Education* of 1981 as updated in 2004, where both English Language and three Nigerian Languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) are chosen to be studied in formal school system as 'National Language'. Thirdly, it may be the recent move made by Nigeria, during Abacha regime (1997), when French Language was added as the second official language to be studied in the school system and fourthly, 'Language in Nigerian Education' according to Madukwe (2001:3), may be inclusive of English, French and the indigenous languages in Nigeria which can be written, read or spoken whether major or minor that can do the work of a Language.

This paper is sharing the view of the last meaning of language in Nigerian education and quickly submitting to the fact that, despite the number of foreign Languages that Nigeria may be adopting as its official languages, Nigerian Languages and Cultures have a major role to play for Nigeria to achieve job creation, employment and self productivity. This decision was taken in this paper because the issue of Language in Nigerian Education is not only limited to formal school system. Language in Nigerian Education covers informal, and non-formal education.

This paper is not advocating that English and French as adopted by Nigeria, should not be studied or used as a medium of instruction and expression whenever necessary, but it is asserting that the neglect of Nigerian Languages and Culture as serious parts of study in Nigeria yet hoping to achieve self productivity may be a mirage.

That is why Crystal (1997:255) rightly observed that language goes beyond communicative and instructive levels to the level of controlling the reality. The reality of today's modern world according to Merton (1979:79), is the scientific and technological breakthrough with its advanced commercial and industrial heights that can launch a country into the economic super high way.

Incidentally, the philosophy behind the present government of President Goodluck Jonathan and many other Governors in Nigeria is to work towards creating jobs, employment and achievement of self productivity for the Nigerian teeming populace.

The philosophy behind the concept above is the desire and willingness of Nigerian government and good people of Nigeria for Nigeria to be among the committee of nations that will attain a certain level of scientific and technological heights with a viable economy. According to Ukaoun (2009:46), the above concept is the strong desire by the government for Nigeria to achieve an enviable economic position among the economic committee of nations' by improving her Scientific, technological, industrial, commercial, telecommunication, energy and educational base.

Importance of Nigerian Languages and Culture in Job Creation, Employment and Self Productivity

Mabata (2004:75-6) opined that for a Language to be functional for economic development, its three domains have to be taught, known and used for all activities in the society. She stated these three domains as grammatical, situational and notional. These areas cover the phonology, structure, lexis and culture of a Language. How can Nigerian Languages come in here? Let us take Chinese economy in the recent time for example. Chinese economy in the world today, despite its large population, Chinese robust economy resulting from developed science and technology has helped her to be able to cater for its large population, and even be flooding other countries with her goods and services, which are both affordable and useful.

China was able to achieve this astonishing feat because of its ability to rediscover itself economically through its science and technology. Moreover, at present, the world over, many countries with science and technological driven economy are seen making a robust profit from the developing countries to boost their countries' economy. To mention some instances are the telecommunication providers, computer (both software and hardware) producers, electronic suppliers, motor-cycle and motor manufacturers that have recently found Nigeria and many other developing countries a lucrative market. These developed countries achieved all these scientific and technology heights by improving on their various traditional science and technologies using their national and indigenous languages as a medium of instruction, interaction and expression. In their training, production and commerce, they use their indigenous languages to a greater advantage whenever necessary.

Japan, Russia, Germany, Italy, France, Britain, China, America, Korea and the likes attached a great importance to their languages in their scientific and technological development. Therefore, for Nigeria to achieve its dreams in the scientific and technological heights, especially in job creation, employment and self productivity, the issue of incorporating Nigerian indigenous languages and Culture should not be over emphasized. The importance these developed countries attached to their indigenous languages in their scientific and technological development could be seen when people go to any of these countries for studies, especially in the field of science and technology, they are made to get either a Certificate or Diploma in the language of such a country before allowing them to embark upon their studies.

Madukwe (2001:10) noted that of recent is a case in Nigeria where Ekiti and Anambra states entered into partnership with Chinese government to study Chinese Language because of the Chinese scientific and technological giant position in the foreseeable future in the world economy. Even many tertiary institutions in Nigeria are seen recently introducing in their various departments of foreign and modern languages, new foreign languages of the developed countries with the aim of benefiting in their science and technology among other things. The truth of the above examples is that the indigenous languages of any country have important roles to play in its scientific and technological development.

The Potentials of Nigeria to Develop its Science and Technology for Job Creation, Employment and Self Productivity

The same will be of Nigerian indigenous languages in her scientific and technological development.

Many indices abound in Nigerian to prove that Nigeria languages and culture have a major role to play in creating a virile economy. These include the unique numerous traditional technologies

and natural resource in Nigeria that are yet to be harnessed maximally. They can be harnessed by the in-depth study of Nigerian Languages and culture. Nwoko (1983:198) opined that the Igbo had an elaborate science which they applied to their traditional technology to produce the limited needs of their society which in the past, was determined by the values and other social structure of traditional Igbo society.

Traditional technologies like cottage industries found dotted in many parts of Igbo land responsible for the weaving, knitting, bag making and local shoes. There were Akwette cloth weavers and sculpture carvers in Igbo land in their traditional cultures that were known within and beyond their immediate territorial boundaries. Nigerian civil war reminds us of the extent the Igbo people could go in their traditional technology by developing a lot of equipment they used during the war. A visit to Eastern Nigeria today to a place like Awka, Nnewi, Orlu and Nkwere and Aba just to mention a few, will prove to a person about the traditional science and technological ingenuity of the Igbo people in shoe making, gold smiting, iron smiting, black smiting, utensils manufacturing, cloths fabrication and equipment production in its various sizes and versatile uses. Uburu salt (nnu uburu) could not be forgotten in a hurry, because of its importance in the Igbo traditional technology. Ogbalu (1982: 19) Stated that the Nigerian civil war exposed the ingenuity in the Igbo traditional technology which would have been harnessed by Nigeria to serve her as a launching into a modern technology.

Also, are other economic resources that could be harnessed for the Nigerian scientific and technological development The palm trees that produce palm oil grow very well in the South eastern part of Nigeria, which can boost and help in developing Nigerian scientific and technological heights if well managed. A good example is Malaysia that came to Nigeria to collect palm nuts only to be reckoned as the world largest producer of palm oil today. There are other resources like limestone, coal, gold, iron-ore; bitumen and aluminum, that can help Nigeria to develop its science and technology.

What of the Kano and Katsina iron and leather workers? Tracing back from history revealed Kano and Katsina as renowned leather What of the Kano and Katsina iron and leather workers? Tracing back from history revealed Kano and Katsina as renowned leather workers among other Northern States. Cash crops, like cotton, groundnut, upland rice, millet and livestock of both animals and birds are well known in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Western Nigeria is not left out in the traditional technology that can launch Nigeria into super high way of modern science and technology if well harnessed. Examples are cocoa and kolanut, among other crops. The cottage Industries that weave and knit clothes like asoke buba, shokoto, adure, agbada and ankara are well known in the Western traditional technology.

The bronze work in Benin of Edo State is also of great importance. The Niger Delta is known for its traditional fishing and refining cottage industries used by the people before the introduction of modern refineries. In Ilesha of Ekiti State, gold is still seen refined by the gold smiths traditionally in the villages. Scattered in Nigeria are other minerals like tin, zinc, iron, columbite, bronze, copper, silver and lead which are extracted traditionally before the coming of the Europeans. Of recent, the issue of flaring gas reveals that Nigeria has gas at a greater quantity also.

Tourism is another potential that can be used to develop Nigerian science and technology. Places like Ogbunike cave in Anambra State, National War Museum and Arochukwu cave in Abia State, zuma rock, Aso rock, Olumoro rock and many other rocks of world attraction that are scattered in Nigeria with many water falls. zoos and national festivals such as; Ikeji festival, Arugungun fishing festival, Opobo International Boat Regatta, a, Igue Festival, Eyo Festival and Osun-Osogbo festivals are potential enough to make Nigeria great in science and technology for job creation, employment and self productivity.

The Role of Nigeria in Languages and Culture in Job Creation, Employment and Self Productivity

Most of the potentials in Nigeria as aforementioned are incorporated in the numerous Nigerian languages and culture. Iheakaram. (2001:17) saw these indigenous languages as "the vehicle" for the transmission, perpetuation as well as the embodiment of traditional science and technology and culture, while Madukwe (2001: 16) saw "culture" as a determiner of a people's language. The above statement of fact showed that a people's language and culture have a lot to do in caring, transmitting and perpetuating her value systems including her traditional science and technology. Njoku (2004:2) asserted that a people's language expresses a people's arts, techniques, strategies, means and methods of attaining a national goal. As a vehicle and embodiment of people's techniques, Nigerian languages should be in a better place to reveal to the present day Nigerians in developing her science and technology presently for job creation, employment and self productivity.

The idea that the nation's ambition to attain some heights in technological advancement could be achieved by transfer of technology, has always remained a dream.

One of the sure ways would be to use Nigerian indigenous languages and her diverse cultures to discover the logical and systematic method through which her abundant natural resources could be harnessed and used.

It is very important for Nigeria to look inwards into her indigenous languages and diverse cultures if she really wants to advance her science and technology this era when technology has more or less become a cardinal institution in the life of all modern societies.

Soyeju (2008:21) noted that we have so many lessons to learn from China, Japan and South Africa who worked themselves out of the loop of underdevelopment to where they are now. He stressed further that some years back, Nigeria was a step ahead of China in terms of prosperity but the same China that is now rated as one of the developed societies based on all the economic indicators. One of the secrets that made China to be where she is technologically today, is looking inwards into her cultures vis-a-vis her languages.

Therefore, the use of Nigerian languages and her cultures will help the modern Nigerian society to review and reorder its techniques and strategies to develop its science and technology with minimal loses, obstacles and setbacks. This notion is supported by Morris (1979:1321) when he stated that "technology" includes the body of knowledge available to a culture that is of use in fashioning implements, practicing manual arts and skills and extracting or collecting materials. Toffler (1970:37) earlier noted that it is clear from archeological findings that each- cultural civilization had its implements and many works of arts. It thus means that every society has some kind of technology, no matter how simple or crude that technology may be. This further shows that in traditional Nigerian society, some body of knowledge existed in her cultures which can be expressed and transmitted in Nigerian indigenous languages; it was on such body of practical knowledge that traditional Nigerian technology is based and can be harnessed.

Some might be tempted to argue that the kind of science and technology found in Nigerian languages and culture might not be the types needed in this modern Nigerian society to attain the desired heights in science and technological advancement in order to create jobs and employment, but examples from Japan, Russia, China etc showed that such notion is false.

The Nigerian languages in the 'National policy on Education' of 1981 as revised in 2004 is a good one but efforts should be made by both the Federal and State governments to effect its implementation and their study in schools as serious as the study of English and French languages. Both the national and various State Houses of Assembly should legislate new laws that will make the study of indigenous languages and their uses a must.

The recent move by Anambra State House of Assembly, (Eze 2009:7) to make the study of Igbo language compulsory in the primary and secondary schools and its use for legislations on Wednesdays is a sound move. Ondo State house of assembly, (Akinfolarin, 2009:11) is making a move to choose a day in which to deliberate in Yoruba language. Other states and the national houses

of Assembly should take the legislation of laws concerning Nigerian indigenous languages as a matter of urgent importance and enforce them.

As stated earlier, the traditional science and technology are seen embedded in the indigenous languages vis-à-vis our culture, effort should be made both by the indigenous languages scholars and the government at all levels to make the study of the Nigerian languages and culture a very serious matter.

It is agreed that in informal education, indigenous languages are used extensively; a visit to mechanic workshops in any part of the country, whether urban or rural or shoe workshops or any other will convince one but in formal and non-formal education more is needed to be done. There should be occasions in the Classroom when indigenous language should be used as a medium of instruction, interaction and expression as done with English and French Languages. Also, in non-formal education more is needed to be done. It is very common these days to hear about seminars either to inform the masses about government policies, programmes and trainings specially in the rural areas. The conveners should try to use indigenous languages, where such can promote better understanding and fuller participation. Good-hearted individuals and the illustrious sons and daughters of Nigeria should contribute both in kind cash for the promotion and in-depth study of Nigerian languages. Good examples are; the promotion of Urhobo language by its illustrious sons and daughters (Aghware, 2008:15), Efik project by Akwa Ibom State illustrious sons and daughters (Efong, 2008:1), Achebe Igbo project (Onuoha, 2007:10) and Ika Translation Bible Project, (Ogboi, (2009:13). These are just a few examples of the numerous efforts by good spirited individuals to promote the indigenous languages. More is to be done for its promotion to allow Nigerian languages play their role in Language education. Although the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is being translated into major indigenous languages such as Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, the constitution should also be translated in other up-coming Nigerian languages, these translated constitutions should also be made available to those who need them instead storing them somewhere. Now that the country is under democracy, these translated constitutions should be reproduced in a large quantity and distributed to the teachers and students in school. Award should be placed for those contributing to the researches and findings in indigenous languages in form of e.g. awarding them honorary degrees or financial prizes as incentives. Also students who distinguished themselves in the study, research and promotion of Nigerian languages should be rewarded.

Conclusion

The role of Nigerian languages and culture in job creation, employment and self productivity is not in doubt but efforts are needed from both the government at all levels and individuals to make all these languages remain viable, relevant and useful. In this paper, discussions have been made on the use of Nigerian languages in informal, formal and non-formal education. Also discussed was the link between Nigerian languages and traditional science and technology, and how they could be harnessed for job creation and employment.

This paper is of the view that efforts should be made by all and sundry to make sure that Nigerian languages remain alive and realistic to play their role for economy virility. The issue of these Nigerian languages should not be taken for granted especially by Nigerians who are the owner of the languages. Language is not only a means of communication and instruction but also a mark of life, identity, dignity and a means of controlling reality hence, all efforts should be made to make Nigerian languages play the vital role in Nigeria.

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