

ACHIEVING MAN POWER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Language education is a sine qua non for manpower development in any given society. The need is more pronounced in developing countries (Nigeria for one) where the languages of the developed countries have to be learnt as media of instruction for the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge is power and develops man's intellect, which enables him to conquer his environment. This paper examines the contributions of language education to manpower development. Effective globalization of knowledge predicates on language, which is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run in and out of which they grow. These thoughts crystallize into scientific and technological break-through, skills acquisition whose bottom line is human development, otherwise called manpower development. Useful recommendations made here, if heeded, would boost manpower development in developing countries.

Introduction

Language is a natural endowment to man by God. Man has ever since, in the history creation used this innate tendency to his advantage. It is a sure means of development. The level man's ability to conquer his environment to adapt measures development. Language provides means for the hatching of ideas and for the transportation of these ideas, and of course their know how made accessible to others who may not be of the same language group. In other w< developed countries make available the blueprints of scientific and technological break-through-other countries, especially to the developing ones, who have to go through the documentaries manuals before embracing the finished products. At times, these -developed countries embark on manpower development programme to help the developing (third world) countries. The latter can benefit from such gestures when they have learnt the language of the benefactor-countries. Often called "Technical Aid Programme," "Manpower Development Programme" etc but radically, present democratic Government wants to look in-wards as a panacea for self reliance in Niganffil Hence Suleiman (2003 ;2) posits that "Technology Transfer" was the medium towards the attainments of self-reliance Today the idea is to create conducive atmosphere to be created to attract the fore:\$M investors, communication becomes necessary. We have to negotiate, by means of language; ir investors when they come have to work with indigenes and must need to communicate either in their own language or that of the hosts or through interpreters or both. In this case, language education becomes a sine qua non for the needed communication/ interaction.

Ways in Which Manpower Development Could be Achieved Via Language Education Good International Relations

Manpower development could foremost be thought of and achieved in a peaceful country. A country at war (either externally or internally) can scarcely record development, which is a function of peace and conducive environment. In order to create this enabling environment, good international and intra-national relationships become paramount. If good international relationship exists b or and among nations one finds out that such friendly countries to cement their diplomatic ties. Normally, the presence of an ambassador in a foreign country instills courage and confidence for peace and protection in his nationals based in that foreign country. It also assures his home government of continued rapport since it still has extended government in that foreign land. It may not sound out of place to say that the countries in such diplomatic ties enjoy good bilateral co-operations politically, economically, socially and otherwise. But these ideal situations could be achieved under understood and well-decoded communication. Here, language barriers need to be broken for easier communication. In this direction, the former Head of State of Nigeria, Late General Sani Abacha had this to contribute:

... our sub-region, West Africa, consists of peoples divided not only by artificial colonial boundaries but also by linguistic differences. The lack of easy communication posed by this linguistic barrier has serious implications for the realization of our goal of total integration within our sub-region. It is important to address this in the interest of sub-regional integration, Nigeria will embark on a vigorous language programme that should ensure that our people, within the shortest possible time, become bilingual (Abacha. 1996:29).

In the area of health, the international bodies, organizations and philanthropists help out in combating diseases in the developing countries who left alone cannot help themselves, Such help become possible only when the outside world is made aware of the problems; and that could be done through language/communication. Health is wealth because an unhealthy nation is robbed of its manpower/workforce. The presence of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Nigeria is due to her out-cry for help against some of these deadly and dreaded diseases like: river blindness (Onchocerca Volvulus), guineaworms, tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera, poliomyelitis, measles, yellow-fever, typhoid fever, malaria and HIV/AIDS. The awareness campaign on the scourge of these pandemic diseases is the handiwork of Language Education.

Moreover, in health-care delivery, Language Education is highly utilized in the training of the health officials ranging from doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists to para-medical staff. To be able, to treat a patient adequately, the patient has to vividly explain the symptoms of his ailment to the doctors and nurses who should be a able to understand these symptoms to be able to diagnose the sickness. These can only be achieved through language.

International Bilateral Agreements

Nations go into bilateral agreements following talks, which is a function of language education. When they have discussed and found areas of mutual cooperation, only then do they embark on meaningful trades, industrial or economic projects/ventures. Stressing the importance of languages (English), Hutchinson and Waters (1987:65) posit "... wanting to learn English not for the pleasure of prestige of knowing the language but because English was the key to the international currencies of technology and commerce".

Manpower Development/Exchange Programmes

Manpower development/exchange programmes are another way by which developed nations assist the developing ones to attain some degree of self-reliance. In the manpower development programmes, these developed countries offer to train, each year, a number of other nationals (3rd World Countries) under high and middle level manpower in their identified areas of need. These trainees/recipients of such programmes first of all undergo intensive language courses to be able to understand their hosts and to follow /benefit from the training. Trainings and instructions are in the language of the host/benefactors. So, language Education becomes of utmost importance for the trainees to acquire the knowledge and skills in order to attain the set objectives of the programme.

If it is the manpower exchange programme where resource personnel are exchanged by the nations, the expatriate must learn the official language of his host country, if different from his, in order to cope effectively, Language education here is seen at work.

Advancement of Knowledge in Science and Technology

Science and technology contribute significantly to knowledge. Knowledge develops manpower. Adequate manpower makes for a virile nation. But science and technology and their attendant products are a function of language education without which nothing could be learnt, produced nor the blueprint interpreted. Language, therefore is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run in and out of which they grow. These thoughts crystallize into scientific and technological break-through, skill acquisition whose bottom line is human development. According to Ali (2001), science can be conceived as a verb rather than a noun. This means that "science" involves "doing" which concerns the various investigative processes and activities with regard to developing, acquiring and controlling knowledge, skills, capabilities, and attitudes, about the natural factors of the environment. Science and technology are at the apex of manpower while language education is the solid-base of science and technology. Language is not only the power source of knowledge but also a repository of knowledge accumulated over the ages.

CREATION OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Language education promotes manpower development by creating job opportunities in the society. The range of job opportunities is unlimited. It pervades the world of works. For the purpose of this paper these few jobs would be considered in the light of languages education. These include teaching, journalism, clerical works, interpreting etc.

Teaching

In teaching at all levels, language education comes into prominent play. Language (whether vernacular or official) is the medium of instruction. From the kindergarten to the University it is used. Language is used in the Teachers' Colleges, in the Colleges of Medicine, Architecture, and Engineering, even in Schools of Languages.

Journalism

Journalism is another sector where the use of language is appreciated. The journalists either for print or electronic media manipulate languages to produce vivid pictures of what they want to report. They are trained to use languages to attract readers, entertain the reading public, educate the populace and inform the generality of the people in the most courteous ways.

Interpreters, Translators & P.R.O.S

Interpreters and translators could be seen as "owner" and "workers" of languages they lay claims on. In view of this, Mbah (2002:280) sees the professional translators as those who have taken professional courses in translation at postgraduate level either in the University or in Translation and Interpretation Institute such as ESIT in France and are now practicing professionally as "Translators". This implies that it is not an all-comers job. Public Relations Officers (P.R.O.) equally have a share in the languages, as it is one of their major tools.

Immigration and Customs Personnel

This class of workers who come in regular contact with foreigners both in their offices and at the borders are often either bilingual or multi-lingual to cope with the job. In Nigeria, for instance, the surrounding neighboring countries are all francophone. These are: Chad and Niger Republic in the North; Benin Republic in the West, and the Republic of Cameroun on the East. Given this situation, for effective border checks, the Nigerian immigration and customs personnel need a smattering of French language while their francophone counterparts need that of English. By so doing, language is contributing to national manpower development. To this effect Ezeude (2002:99) posits that "the new National Policy on Education (1998) has ushered French language teaching in Nigeria, into the new millennium with dignity ... the future holds bright for French language in Nigeria in the next millennium."

Conclusion and Recommendations

The greatest national or personal investment is the investment on human capital. It is often a long term project and should not often be assessed in terms of Rate of Return Approach. Developed manpower ensures the viability and strength of a nation; as a house built on a solid foundation. Language education is manpower development No. 1 tool.

In the light of the for-going; the following recommendations would benefit developing nations like Nigeria:

1. The Federal Government is advised to stop at nothing in manpower development since it has been proven to be one of the major sources of national strength.
2. The Federal Government should pursue with vigour the implementation of her declared bilingual policy. It should liaise with the French government to realize French language as a second official language of Nigeria.
3. The Federal Government should integrate French language learning in the training programmes for Nigeria's Immigration and Customs personnel for better and more effective output.
4. Journalists in Nigeria's print and electronic media should be encouraged to start giving information, news and programmes in both French and English as our second official language.
5. Wealthy Nigeria should be encouraged to go out of their way to help people from poor families to learn one trade or another, thereby helping the manpower base of the country.

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