

A Review of Teaching and Learning of Mother Tongues in Nigerian Schools; Yoruba as a Case Study

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Abstract : Taking a cue from countries such as China and Japan, there is no doubt that the teaching and learning of Mother Tongue (MT) or Language of Immediate Environment (LIE) is a potential source of development in every country. The engine of economic, scientific, technological and political advancement would be more functional when the language of instruction for teaching and learning in schools is in the child's mother tongue. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to delve into the genesis of the official recognition given to the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages at national level with special focus on Yoruba language. Yoruba language and other Nigerian languages were placed on a national pedestal by a Nigerian Educational Minister, Late Professor Babatunde Fafunwa, who served under the government of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985 - 1993). Through his laudable effort, the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages in schools all over the nation was incorporated officially in the national policy of education. Among all the Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were given foremost priorities because of the large population of their speakers. Since the Fafunwa era, Yoruba language has become a national subject taught in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. However, like every new policy, its implementation has suffered several forms of criticisms and impediments from governments, policy makers, curriculum developers, school administrators, teachers and learners. This paper has been able to arrive at certain findings through oral interviews, questionnaires and evaluation of pupils/students enrolment and performances in Yoruba language with special focus on the South-west and North central regions of Nigeria. From the research carried out, some factors have been found to be responsible for the successful implementation or otherwise of Yoruba language instruction policy in some schools, colleges and higher institutions in Nigeria. In conclusion, the paper made recommendations on how the National Policy of Education would be implemented to enhance the teaching and learning of Yoruba language in all Nigerian schools.

Keywords : language of immediate environment, mother tongue, national policy of education, yoruba language

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