

USING LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The focal point of this paper is the need to pay attention to the role of Language Education in enhancing an all-round national development. It is a common knowledge that language is the indispensable medium through which knowledge, skill, societal values, etc. all of which form the marrow of the entire gamut of education – are transmitted to learners. Language Education, which in turn, prepares Language teachers for this task, should be accorded its rightful attention as a panacea for the much desired national development. Bearing this in mind, therefore this paper beams its search-light at the various ways by which language Education can be exploited to achieve the goals of national development.

It is a common knowledge that language is the indispensable medium through which knowledge, skills, societal values etc. all of which form the marrow of the entire gamut of education are transmitted to learners.

Language Education is viewed in two ways: First as a medium for educating: Secondly as a subject to be studied in schools just like mathematics, history, etc. whichever way one looks at it, (a medium of instruction or a subject), Language Education is a very important tool to achieving national development. It is the most effective tool for inculcating the right type of values and attitude which can ensure the survival of the Nigerian society. Through a careful implementation of the language policy, students are equipped with appropriate linguistic and cultural skills, knowledge and abilities that will enable them live and do business or any type of work in any part of

Nigeria there by contributing meaningfully to national development. Through the knowledge acquired from language education, we can raise a generation of Nigerians who think, respect the views and feelings of others. Language Education can be exploited to achieve the goals of national development. NPE (2004) elucidates that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. Obilom (2005) also explicates that language teaching is more than telling and testing but a complex art of education, guiding the learner through a variety of experiences to bring about worthwhile changes in other areas of endeavor. Therefore, Language Education should be accorded its rightful attention as a panacea for the much desired national development.

What is National Development?

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g. by providing the social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care etc.

National Development is also making effort to pursue rapid and sustainable economic growth and development, improve the quality of life of the citizens, empower the poor and marginalized and enhance our social cohesion as a nation. Our strategic development policy framework thus focuses on improving transparency and accountability in governance, strengthening the macro economy, boosting the competitiveness of our industries, facilitating infrastructural development, strengthening the financial sector and capital mobilization, improving access to quality social services, enhancing peace and security for development and ensuring ecological integrity.

Concept of National Development

National Development as posits by Lichman (1972:5) and Marko Vitz (1977) cited by Kingdom E. O. (2018) stress that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in proving a source of living for the majority of its inhabitant and that in such society, premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members. To Dare and Smith (2006:20-21) corroborates the same truth of this definition of National development. They see development as multidimensional process which involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better human life. Three basic components stands out in this definition: these components are: sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. This represents common goals sought by all individuals and societies. Sustenance, according to them is concerned with ability to meet basic needs, self-esteem is concerned with a sense of worth and self-respect, of not being used by others as tools for their own needs and freedom is concerned with from servitude. Servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs especially, that poverty is predestination. Therefore, the definition by this parching which emphasizes the basic needs of life in transforming the individual in the society to self-actualization is a true definition of development. Any development model that does not reflect these tenets needs a paradigm shift.

Omoyibo and Agbonzeke (2010:284) as cited by Kingdom, E. O. (2018:314) states that the former secretary of the United Nations Organization, Boutros, B. Ghali, in May 1994, issued a document which categorizes development into five facts viz: peace, economy, environment, social studies and democracy. In the Nigerian context, these components are missing as democratic processes are absent and the government in power abuses the rule of law.

Furthermore, Oke (2004:31) elucidates the fact that sustainable national development starts with the ability of a nation to satisfactorily provide the food and fiber that are needed by its people and industry.

Himmelstrend (1984) also corroborates this assertion; stating that food security must be given adequate attention to solve the problem of mass hunger in Africa. National development should be able to transform individuals in virtually all sectors of the economy.

Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development, some of these definitions will be examined in this study. Gboyea (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the condition of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future. It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances.

Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of healthcare, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. (Naomi, 1995).

Christman (1984) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people are generated as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is noteworthy to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves socio-economic and political issues and also extends to all other aspects of societal life.

Education and National Development: The Nigeria Perspective

No doubts education is the best legacy a country can give to her citizens. Igbuzor (2006) opines the importance of education, stated that education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reasons of being human. Education improves the development of any society, hence the need for the educated ones to occupy significant positions in order to improve the society. Schools at various levels are expected to educate future leaders and develop the high level of technical capacities needed for economic growth and development, Osokoya, (2008) without doubt, Nigeria had witnessed a series of educational systems since its birth in 1914. Immediately after

independence in Nigeria, there was lots of ills and shortcomings in Nigeria educational system as it was based on the British educational system which did not pave way for yearning needs, interests and aspirations of Nigerian societies. This gave birth to the 1969 curriculum conference that focused on Nigerian children in Nigerian society with National Policies on Education in 1977, 1981, 1998 and 2004 respectively (FRN, 1977, 1998 and 2004), with all prime purpose of improving the quality of Nigerian education. Adeyemi, B.A. et al (2012) seeing education as a veritable tool for National Development because a nation develops in relations to its achievement in education.

Education is a crucial sector in any nation. Being a major investment in human capital development. It plays a crucial role in long term pro levels. This explains why the state of education in Nigeria continues to be our national discourse at all levels. Consequently, the implication of the degrading quality of education at all levels has far reaching negative impact on a nation's moral, civic, cultural and economic sustainability.

Concept of Education

Education is a concept that has many definition depending on whether the focus is on formal or informal or on the individual perception. Kalayi, (2009) sees education as “a lifelong process which begins at home for birth till cessation of life”. This is more or less looking at education from an informal point of view.

Akindele (1999) opines “whether formal or informal, education is imparted through the medium of language. In informal education, school subjects are coded via the means of language. Teacher teaches through language”. Furthermore, Abdullahi (2010) elucidates education as a means through which aims and habits of a group of people sustain from generation to the next. Generally, it occurs through any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels or acts.

Education is a dynamic instrument of change: it is an instrument per excellence in achieving national development (Humaira, 2008). In its narrow and technical sense, education is a formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another.

Government Policies and Programmes as Strategies for National Development

Nigeria evidently has a history of national planning of policies and programmes which spans both the colonial and post-colonial periods. There is however, no gain saying the fact that no country can attain any form of development without putting in place sound policies and programmes thus, Nigeria must thrive to put in place sound policies and programme if the country must attain the much needed national development towards becoming an economic giant by the year 2020.

These policies and programmes must be direct reflection of available human and materials resources, cultural realities and political persuasions and also policies and programs must be rooted in deep democratic norms of accountability, transparency and fiscal discipline because of the choking impact of corruption on policies and programmes in Nigeria over decades. For the goals and objective of national

development to be realizable, is anchored on policies and programs. However, on the basis of favourable statistics, there is no doubting the fact that Nigeria today is one of the less developed countries in the world despite the fact that successive governments in Nigeria between 1960 when the country dethrone colonialism and enthrone self-government have put in place various policies and programmes to achieve national development but unfortunately these various national development plans in Nigeria did not achieve excellent yield as expected.

National Development Plan of Nigeria

Nigeria has a relatively long experience in development planning beginning with the Colonial Development plan (1958-68). Medium-term development plans and national rolling plans were also developed and implemented with mixed results. Other major strategic initiative such as the Structural Programme (SAP); the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS); Strategy for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS); and the 7-point Agenda were not seen to have been effectively implemented.

The Nigeria Vision 20:2020 expresses the aspiration for Nigeria to become one of the top 20 economies in the world by 2020. Attainment of the vision would enable the country to achieve a high standard of living for its citizens. It was developed by Nigerians for the Nigerian people and involved a process of thorough engagement with all stakeholders across all levels of government and society.

The vision will be pursued through a series of three/four years plans which with further articulated strategies, policies, projects and programmes.

Policy

The two broad objectives of vision 20:2020 are to:

- ❖ Make efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve rapid economic growth.
- ❖ Translate the economic growth into equitable.

Social Development for all citizens

The six main policy thrusts are:

- ❖ Bridging the infrastructure gap to unleash economic growth and wealth creation
- ❖ Optimizing the source of economic growth to increase productivity and competitiveness
- ❖ Building a productive, competitive and functional human resource base, for economic growth and social advancement.
- ❖ Developing knowledge-based economy
- ❖ Improving governance, security, law and order and engendering more efficient and effective use of resources to promote social harmony and a conducive business environment for growth.
- ❖ Fostering accelerated, sustainable social and economic development in a competitive and environmentally friendly manner.

The Critical Policy Priorities identified by the vision are:

- ❖ Correcting the weakness of the revenue allocation system which relies heavily on revenue from crude oil, by encouraging great internal revenue generation efforts at the state Local Government levels.
- ❖ Increasing investment in critical infrastructure, developing a frame work for joint financing of infrastructure projects between the tiers of government, and encouraging private investment in infrastructure.
- ❖ Deepening reforms at all levels of government.
- ❖ Promoting private sector led non-oil growth to build the foundation for economic diversification.
- ❖ Investment in human capital development to enhancing national competitiveness.
- ❖ Entrenchment of merit as a fundamental principle and core value.
- ❖ Intensifying the war against corruption.
- ❖ Upgrading the capability of the internal security apparatus of government and enhancing the efficiency of their operation.

Governance

A key strategy in the implementation of vision 20:2020 will be the empowerment of Local Government. The vision sees Local Communities and Jurisdictions at the centre of development.

Other strategic initiatives which will be pursued include:

- Strengthening of the separation of powers between the legislative and executive arms of government with a view to enhancing the independence of the legislature.
- Establishing appropriate mechanisms to allow for civic engagement and citizen participation, especially the effective participation of women, in public policy development and implementation, to ensure that, apart from periodically electing their representatives, the people are continually involved in decision and activities affecting them, either directly as individuals or through civic society organizations, such as community based organizations and special interest groups.

Language

Language is as old as the human race itself. One cannot tackle anything that has to do with human endeavor without bringing into the equation language as the source of co-ordination of human activities. As a result of this, Abdullahi (2010) as cited by Muhammed (N.D) extol the relationship when he says “hardly is there any other phenomenon which resembles human being almost systematically as language” for this, it is realized that language is a tool through which social, political and economic development could be achieved.

In every human society, some languages: native or second or both have to be in active use in order to transmit instructional knowledge and train skills such as the psychomotor, cognitive as well as affective.

Education, on the other hand, is closely related it is two sides of a win. Education is seen as a lifelong process which begins from birth to death. It is also seen

as a means of socializing an individual to acquire useful and useable knowledge, skills and training in order to become a fully developed useful member in the society.

Concept of Language

Language is a meaningful medium of sending a message to a receiver; the message may be an idea, feeling, desires, tears, joy, or sadness language, in general terms, can be an instinctive (as in animal) or a non-instinctive (as in human being) there is animal and human language (Mannir 2001).

Function of Language

When language learner has mastered how to manipulate the way in which words are put together in his language (the basic structural patterns) and the words, phrase that is, lexical items of a language, he can use language to inform: ability to impart information to others or to make aware of something. Persuade: to cause someone to do something reasoning or argument. To entertain, that is hold the attention and interest of an individual or gives pleasure and delight. Dissuade persuade someone not to take a particular action also to defer a person from a course of action or a purpose by persuasion or exhortation. Give an account: details of how a thing happened either an action or event as well as process. Opinion: is a belief about matter commonly considered to be subjective. It is based on that which is less than absolutely certain and is the result of emotion or interpretation of fact. Suggestions: is the psychological process by which one person guide the thought, feeling, or behaviour of other. It is also a process by which a physical or mental state is influenced by thought or idea.

A value of judgment: is a judgment of the rightness or wrongness of something or of the usefulness of something, based on a comparison or other relatively. Language helps in promoting social interaction, national cohesion and also it is a means of preserving the culture of the people from the purpose of achieving Nigerian national goal of building a united, strong and self-reliant nation and ensure that the different ethnic groups in Nigeria live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, in dissolvable democratic sovereign nation” (FGN, 2004).

Having viewed language and education conceptually and seen the dynamic roles, it is necessary that language education be given solid foundation at the basic level as explicated by Azikuwe, (1998). Language helps us to understand the experiences of others and also to put our own into words since every language is culturally bound. Language education is a medium of instruction, it is an important tool to achieving national development. It is the most effective tool for inculcating the right type of values and attitude which can ensure the survival of the Nigerian society. Through a careful implementation of the language policy, students are equipped with appropriate linguistic and cultural skills, knowledge and abilities that will enable them to live and do business or any type of work in any part of Nigeria there by contributing meaningfully to national development.

Language is a major aspect of culture which every society guards jealously for, among other things. “The transmission of the cultural heritage” as posits by Laswell

(1948:11). Language is used not only in interpersonal communication, but also in the transmission of mass mediated messages. Technology has made possible the emergency of media of mass communication which have improved communication systems within and among communities. These media of mass communication basically fall into the language factor in Nigeria's National Development e.g. Newspapers, Magazines, Electronic media such as radio, television, film and new media of internet. All of these media disseminate messages through the use of language.

Importance of Language Education

Language is an integral part of man. It surpasses communication and social interaction. Language influences thought, and thought often conditions action and also influences conduct. Language therefore is the strongest medium transmitting culture and social reality. Democracy is a part of the present world order which is not genetically inherited but learned. Democracy is an acquired form of knowledge as well as in practice. It requires the use of language for the cultivation, survival and blossoming, for democracy to flourish and be entrenched, it's norms, tenets and practices must be couched in cultural idioms that are indigenous to the people. Language plays a crucial role in national security and promotes peoples participation with other in meaningful business.

Language education is viewed in two ways first as medium for education; secondly as a subject to be stenciled just like other subjects language education is an effective tool for inculcating the right type of values and attitude which can ensure the survival of the Nigerian society.

Specific Roles of Language in National Development

Any development that takes place in any nation is executed with language, adding that, without the tool language teachers, no nation can experience any kind of development. Abekah (2009) posits that teachers generally train the manpower for their nations but language teachers arm students with the tool of communication and a business.

He said it is as a result of the efforts of the language teacher that the individual master the relevant language as a tool to enable them read on their own for any piece of information of any description. Having acquired the skills of language, the individual enters the university and other institutions to read all kinds of academic disciplines and begin to contribute their quota to national development e.g. professionals such as the teacher, politician lawyer, doctors, engineers, and the president with his ministers of state, among other individuals who contribute to national development all use language as a medium of communication.

The audience or situations determines the type of language to be used. It will be a more waste of time and waste of energy when one uses languages which has no impact on the target audience or situation the way we address people or issues means a lot, it can either mar or make situations.

Educational and National Development

Education is a crucial sector in any nation. Being a major investment in human capital development. It plays a critical role in long term productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels. This explains why the state of education in Nigeria continues to be our national discourse at all levels. Consequently, the declining quality of education at all levels has far reaching negative impact on the nation's development.

Etymologically, the word education is derived from two Latin words "*educare*" and "*educere*" (Amqele et al 2011:6) "*educare*" means to train to form or to mould. In other words, it means that the society trains, forms or moulds the individual to achieve the social needs and aspiration. "*Educere*" on the other hand means to build, to lead, or to develop. This is mostly favoured by the humanist who argue that the function of education is to develop the natural potentialities in the child to enable him function in the society according to his ability, interests and needs. This is child-centered orientation ordinarily, education is exclusively used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho-productive domains. It also involves a desirable approach in human behaviour through the process of teaching and learning. Fafunwa (1974) defines education as what each generation gives to its younger one's which makes them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviours which are the positive values to the society in which they live.

Education, according to Amaele et al (2011:7) is seen as the total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his ability and interest to meet the needs of the society and for the individual to take his rightful place and contribute equally to the enhancement of the society.

Education is an indispensable tool which not only assists in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspiration but also inculcates in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will foster national development and self-actualization.

Education is indispensable without it, a nation cannot get the needed manpower for material advancement and enlightenment of the citizenry. The trained engineers, teachers, medical doctors, are all the products of education. This explains why it is argued that the quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development.

Education promotes social and group relationships, (Armstrong, D.G. et al 1981:142) Obasnjajo (2012:3) states that education trains individuals to relate to and interact meaningfully with others in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress. Hence, the school system within the educational system fosters this development. The school brings people of different cultural backgrounds together for a common purpose. This promotes mutual co-existence among the different students.

Education also promotes the culture of productivity by enabling individuals to discourage the creative potentials in them and apply the same the improvement of the existing skill and technique of performing specific tasks. Education develops in individuals those values which make for good citizens, such as honesty, selflessness,

tolerance, dedication, hard work and personal integrity, all of which provide the rich soil from which good leadership potential is groomed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined Language Education as a panacea for national developments. Language Education plays a crucial role in technological advancement, security of the nation, create peaceful co-existence, medium of communication and social interaction among Nigerians. No nation can experience any kind of development without the tool of language and language educators the roles of language education are enormous and indispensable both to individuals, society and the nation. Therefore priority attention should be given to it since.

Based on the discussions in this paper, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. Language teaching and learning should be given polity attention in our schools.
2. Government should train language teachers and also support and fund personals train language teachers who will be qualified to teach and comply with the language policy as contained in the national policy on education.
3. Training of more language education teachers for the basic education level should be taken seriously.
4. For the purpose of National development, government should encourage the teaching and learning of the three main Nigerian languages: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as it will forester fast and quick development like other developed countries of the world e.g. China, Asia.
5. Government should be determined to make provision for effective funding education.

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