

REFOCUSING IGBO LANGUAGE EDUCATION THROUGH MOTIVATING IGBO LANGUAGE TEACHERS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Okafor Stella O. Mrs.

Abstract

There is often a correlation between job satisfaction and job performances. When one is highly satisfied with the nature and condition of his services be he: a teacher or any professional, he will be motivated to perform highly in terms of productivity. This paper recognizes the fact that there is increase in students poor performance in the Igbo language and attributed this problem to lack of adequate motivation and inadequate incentives to the Igbo language teachers, it therefore, examines problems associated with the teaching and learning of Igbo language and suggested some possible solutions to these problems.

Introduction

One of the greatest worries of any nation especially developing ones like Nigeria is how to fully utilize her educations to develop the people's ability to manage and induce changes or, to improve the standard of living of her citizen and effect national development.

Education, is the chief social agent for training the young for competent adult role performance and for socializing them to value consciousness upon which society's stability and continuity are believed to depend on (Atbacli, Amore, Kelly 1983).

Education enlarges the child's knowledge, experiences and imaginative understanding of the world in which he or she lives. It is for this reason, that the nation in her policy on education (NPE 1998), conceived that some enduring objectives be channeled towards achieving self-reliance effective citizenry, efficiency and national consciousness.

In order to achieve the above national aspirations, the current system of education is focused on science and technology. Obviously pays little or no attention to language education yet the objective is not achieved.

Igbo language as one of the three recognized Nigerian language is being taught in Nigeria schools up to university level but students' performance has been very poor especially *-in* Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCB). The effect is that not many young Igbos know their mother tongue. They cannot be identified with it. They do not even know that the development of the mother tongue is central to the educational system. That was the reason that the nation in her policy on language education (NPE 1998), stated boldly that, "in addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of the national unity that a child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major language other than her own mother tongue". In this connection, the government considers Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to be the three major languages.

A study of those languages is part of citizenship education. In order to improve the students' performance in Igbo language, there is every need to refocus the Igbo language education.

This could be done through motivation of the Igbo language teachers. Teachers generally are individuals who are equipped with knowledge, ability, and skills after a period of training and transmit the knowledge and skills to the learners at various levels of educational system. Academic American Encyclopedia (1989:610), describes them as facilitators and managers of knowledge. They are the instrument of effecting immediate change in their learners' behaviours forward into future life.

Language teacher is therefore, an individual that has superior knowledge, ability and skills in language and transfers this knowledge and skill to the learner in the process of teaching and learning. The language teacher in any country in the whole world is an important personality because he has the opportunity (if adequately utilized) of influencing the members of his society, by setting up a strong communication network between all the members of his nation (Urama 2004).

For a language teacher to be adequately utilized there must be motivation. Motivation is a crucial component in learning. Thorndike, was the first psychologist to document the link between learning and motivation. He called (his link, the Law of effect. Motivation has since become a firmly established concept in psychology and education. Academic American encyclopedia (1989:610).

defined motivation as the hypothesized cause of behaviour: the determinate of behaviour's arousal vigor, direction and persistence. Motivation is often considered as an answer to the question why an action is performed.

According to Thorndike (1913:2), "Motivation is followed by satisfying state of affairs". Therefore, the Igbo language teachers will only perform well when they are satisfied with the condition of their services.

Problems of Igbo Language Education

There are factors militating against the effective teaching and learning of Igbo language in our schools. Some of those factors are:

i. Inadequate Trained Teachers: The general effectiveness of language learning and teaching in any given country is heavily dependent on the nature and quality of training which teachers undergo before entering their profession. This implies that the would-be teachers need to undergo teacher-training programme.

Today, most of Igbo language teachers are not well trained and do not possess the three major characteristics of an ideal teacher such as personal qualities, technical abilities and professional understanding and this affects them in performing well in their field.

ii. Poor Salaries to the Teacher: Traditionally, teaching has not been an occupation that receives adequate financial assistance. Igbo language education is not well financed as the teachers and students are not motivated through salaries, allowances etc. Igbo language teachers are poorly paid and other incentives are denied. Moreover, though the salaries are poor, they are not regularly paid thereby contributing to the teacher's ineffectiveness in his teaching.

iii. Inadequate Organized in-service Training for Teachers: There are inadequate organized in-service training and retraining programmes such as seminars, workshops, and conferences for Igbo language teachers as a normal expectation of their career. This type of training will help the teachers to retain and improve on their potentials. Since there is not enough of this training for Igbo language teachers, reverse was the case. This in no small way affects teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

iv. Non-availability of teaching aids/Materials: The term teaching aids describes object and or events that help the teachers to promote teaching and learning activities. They provide the direct interaction of the pupils with the realities of social and physical environment. They also give initial concept, which is correct, real and complete. In short, teaching aids do not only instigate lack off interest but also provide motivation and stimulation. These teaching aids ranges from models, television, radio cassettes, newspapers, films, chart, tape records, computer and even language laboratory. These are not available in schools for the Igbo language teachers.

Even in some schools and colleges, common cardboard and tempo for drawing and writing word cards, sentence cards, to mention but few, are not available talk less of tape recorder and cassettes, computer or language laboratory that many schools and colleges regard as elephant venture.

v. Study Leave Problem: There is every need for Igbo language teachers to retain and improve on their potentialities. They need additional knowledge for day-to-day improvement in their areas of specialization and also continually educate themselves in order to acquire the essential requirements for teaching Igbo language.

Examples of those requirements are: they should know the material they are to teach. They should be able to organize and articulate the material in a manner understandable to the students and should manage the students in order to maintain students attention on the learning task. The Igbo language teachers are not given study leaves that will help them to acquire additional knowledge to their areas of specialization and this affects their teaching effectiveness and as well affects their promotions.

vi. Parent Attitude: Some parents do not support their children to study Igbo language in schools. Most of them are protective and authoritative. Thereby, hindering their children's freedom of doing what they like even when it is necessary. Some parents even deny their children food and other things of life because they do not adhere to the choice being made

by their parents. Specifically when women want to be called "Mama dokita" which means Doctor's mother, "Mama Njinia" - Engineer's mother, and "Mama Loya" - Lawyer's mother, because (hey feel that lhsc professions are more lucrative and prestigious. The parent's attitude dampens the child's interest in reading the course.

Recommendations

Well trained and qualified teachers should he provided and given good treatment, e.g. free accommodation, free medical treatment, free transport facilities,, car loans plus other incentives. The

government should ensure there is an extension of quality teacher education programme. By doing these, teachers' interests will be aroused and they will perform better in the classroom.

There should be an increase in teachers' salaries and regular, payment of these salaries and allowances as when due, since we all know that a hungry man is an angry man, and one cannot play with a hungry dog. The increase in salaries and regular and punctual payment of teachers' salaries will induce the teachers to effective teaching.

The government should encourage the teaching and learning of Igbo language through sponsoring the organization of workshops, seminars, conferences for teachers and students regularly. Teachers should be given opportunities to attend these workshops, seminars and conferences.

Teaching aids/materials such as T.V., Radio Cassettes, Film projectors, Computers, language laboratories etc should be sufficiently provided.

Teachers should be given study leaves in order to improve themselves.

Government or civil society organizations should organize orientations for parents and teachers of Igbo language on importance of language.

There should also be a general improvement of teachers and students of Igbo language welfare so that the parents will change their negative attitude against Igbo language education.

Conclusion

The problems militating against the teaching and learning of the Igbo language in Nigeria schools are the basic issues highlighted in this paper. Possible solutions are also recommended to ameliorate these problems in order to enhance a big success in language education. These solutions gear towards motivating the Igbo language teachers through increasing their salaries, payment of these salaries and allowances regularly and as when due, improving the teachers working conditions, lengthening their period of training and general improvement of the teachers welfare. If these recommendations are candidly implemented, there will be progress in teaching and learning of the Igbo language and students will start to perform well in it.

Language played a vital role in the achievement of all educational objectives. It cuts across all other disciplines and without good communication, no nation can stand. The cardinal point for language educational reform begins and ends with motivation of the Igbo language teachers.

References

Academic, American Encyclopedia, (1989). U.S.A. Glorier Incorporated.

Attbach, G. Arnova, Kelly, G. (1982). *Comparative education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). *National Policy on Education*. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education NERDC.

Thorndike, E.L. (1913). *Educational psychology: the psychology of learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Urania, C.E. (2004). The Language Teacher. *Journal of Language and Literature (Joll)* I, (1). Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu: Chuka Education Publishers.