

LANGUAGE EDUCATION: AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the concept National Security and juxtaposed it with concept of Language Education. It specifically investigated how language education can be employed as tools for solving the problems of insecurity, economy, socio-political and electioneering conflicts, ethno-religious crises, cultism, kidnapping among others in Nigeria. The paper discovered that the term national security goes beyond prevention of crimes but it is also employed to as an expression of the availability of the basic needs of life. The paper further discovered the nation has been experiencing socio-economic and security challenges as a result of individual and collective negative attitudes of the of the citizens towards various national issues. It was also a finding of the study that inadequate communication among the citizens, ethnic and language loyalty are factors that have been causing disharmony in the country. The conclusion of the study is that if the government gives adequate attention to language education, it will promote unity and peace in the country. The paper also concluded that a proper appreciation of the place of Language Education in Nigerian can bring about security and sustainable development.

Key words: Language Education, National Security, Development, Mother Tongue.

Introduction

Language education in Nigeria is as old as the western education in the country, (Olaoye 2008, p. 136). The relevance of Language Education in any nation cannot be over emphasized. In realization of this importance, the Nigerian government decided to make English her official language and French, a foreign language. This was done to achieve national integration and to solve communication barrier among her citizens. The significance of language education has informed the policy that makes it compulsory for students in Nigerian Secondary Schools to study a Nigerian language in addition to their mother tongues. A country where a citizen speaks the language that is of mutual intelligibility to everyone has her atmosphere safe and secure socially, economically and politically. This explains the focus of the study.

The Concept of Language Education

Language Education in Nigeria involves the learning of other languages other than the mother tongue. It facilitates all actions that any nation can embark upon to restore peace, ensure economic growth, bring unity, strength and self-reliance. These are some of the main objectives entrenched in the second National Development Plans (NDP); accepted as the basis for National Policy on Education in 1998. The objectives of the NDP include:

- a. a free and democratic society
- b. a just and egalitarian society
- c. a united, strong and self-reliant nation
- d. a great and dynamic economy
- e. a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

Cognizance is given to education in the NDP as the cornerstone and bedrock of National Development. It is believed that through education, Nigeria will develop both her human and material resources. According to Akindele and Adegbite (1992, p. 15), "the quality of a Nations education could be considerably determined by the quality of language through which it is given". Bokova (2012), quoting Nelson Mandela states that "the language of our thought and our emotions is our most valuable asset... in ensuring quality Education for all; in promoting inclusion and in combating discrimination".

National Security

National Security means the survival, the well being and the ability of the country to preserve its territorial and cultural integrity. Scholars have different views on what National security means. Trager and Kronenberg (1973, p.36) define National security "as that part of government policy having its objective on the creation of National and International Political conditions favourable to the protection or extension of vital national values against existing and potential adversaries". Louwi (1978) states that national security includes traditional defence policy and also the non-military actions of a state which ensure its total capacity to survive as a political entity and which enable her to exert influence and to carry out its internal and international objectives. Mroz (1980, p.105) simply defines security as "the relative freedom from harmful threats." Oditia (2012) opines that security is the foundation on which any meaningful project is anchored.

There have been several ethno-religious conflicts in the history of Nigeria in recent times, these problems appear to be escalating at an intolerable scale. As stated by Albert Akpor (2011), at least 800 people were said to have been killed by the extremist Boko Haram group in Nigeria. This group claims to be fighting to establish Islamic Law and reject western education in its entirety. Hence, it results to the incessant bombing in Nigeria. As a result of the activities of Boko Haram, Nigeria has been listed as one of the terrorist countries in the world. The listing of Nigeria among the terrorist nations was informed by several bombing in Nigeria since October 2010 - the beginning of the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. The incidence of bombing in Nigeria include the bombing in Abuja on the 2010 Independence Day; the Army barrack in Abuja in December 2010, the Police Headquarter Abuja, in June 2011, the United Nation (UN) Office in Abuja, in August 2011, the incessant and continuous bombings in Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa and Kano States, (Adejumo, 2011). The new trend in armed-robbery in Nigeria is bank robbery. People now feel insecure whenever they are in the banking halls.

The social unrests arising from the absence of such basic human security are believed to be capable of creating chaos. Adejumo (2011) quoting the Wikipedia says that "Internal security is the act of keeping peace within the boarders of a sovereign state or other self-governing territories." This is done generally by upholding the national law and defending the nation against internal security threats. Adejumo (2011) goes on to state that threats to the general peace may range from low level civil disorder, large scale violence, or even an armed insurgency. Threats to internal security range from petty crime, serious organized crime, political or industrial unrest or even domestic terrorism. In Nigerian situation, these problems have damaging consequence of giving a signal to the rest of the international community that, Nigeria is not a safe and secure nation; and as such, not suitable for economic investment and activities.

National Development

National development is a process whereby there is a continuous increase in the systems efficiency; the condition which results to general upliftment of the socio-economic activities of the nation. Such upliftment could be material or psychological. Indiresan, (2003, p. 615) quoting Cairncross, (1962) states that development is not just a matter of having plenty of money, nor is it purely an economic phenomenon. It embraces all aspects of social behaviours and establishment of law and order in dealings with issues relating to the revenue authorities, relationships between the family, literacy, familiarity with mechanical gadgets and so on. Onukaogu, (2010, p.6) says that sustainable development is "the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets their own needs." National development can also be referred to as the general improvement in the well being

of all citizens of a country. Citizens in a developing economy must have access to qualitative health facilities, good roads, pipe borne water, employment, uninterrupted power supply. Unfortunately, many of these facilities are not available for Nigeria citizens. This is what this study considered to be a wrong security signal.

Language Education in Nigeria

The 1952 and 1954 primary school syllabus for the Eastern and Western Regions of Nigeria emphasized the study of language. The designers of the syllabus were of the opinion that, learning Nigerian languages will keep the pupils abreast of their cultures and make them to respect other people ideas, opinions, values and beliefs; thus making them to shun ethnocentrism or cultural stereotypes and biases. In recognition of the importance of Language Education for the purpose of promoting national unity and national development, government introduced the National Policy on Education in 1977. The policy has been revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. The main national objectives of the policy are the building of a free, democratic, just, egalitarian, united and dynamic economy; and a land of bright and well opportunities for all citizens. Lawal (2008, p.292) submitted that the National Policy on Education stipulates that, the quality of education instruction at all levels has to be directed towards inculcating the following values:

- respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
- faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- moral set and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations;
- shared responsibility for the common good of society,
- respect for the dignity of labour; and
- promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

The Education Language Policy (1981) states that, the medium of instruction in pre-primary and early Primary Education will be the mother tongue or the language of immediate community. For Secondary Education, at the Junior Secondary School level, students will be required to learn English as well as two Nigerian languages: one of which will be the language of their immediate environment, while the second should be any of the three major languages. It is stated in the National Language Policy (1998) that "for smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigeria to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in schools." When this Language Policy is fully implemented, inter-ethnic communication and understanding would increase. There would be better communication and understanding with our Francophone neighbours. The implication of this clause of the policy is that learning the language of neighbouring communities increases ties with those communities and consequently brings unity, progress and development; socially, politically and economically.

Some of the efforts made towards the implementation of the policy is the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 with one of its objectives as forging unity among the youths across of the country. In actualizing this objective, materials were developed for Languages. Corps members were given rudimentary knowledge of the language of the environment of the state in which they are serving during the one month orientation exercise and for the rest of the service year. The programme is expected to help corps members to acquire additional language and also appreciate the culture and people of the community where they are serving. According to Sodipe (1999), this will further consolidate the unity among Nigerians and as the youths of today become the futures leaders, that will form part of the success of the language policy.

Language Education: A Tool for Achieving National Security and Development

Nigeria is a political unit, made up of over two hundred ethnic and diverse religious groups. The consent and cooperation of these ethnic nationalities and religious groups are important to the existence and continuity of Nigeria as a Nation. As a result of the multi-ethnic configuration of the nation, the issues of unity and peaceful cooperation become inevitable. Frequent crises and violence among the groups that formed the nation will lead to divisive politics and loss of confidence in the system. Consequently, there will be an impediment to the progress of the nation and the

consolidation of the nations hard earned democracy.

The multi-lingual structure of the nation has its advantage. The ability to speak other languages has the advantage of building and restoring friendship, trust and confidence among the various people who speak such languages; thereby bringing social cohesion among them. According to Macious and Plummer (1998) quoted in Ani (2004), language influences conduct, because language is the simplest means of communicating thought. It is evidently the strongest medium of transmitting culture and social reality. There is no doubt that language is a prerequisite for full mutual understanding and cooperation between nations. Language learning promotes understanding, tolerance and respect for the cultural identity, rights and values of others; whether abroad, or at home in minority group. Through language use, learners become conscious of the correct levels of discourse, polite behaviour and expectations specific to situations within a social community. Language education thus brings forth development of the mind, which eventually leads to National Development.

Language Education has an essential role in preparing children to cope with the new perspectives brought about by a rapidly changing society - both in international and national communities. It helps to overcome insecurity and it develops confidence as the members face the demands of social and personal relationships. Learning foreign languages is a necessity; if a country is to fully play her role in international affairs. In Europe, it is seen as a criterion of responsible international citizenship. It is considered as strength needed to interact with people from other countries on equal linguistic terms.

The knowledge of language boosts a persons self confidence. It brings about friendship and exchange of visits. In Nigeria today, people that speak French are able to exchange visits with their French counterparts. They are able to interact freely with them. It affords them opportunities to transact business with French nationalities. Such Nigerians gain much from the technological products of the French people and they transfer same to Nigeria. As people share cultural values, they become less ethnocentric, as they come to see themselves and their society in the eyes of the rest of the world; bringing world peace which leads to national security and development.

Language and education are interwoven. Asemota, (1996, p.91) reiterating his position concerning language needs states that, "language information is needed in helping to determine the most effective pedagogic segmentation and sequencing." Most Nigerian learners and teachers of French for instance, belong to associations like Nigeria Association of French Teachers (NAFT) and Inter College Association of French Teachers (INTERCAFT). Likewise, for teachers of English language; there are association like: Nigeria English Studies Association (NESA), National Association of Teachers and Researchers in English as a Second Language (NATRESL). These associations do organize meetings, workshops and conferences, where different views and knowledge are shared. The meetings are always organized to bring unity and commitment amongst members, irrespective of the differences in their indigenous languages and places of origin. That is why Okobah, (2001, p.169) states that "Language appears to be the most important bond holding human societies together".

Language aids invention. Without language, it is difficult to invent anything. A team of scientists, for example, working together to invent something needs a medium of communication which evidently is language. A scientist that needs to advance knowledge in his area of study can only achieve this through the use of language. Interestingly, success in the international world of commerce and industry is becoming more and more dependent on foreign language learning. Young people have more career opportunities when they have understanding of a foreign language. These opportunities are not limited only to the executives but are found with all grades and categories of personnel, such as marketing staff, legal specialist, secretaries and technicians.

When the citizens secure good jobs, they are bound to secure the most basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, medicine, fuel, etc. human security will be assured. Consequently, there will be

attainment of national security, peace and development.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that language learning occupies a central place in the life of a nation, especially in the educational sector. It promotes understanding, unity, peace and development of the mind. It is also the conclusion of this paper that language education moulds and directs the mind the citizens in the areas of cultural integrations as learners of a language imbibe the culture of the native speakers of the language they learn. This brings enlightenment and refinement to the learner. He or she later transfers such culture to his or her society where it can be accepted. This paper also conclude by establishing the fact that Language Education brings about human security (i.e., the ability to secure the most basic necessities of life like food, shelter, clothing etc) which is very important for the attainment of national security and development.

If indigenous Language learning is encouraged in our nation; the paper also concludes that there shall be security of lives and properties which will in turn promote National security. The nation shall also develop at a fast paste in every sector. It is hoped that the Government and Non-Government Organizations would encourage the teaching and learning of Language by-./p>

- Revisiting the national language policy with a view of correcting the flaws in the policy;
- enforcing without delay, a full implementation of the National Language Policy;
- emphasizing on Language education at all levels;
- mass training of language teachers;
- giving special incentives to language teachers;
- granting scholarship to language students;
- educating the people through National Television, Newspapers, and Radios on the importance of learning foreign languages; for public safety, national security and for nconomic development.

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