IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

The paper gives an overview on the Implementation and Challenges of Sustainable Functional English Language Education in 'Africa as it relatives to the Nigerian experience. This work should be said to be literature-based. A paper that is aimed and addresses a set of related challenges in the area of English Language Education. The researchers trying to find the possible implementations to improve sustainable functional English Language Education. In conceptual framework, the writers explain the following terms: English Language Education, Functional English Language, Sustainable English Language Education, implementation of Sustainable Functional English Language Education and Challenges of Sustainable Functional English Language Education. The researchers also introduced or suggested theories such as theory of transformative learning and a whole school approach theory to highlight the work more-. Notable empirical studies were expressed. The paper recommends what should be done to ensure. Sustainable Functional English Language Education in Africa, using Nigerian experience as a point of reference. The researchers present opinions, comments and made suggestions to the Challenges and Implementations of Sustainable Functional English Language Education in Africa using the same Nigerian environment as case studies in the work.

Introduction

Education serves as a source of development and transformation for societal existence. It is indeed indispensable in the life of individuals and nations, and all these cannot be achieved without effective and efficient teaching-learning process.

Today, 26th countries in sub-Saharan Africa use the English language either as an official language exclusively (like Nigerian and Ghana) or as an official language (like in Kenya or South Africa) (Negash, 2011; World Facebook, 2013).

So, the English language is an international language that is an international language that is being used all over the world either as first, second or foreign language. It is considered as the means of communication and learning. Communication is the interaction amongst people or a means whereby thoughts, ideas or feelings are shared.

Infact, the English language is the most widely used lingua Franca in international communication. The strongest reason behind this prevalence is related to the economic pre-eminence of the United States of America (U.S.A) and the predominance in terms of dimensions and power that the British Empire occupied from the 16th century until the end of the Second World War, (Jimma, 2017).

However, African education especially in Nigeria has been facing uncountable challenges and poor implementation of sustainable functions. As a result of all these, the researchers were motivated to present a paper on "implementation and challenges of sustainable functional English language education in African: The Nigerian experiences". The objectives of this work are to outline the implementation and challenges of sustainable functional English language education in Africa, using Nigerian experiences as case studies. Again, to provide a platform to seek further opinions, comment and make suggestions to the challenges and implementation of sustainable functional English language education in Africa.

Conceptual Frameworks
English Language Education

Language in its natural or functional perspective has many unique features which one can conclude that it plays dual roles or functions in a well-

known formal educational system. In the first place, it can be seen as a school subject on the school scheme of work or curriculum. In this case, it can be referred to as language education just as we can see in other disciplines like economics education, religion education, political science education, mathematics education, etc. However, the second role or function of language is actually what made it different and unique to other school subjects. In all over the world, it is used as a medium of instruction or teaching in all other disciplines including the language itself. As a result of this second role, one can comfortably coined out the title of language in education.

From the explanations above, one can see language education and language in education as being referred to as the two unique and distinct roles or functions that language naturally plays in educational system. In any case, the researchers are majorly talking and touching the former, which is "language education in this work".

Functional English language education

From online language learning posted in language learning, methodology and tagged formal English, functional language, general English, informal English on 28th August, 2017 by Net languages. The concept of functional language is language that you need in different day-to-day situation. For example, greeting, introducing yourself, asking for or giving advice, explaining rules, apologizing, or agreeing and disagreeing. Any one of these functions can have a number of different exponents, or fixed expressions, for example, giving advice, we could say! **I think you should... why not... how about...? Have you thought about...?** Or to explain rules, we can say! **We can't... we 're not allowed to... and we have to....** So, naturally one should say that the term functional language is very important and should be learnt by every individual for both formal and informal relationship with a fellow human being. Indeed, the more functional language you know, the more real-life situations you can interact in. You can learn different expressions for different contexts. Some expressions are more suitable for a formal situation than an informal one, some you use with close friends and others with strangers. If you are learning a new language, it's as important to learn functional language as it is to learn vocabulary, or even grammar.

In this article, the writers further explained how to design a course to incorporate functional language. He says that to prepare learners for real-life communication (in the target language), many language courses focus not only on grammar but also on how grammatical forms can be used to realize different functions, such as giving instructions or giving an opinion. How do syllabus designers incorporate functional language into a language course?

These can be done by organizing and planning the syllabus around certain topic areas: For example, a unit on the topic of travel could contain the functional language of asking for or giving directions, or useful expressions we use when telling travel on a note. A unit on the topic of helping people could incorporate the language of asking for help, or ways of responding to requests, accepting, or saying "no" and giving an excuse.

Sustainable English Language Education

The researchers have previously explained the concept of functional language education. So, coming to the term sustainable, means the quality of causing little or no damage to environment and therefore able to continue for a long time. Able to be maintained of a certain rate or level like sustainable economic growth, sustainable functional language educational etc. Sustainable is also able to be upheld or defended such as sustainable definition of good educational practice.

Sustainability therefore means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In conclusion, sustainable functional language education has to do with those, systems, strategies, methods that are practically workable and retainable in language education in Africa using Nigerian experience as a case study. This leads to the next subheading which is thus:

Implementation and Challenges of Sustainable Functional English Language Education

Really, to maintain a sustainable functional language education, the type of implementation used to achieve it matters so much. The term implementation is the process that turns strategies and plans into actions in order to accomplish strategic objectives and goals. The process of putting a decision or plan into effect, execution. It is the same thing as application, carrying out, carrying through, performance, accomplishment and so on. However, to execute a plan, it is obvious that they must be uncountable challenges.

In Vuzo (2019) school of education, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in his article, the researcher outlines and explained the implementation and challenges that can be found in sustainable functional language education as thus:

(1)   **Language instruction -** Learning in a language that you are not familiar with posses two major challenges such as the understanding of the language itself and the understanding of the content presented in that language.

(2)   **Leads to poor result, dropout from schools -** According to Vuzo

(2018) illustrates that using an unfamiliar language of instruction contributes to school dropout.

(3) **English language teaching -** It is important to note that English language teaching is different from the language of instruction. In Vuzo (2019) says, in order to promote sustainable development language, proficiency in its diversity is a necessary tool for communication. Zygnunt (2016) in relation to sustainable development stresses that a speaker should function in a variety of socio-cultural levels on both the micro and macro scale, which entrails teaching how to communicate and be creative in expressing thoughts and ideas. This he says, it entails implementing appropriate language programs.

(4) **Teaching of English language through code switching and code-mixing -** These should be encouraged in African schools especially in primary and secondary levels. This can be an effective workable strategy for sustainable functional English language education especially in Nigeria with her multilingualism.

(5) **Mindful of professionalism and competence in employing English language teachers in African schools -** In this case, teachers are expected to be trained teachers not only on the English language but also on education.

Theoretical Frameworks

The researchers coined out two suitable theories for the work such as:

(1) Whole school approach theory
(2) Theory of transformative learning

1. Whole School Approach Theory

A whole school approach as propounded by Jones and Boufford (2012) aims at integrating skill development and sustainability into daily interactions and practices using collaborative efforts that include all staff, teachers, families and children. Meyers et al (2016) stress that family and community partnerships involve extending learning to the home and community contexts.

The approach also aims to raise quality and standards across the entire school. For this approach to be effective, schools need to identify and address the needs of the school community and engage in continuous, cyclical processes for improvement of the extending learning to the home and community contexts.

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effective, schools need to identify and address the needs of the school community and engage in continuous, cyclical processes for improvement.

(2)   Theory of Transformative Learning

To begin with, the world transformation means to change in composition or structure, to change the outward form or appearance, to change in character or condition. From Jisse Schrage and Frans Lenglet (2016), the field of education and especially teaching and learning in the context of sustainability, has brought considerable attention to the theory of transformative learning with its emphasis on learning processes and outcomes, TTL, has enabled a re-training of the role of education in relation to sustainability. As argued by Wals (2010) and Sterling (2005, 2011) the pluralistic society we live in (characterized by a wide range of values, interests and actors, along with the complex nature of sustainability issues) requires a way of learning that addresses divergent interests. Described as a pluralism of thought TTL, places emphasis on a critical, problem-based and reflective practice of education, (Thomas, 2009). It enables "Education that fosters critically reflective thought, imaginative problem solving. The discourse is learner-centered, participatory, and interactive. It involves, group deliberation and group problem solving" (Mezirow, 2000:10).

For the TTL, sustainability is not a vision that education should strive for. Instead, and echoing a nation of critical education for sustainable development (ESD) developed by Vare and Scott (2007), it becomes the state that emerges through transformative learning processes, (Wals & Jickling, 2002; Wals & Corcoran, 2006). This transformative learning in the context of sustainability is a form of learning that enables alternative and new kinds of thinking and solutions that are "co-created (and) co-owned by more reflexive citizens, living in a more reflexive and resilient society", (Wals, 2007:42).

The TTL focuses on the processes that facilitate a collaborative reflection of the learners involved. It assumes that the reflexive interaction with heterogeneous members of a group allows the learners to mirror their own positions and mind-sets with those of others in the group. Wals (2007) stresses how a carefully balanced collaborative setting enables what he terms the "deconstruction" (or de-framing) of individual assumptions and ideas which are then further challenged and assimilated with other ideas in a process of co-creation. For the TTL, this process of frame deconstruction is assumed to occur in, but not be limited to, group deliberation and social interactions. Not all participatory learning processes automatically result in a transformed understanding of an issue, but the transformed understanding that on occasion does occur, especially within the context of sustainability and through group processes, has been qualified as "transformative social learning", (Wals, 2010). Essentially, this refers to the notion that a pluralistic and heterogeneous

group will be able to identify new ways of approaching a problem as the group's internal diversity will help with "switching back and fort" between different mind-sets and understandings of an issue.

Wals and Corcoran (2007) identified eight modalities that, integrated into higher education settings, foster autonomous thinking and an inclination toward systemic change among students and educators alike (see the table below). By applying the TTL in teacher education institutions in Botswana, we wished to determine whether and how these modalities manifest themselves in the different ESD-related change projects.

Table 1: Eight Modalities of Transformative Learning in Higher Education

S/N	Modalities	Description	Example
1.	Total immersion	Fostering a direct experience with a real-world phenomenon	Observing and monitoring sustainability acts in managing a specific issue
2.	Diversity in learning style	Being sensitive to the variety of learning styles and preferences that can be found in a single group	Offering a variety of didactic approaches. Reflecting on the learning processes with learner
3.	Active participation	Developing discourse and ownership by utilizing learners' knowledge and ideas	Soliciting the learners" own ideas, conceptions and feelings
4.	The value of valuing	Exposing the learners to alternative ways of knowing and valuing through self-confrontation	Giving learners opportunities to express their own value. Creating a safe and open learning environment
5.	Balancing the far and near	Developing empowerment by showing that remote issues have local expressions which one can influence	Relating issues of biodiversity or sustainability to last night's dinner
6.	A case study approach	Digging for meaning by studying an issue in depth and looking for transferability to other areas	Assigning different people to explore different angles of a particular theme and bringing the different angles together
7.	Social dimension	Mirroring learners' idea, experiences and feelings	Taking time for discussions and

	of learning	with those of others, through social interaction	exchange. Addressing controversy. Stimulating flexibility and open-mindedness
8.	Learning for action	Making the development of action competences an integral part of the learning process	Allowing learners to develop their own course of action and to follow through with it. Studying examples of action- taking elsewhere.

Source: Wals and Corcoran (2007).

Discussion of the Framework

In the above table, we have shown how each of the two theories have their own explanatory power. However, each of them remains partial in its ability to grasp the whole, especially when evaluating such a complex endeavour as an education for sustainability.

Empirical Studies

Research topics like "Implementation and challenges of sustainable functional English language education in African" as a title of this paper or other closely related paper topics have been presented by so many researchers and educationists in both international and national levels. In this work, the researchers have carefully selected some of those closely related topics to express their paper better for their readers.

In Vuzo (2019), language is the main way of communication among people. Uzoma (2016) in Vuzo (2019) emphasizes that language is the key to sustainable development as the most essential tool that can bring development in the economic, social and environmental life of the people of any nation. According to Vuzo (2016) it is therefore important to critically analyze our struggle towards sustainable development through language in education. Trudell (2009) in the same Vuzo (2019) accentuates, "sustainable development is not possible without attention to the questions of language choice and literacy ability".

The researchers also selected the work of Oladele Awobuluyi "Language Education in Nigeria: Theory, Policy and Practice" Fafunwa Foundation Internet Journal. So, in Awobuluyi (1998), the two natural roles or properties plays by language are explained. The researcher maintains that we have language education and language in education. This means language as a discipline and language to be used in teaching other disciplines.

Schrage (2016) states the research results obtained in the framework's application which he highlights key elements, enabling the successful

implementation of education for sustainable development in two specific teacher education institutions, such as: The educators' capacity to foster transformational pedagogies in the classroom, their capacity to strategically plan and implement their change projects, and the wider institutional and administrative context.

Zygmunt (2016) in his work, "Discourse and communication for sustainable education, Zygmunt says "since sustainability is not a local issue, all sustainability related problems ought to be discussed on the macro scale, which requires an internationally shared means of communication such as language. Although no name of any language appears in the paper, it becomes evident that the attention is directed towards English as an internationally recognized language.

Recommendation/Suggestions

From the implementation and challenges of sustainable functional English language education in African found in this paper, the researchers lucidly outlined and explained their recommendations and suggestions to their readers.

Vuzo (2018) illustrates that using an unfamiliar language of instruction contributes to school dropout. To handle this challenge, the researchers suggest that qualified and competent English language teachers should be employed to handle the subject in schools and colleges which can increase the learners' capacity to maximize their learning potentials.

Use of the English language as a language of instruction in Nigeria is one of the outstanding challenges of sustainable functional English language education. Cameron (2001) in Vuzo (2019) maintains that using only the foreign language requires that teachers have a repertoire of language for classroom management and organization for discipline, for giving feedback, for talking about language, and for chatting with children more informally. So, to bring a lasting solution to this challenge or reduce it, Nigeria educational system should create a curriculum that should have a language that can be used generally by all Nigerian students and not just the English language.

Development of the English language teaching curriculum above what it is today in Nigerian schools in order to promote sustainable functional English language education in Africa especially in Nigeria, development of the English language proficiency in its diversity is necessary for sustainable functional communication Zygmunt (2016) in Vuzo (2019) in relation to sustainable development stresses that a speaker should function in a variety of socio-cultural levels on both the micro and macro scale, which entrails teaching how to communicate and be creative in expressing thoughts and

ideas. This Vuzo (2019) maintains that it entrails implementing appropriate English language programmes.

Use of code switching and code-mixing of the English language with other local languages in Nigeria. English and Igbo, English and Hausa, English and Yoruba code switching or code-mixing is often employed intensively in the classroom by both teachers and learners, as a coping strategy to attain meaningful learning even in the teaching of the English language. In Nigeria, though the practice is unacceptable and not permitted officially, yet it seems to be one of the ways of promoting sustainable functional English language in Africa especially in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Vuzo (2019), "communication is one of the vital skills for the 21st century, language is a central aspect for communication and hence language teaching should be promoted to acquire requisite skills necessary for the future of students and for sustainable language education needed for education and development".

To achieve this propoundment, and also overcome the implementation and challenges of sustainable functional English language education in African, using Nigerian experiences as case studies, this paper concluded by stating three outstanding suggestions.

- Nigeria educators' capacity should be made to foster on transformational pedagogies through the classroom and field academic works.
- The educators' capacity should strategically planned and implement changes in teaching and learning skills and other extra-curricula activities.
- More interest should be on wider institutional and administrative context than just focus in examination and thereby limiting the learners' knowledge to pass and not necessary to acquire the necessary information needed to empower the learners after their education.

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