

# ISSUES AND INSIGHT INTO INTERSTATE CO-OPERATION IN UTILIZATION OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES TEACHERS

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## **Abstract**

It is a truism that National Policy on Education is not fully implemented. One area mostly affected is the Nigerian Language requirement that has suffered series of setback. In the midst of this, States are not helping matters. Lack of Inter-State Co-operation in their utilization ranges from contract teaching appointment, discrimination, statism, unemployment, political and religious instability that result in brain-drain and manpower wastage. Inter-State Co-operation in the utilization of Nigerian Language teachers, irrespective of their state of origin, will foster cross fertilization of ideas and culture, tradition and knowledge or another language dial will facilitate the much needed national unity and peace by appreciating our diversities.

## **Introduction**

It is an established fact that no nation can rise above the level of its education and no education system can rise above the effectiveness of its teachers. Teachers hold the key to the door of Sound education.

Ukeje (1971 page 174), summarizes the importance, of the teacher in our educational system in these statements "The lonelier is the hub of any educational system because the school cannot be better than their teachers. It is upon the quality and devotion to teaching that the effectiveness of any educational system can be tested.

For political, social and economic emancipation, more states were created as occasion demanded. Nigeria has thirty six states and the federal capital territory. A state in Nigeria is one division of a federation. It also means a group of people sharing some ancestors, culture and history. It is therefore pertinent that a country pursuing a free and egalitarian society should not create the impression that people of this country are either citizens or subjects and that you can only be a citizen or subject of your own state. States are largely funded by federal government allocations, taxes and levies, internally generated revenue (IGR). The economic slate of the state led to the employment opportunities in the states. This rubs on the appointment of teachers and other appointments. The states invariably employ their state indigenes rather than employ from other states. Up to 1980, Nigerian teachers are employed outside their states on permanent and pensionable basis. Then education was still regarded as a tool for building national alliance through language and culture development. Teachers were then employed irrespective of the state of origin of such teachers to encourage national unity and freedom. It is unfortunate that political inclination of some states negates national unity. The political party in the states and their godfathers and "oracles" determine those to be employed. The debilitating dissonance i.e. indigene and non-indigene syndrome has permeated every sector of our life. This politically motivated discrimination policy has negative repercussion especially in employment. Teaching became the worse hit. Only federal government posts their teachers to any state in the country with full benefits. Statism should give way for nationalism to take root, especially, in our educational system. Education needs to be insulated from the unhealthy ethnic, tribal, and geopolitics of the nation therefore there should be no boundaries as to where a teacher can teach. The National Curriculum Conference in 1969 deliberated on all aspects of the education. What came out was, the National Policy on Education. The document, since its release, was not matched by commensurate or any action. The worse hit is the pronouncement on Nigerian languages. This spirited pronouncement fizzles out gradually as the issue of Nigerian languages is politicized. The deteriorating economic inertia that is strangulating Nigerian education is no excuse to retrench some Nigerian languages teachers or not to recruit them.

## **Issues and Insight into Nigerian Languages Teachers Production**

Nigerian languages study has a long history in this country dated back to missionary era. The Phelps Stokes Commission and the 1926, Education ordinance then favoured the teaching of Nigerian languages ((hen vernacular) in schools. During the UPE era in 1976, Nigerian languages teacher? were also produced though not enough then. The National Policy on Education, first published in 1977, reprinted in 198), 1998 and 2004; Section 8.71, states that the goals of Teacher Education shall be to:

- a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- (b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance the commitment to national goals.
- (d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- (c) Enhance (teachers commitment the teaching profession.

To give the study of Nigerian Languages a constitutional backing, the same document Section 1. 10a stress the importance of language thus;

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 ever, child shall be required to learn one of the three major Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The document goes further to specify in Section 4; 19e, that at primary level, the medium c: 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.

For secondary school level, Section 5.22d specify, that the development and promotion of: Nigerian languages, arts and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage. To fulfill this, at the JSS level, the language of environment shall be taught as L, where it has orthography and literature and another major Nigerian language other than that of the environment to be taught as L<sub>2</sub>. At SSS level a major Nigerian language (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) will be studied as a core subject for certification.

In contemporary Nigerian context, there is wide gap between policy formulation and policy implementation. The mismatch between these two to a greater extent leads to unwarranted failure and disheartening consequence. The implementation problems lead to failure in attaining policy objectives and societal goals,

In realization that "teacher education is the foundation of quality of its teachers" (FRN, 2004). the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1989; under Decree 3, established the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). One of its aims is to save the teacher education from total collapse. Nigeria Certificate in Education became the minimum entry qualification into the teaching profession.

The question now is where are Nigerian languages teachers produced? Are the numbers adequate to cope with the policy implementation?

To manage growth and new direction, Nigerian languages teachers' production became streamlined and controlled policy-wise. These institutions were empowered to produce Nigerian languages teachers,

- (a) Colleges of Education (Federal and State).
- (b) National Teachers Institute.
- (c) Institutes and Faculties of Education in Universities.
- (d) National Institute for Nigerian languages (NINLAN).

Another question that arises is, how many of these institutions produce Nigerian languages teachers and at what number?

The answer is not far fetched. The reduced enrolment in Poly Jamb enrolment has its toll in "Nigerian languages. As for University it is abysmally low.

The total enrolment of five major languages taught in Colleges of Education (1992 - 1998) is as staled below;

	English	Hausa	Igbo	Yoruba	French
1992/93	10851	3987		3744	2577
1993/94	10220	4797	2241	4187	2125
1994/95	9306	5424	2154	3826	2619
1995/96	7953	3824	1972	3609	2209
1996/97	8480	3536	1122	3058	2652
1997/98		3752	1374	2957	2741
	8904		1192		

Source:

NCCE: PRS Department.

A cursory look at the data shows that there is decline in enrolment for Nigerian languages. Even English and French suffers mild decline.

Most of the sixty two (62) Colleges of Education produce very small numbers of Nigerian languages teachers.

Mention must be made of the following Colleges of Education that produce either 2 or 3 Nigerian languages teachers though not adequate.

Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri

Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo

Federal College of Education, Abeokuta

Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu

Federal College of Education, Pankshin

Federal College of Education, Okene

At University level, we have University of Lagos, University of Ibadan, University of Calabar., University of Benin, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

These schools produce few Nigerian languages teachers in one or two major Nigerian languages. It is disheartening to note that in some of these institutions, the Nigerian languages lecturers are underutilized due to low enrolment figure. In other cases lack of lecturers to teach these languages mar the intake of students to study these languages and ironically there are still some graduates in these languages unemployed in areas of need. There is not much in production of teachers for other Nigerian languages to help fulfill the primary school level requirement of language of the environment in the first three years.

The inadequate supply of Nigerian languages teachers at Primary and secondary level to fulfill the National Policy on Education objective is a national problem. Still in the midst of those inadequacies, some Nigerian languages teachers are unemployed and in some cases retrenched in some states. What a wastage of manpower in area of need.

### **Issue and Insight into Inter-State Co-Operation in Utilization of Nigerian Languages Teachers**

Many scholars, authors, researchers and journal articles and conferences have highlighted the problems in their useful write ups, but these are either not used or faultily applied. Utilization means to make use of, turn to use or primarily produced for usefulness.

Some states are impoverished. The failure of some states to guarantee adequate supply of qualified Nigerian languages teachers led them to succumb to socio-political and economic pressures.-Most schools don't have trained Nigerian languages teachers while some remain unemployed. This is wastage of human resources and under utilization. The poor condition of most Nigerian languages teachers outside their state of origin lead to frustration and poor attitude to work has direct negative effect on the pupils in form of idleness, indiscipline, laziness and misdemeanor. Discrimination entrenches ethnicity which does not augur well for national unity. In most Western states, the other major Nigerian languages are yet to be incorporate into their curricular due to non availability of teachers. This makes the policy to suffer setback.

Nigerian languages teachers in rural schools are over utilized while those in urban areas were underutilized. Some Nigerian languages teachers are permanently stationed in urban areas even when they are overstaffed to the detriment of the rural schools that hardly have these teachers not to talk of having enough.

Some states are impoverished of Nigerian languages teachers. Some states seem to suffocate from overproduction and glut which translate into Nigerian languages teachers unemployed in their areas. This is inimical to capacity building. Some states prefer recruiting unqualified Nigerian languages teachers who earn less salary. Some lack good will to recruit from outside the states that have paucity of qualified Nigerian languages teachers. Poor retention of competent and experienced' teachers is therefore a threat to capacity building. The shortfall is both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Junior staffs in some states are given more benefits than senior from another state. Appointments of Deanship, HOD and other

post are accorded to the indigenes in some institutions. Most non indigenes are employed on contract basis that can be terminated anytime. Some are not confirmed. The implication is brain-drain, low standard of education, redundancy, political show down and antagonism'. The economic inertia that is strangulating Nigerian education is no excuse to retrench Nigerian languages teachers or not to recruit them.

There is no accurate statistics about turnover rates of Nigerian languages teachers. There is no data as to whether those employed teach the language or what their employer want them to teach.

Some reasons for turnover of Nigerian languages teachers also include underpayment, poor condition of service, poor public image of Nigerian languages, reason of marriage and push-pull financial attraction offered by other jobs and private schools. The glut in Nigerian languages teachers in some states as against dearth in other states is due to lack of political will to employ even when the vacancies are available and there are teachers who can fill the vacancies.

The Diffidence and lack of commitment to Nigerian languages studies by government is'' evident in the escape clause in the NPE as regards studying Nigerian languages in schools. This is because language policy is replete with good vision but lack implementation. Discrimination creates; artificial boundaries that make it difficult for cross-fertilization of socio-economic values.

Education is in the grip of politics as such sensible educational policies are ruined with government paying more attention to political exigencies and less to informed pragmatism.

There is low enrolment of Nigerian languages intake in Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education. Most of those admitted are mediocre students. Some at graduation leave for other jobs that are appreciated by the society.

Private schools teach foreign languages and maybe the language of the environment only.

There is also lack of commitment by state to systematically address the widening gap between Nigerian languages teachers demand and supply. Personal security is another obstacle due to religious riot, tribal and political killing, lack of love and care. People became frightened to leave their state for employment in an insecure state.

## **Recommendation**

These recommendations are normal rhetoric, which government and authorities are aware of but refuse to implement.

- (1) Odo, Ezike and Nwani (2000), recommend that 'A promulgation of laws that prohibit statism saga in teacher utilization among states and local councils in the country should be encouraged with a minimum delay. This will end the so called "retrenchment of non-indigene" teachers in any state or local council of this country".
- (2) Teachers should be employed irrespective of the state of origin of such teachers since all teachers are made to pass through uniform training of programmes.
- (3) Anikweze Ojo, and Maiyanga (2002), opined that "teachers should be involved in exchange programmes whereby teachers from one geo-political zone would be made to go to a different geopolitical zone to teach in an exchange programme. The benefit of this exercise to the

teaching profession would be the cross fertilization of ideas by teachers in the areas of knowledge and skills, as well as pedagogy. It would also facilitate the much needed national unity by appreciating our diversities<sup>1</sup>.

- (4) Federal government should recruit qualified Nigerian languages teacher on national basic and post them to area of paucity. This will eliminate the, discrimination of job, and insecurity associated with contract appointment. Posting them to areas where their services are needed will prevent over utilization and underutilization in states.
- (5) Some Hausa languages teachers will be posted to the South while some Igbo and Yoruba languages teachers will be posted to the North. This employment should, be on permanent and pensionable basis irrespective of state of origin. This will stabilize the distribution.
- (6) There should be tribunal or court to prosecute erring states. Political inclination or interest of any state should' not affect appointment and benefits of non indigene Nigerian languages teachers.
- (7) Nigerian languages teachers should be protected, carted for wherever they are posted. Religious, political, tribal wars or riot should be prohibited. A law should be put in force so that people can be secured and protected anywhere. We should see ourselves (Nigeria) as one

- family; preach love, peace, tolerance and patience with one another.
- (K) There should be increase intake of Nigerian languages student teachers in Colleges of Education and Institutes of Education in Universities. Bursary award, incentives and inducement given to them to attract quality students. This will attract devoted teachers leading to improved quality education. Improved funding to improve infrastructure facilities, equipments, for laboratories and workshop.
  - (9) These Nigerian languages teachers posted outside their geographical areas should be adequately remunerated through special allowances, conducive working environment and good accommodation. Their spouse should also be automatically employed to reduce attrition.
  - (10) Government should guarantee safety of life and property of any Nigerian languages teacher outside his own state.
  - (11) Government, parents and pupils should change their traditional view about Nigerian languages and encourage it. The teachers should also change their conception of Nigerian languages.
  - (12) In-service training of Nigerian languages teachers, sponsorship to conferences, workshops and seminars should be implemented. The professional association i.e. ANLAT, APNJLAC and others should be more active to improve their professional knowledge and skills.

### **Conclusion**

The Nigerian nation aims to use education as a tool for the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity. To transform the country into a truly united, democratic, stable and dynamic nation, Nigerian language teachers should seek employment and be employed where their services are needed to prevent over utilization and underutilization in some states.

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