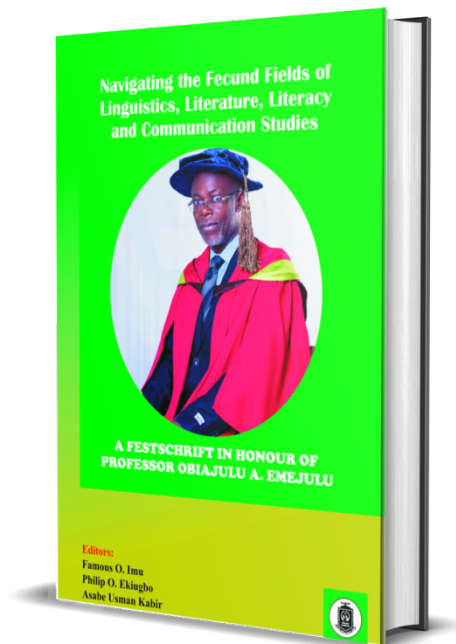


## **Navigating the Fecund Fields of Linguistics, Literature, Literacy and Communication Studies: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Obiajulu A. Emejulu**



### **Editors:**

Famous O. Imu, Philip O. Ekiugbo and Asabe Usman Kabir

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## Chapter Twenty-Three

### The Status of Nigerian Languages in Primary and Secondary Schools: The Way Forward

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**Abstract:** Nigeria is a multilingual country. It has over five hundred indigenous languages. These languages are spoken mainly in the home domain, and serve the socio-cultural, political, health, economic as well as spiritual needs of the people who speak them. The importance of these languages is underscored by the fact that they serve as repositories of the culture, customs, norms and values of our societies as well as constituting an important resource and vehicle for national development. The Federal Government, in recognition of the importance of indigenous languages in national development, made provisions for their use in the constitution and the National Policy on Education (NPE). This paper examines the status of Nigerian languages in primary and secondary schools in relation to the provisions of the National Policy on Education. It discusses the adequacy or otherwise of the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction from pre-primary school through the first three years of primary school, with English featured as a school subject. A total number of one hundred (100) teachers at the basic education level in Aba metropolis were selected as participants for this research using the simple random technique. A 16-item questionnaire was administered to them for data collection. The findings showed that students prefer to be taught in their mother tongue and they usually achieve better learning outcomes when the medium of instruction is their mother tongue. It also revealed that the provisions of the indigenous language education contained in the National Policy on Education are not properly implemented by the majority of the teachers, and the government has not taken the implementation of the provisions any seriously. The findings further revealed that some of the factors militating against the use of Indigenous languages in Nigeria include: poor policy planning and implementation; teacher quality and inadequate curriculum materials. Recommendations were also

made which include: that language policy as stated in the NPE document be revised by extending the use of the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment as the medium of instruction from pre-primary up to the end of primary school level. There should be a shift from what is obtainable presently towards the effective implementation of language policies of the NPE. The government as well as relevant, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organizations and local communities should collaborate to sponsor the study and standardization of local languages for inclusion and use as national languages.

## **ỤMỊ EDEMEDE**

Naijiria bụ mba nwere ụbara asụsụ nke asụsụ agbụrụ ya dị iche karịrị narị ise. Imerime asụsụ agbụrụ ndị a dị na Naijiria bụ nke a na-asụ dika asụsụ olu nne. E ji asụsụ ndị a eme ihe ndị metụtara omenaala na mmekọrịta mmadụ na ibe ya, ọchịchị, ahụike, okwu akụnaụba nakwa okpukperechi nke ndị mmadụ. Uru asụsụ ndị a bara na-apụta ihe nke ukwu n'ihi na e ji ha mere ka ebe nchekwa omenaala, ọdịnaala, mbamuru na ọdịbendị nke obodo anyị dị iche ma burụkwa akụ dị mkpa na-enye aka maka mwulite obodo. Ya mere Gọmentị Etiti, n'igosiputa idị mkpa nke asụsụ agbụrụ anyị dị iche dị na mwulite obodo, tinyere ya n'akwụkwọ iwu ozurumba nakwa n'akwụkwọ Atumatụ Iwu Ozurumba ke Edukeshon a kpọrọ National Policy on Education (NPE). Akwụkwọ nchọcha a na-enyocha ogo nke asụsụ agbụrụ ndị dị na Naijiria nọ na agụmakwụkwọ praịmarị nakwa sekọndrị dika arọputara ya n'ime Atumatụ Iwu Ozurumba ke Edukeshon. O na-akparịta ụka banyere ozuzu maọbụ ezughị ezu nke iji olu nne maọbụ asụsụ ogbe akụzi ihe n'ụlọakwụkwọ ọtaakara rue afọ atọ butara ụzọ nke agụmakwụkwọ praịmarị, ebe e ji asụsụ Englishi eme ihe dika ihe ọmụmụ sọbjekti. Onuogugu ndị nkuzi dị otu narị n'ogo agụmakwụkwọ dị ala n'obodo Aba dị n'Abia Steeti nke Naijiria ka a horo ime nchọcha a site n'igbaso usoro mfe nke inweta njatule. E nyere ha akwụkwọ njumaza nwere ajuju 16 maka inweta ngwa nchọcha. Ihe ndị a chọputara na-egosi na ụmụ akwụkwọ ka nwe mmasị n'ime akwụkwọ n'olu nne ha ebe ha na-eme nke ọma karịa mgbe e jiri olu nne akuziri ha ihe. Ihe nchọputa na-egosikwa na ọtụtụ nroputa nke ọmụmụ asụsụ agbụrụ dị iche na Naijiria nke dị n'ime Akwụkwọ Iwu Agụmakwụkwọ obodo anyị bụ nke ọtụtụ ndị nkuzi adighi e tinye n'oru otu o kwesiri, tinyere na gọmentị ejighi ntinye n'oru nke nroputa ndị a niile kporo ihe. Ihe ndị ozo achoputakwara na-adola azu iji asụsụ olu nne akuzi ihe gunyere: atumatụ na ntinye n'oru iwu agụmakwụkwọ na-erijughị afọ, enweghi ọtụtụ ndị nkuzi azuru azu nke ọma n'asụsụ agbụrụ dị iche nakwa mmebe ihe ọmụmụ asụsụ agbụrụ na-erijughị afọ. Enyere ntuziaka ndị gunyere: ka

emegharịa atumatụ iwu asụsụ nke NPE site n'igbatikwu iji olu nne maobu asụsụ ogbe akuzi ihe n'uloakwukwo otaakara rue na ngwucha agumakwukwo praimari. E kwesiri inwe mgbanwe puo n'onodu di ugbuga banyere ntinye n'oru di ire maka atumatụ iwu asụsụ niile nke NPE. Goomenti tinyere uloru n'abughị nke goomenti na otu ndi nkiti di iche nakwa ime obodo di iche kwesiri igbakọ aka kwado omumu na ndinotu nke asụsụ agburu di iche maka iwebata ma tinye ha n'oru dika asụsụ ozurumba.

## 1.0 Introduction

Language is one of the most enduring artefacts of culture. Sidi (1996) asserts that people can always have their history traced through their language except if they are forced by conquest or by another superior group, or by social, economic and political domination to give up their language. Language as people's accepted medium of communication has different forms which depend on the status and purpose it serves in a community. Consequently, a language could be indigenous or foreign. An indigenous language is a native language spoken by the people of a given community or linguistic group. Nigeria is a multilingual country that is endowed with more than 500 indigenous languages (NERDC, 2013). These numerous languages are spoken as either mother tongues or lingua-franca across societies and linguistic borders. They are used to serve the socio-cultural, political, health, economic as well as spiritual needs of the people. The importance of these languages is underscored by the fact that they serve as repositories of the culture, customs, norms and values of our societies as well as constituting an important resource for national development.

Wolff (2006) and Malgwi (2009) asserted that the languages of a nation are part of its natural resources. Unlike other natural resources where the greater the quantity the greater the benefit to the nation, harnessing the resource of languages for nation-building poses overwhelming challenges to multi-lingual nations like Nigeria. Das Gupta (1968), Bamgbose (1976) and many others have all discussed matters relating to these subjects, and have together produced overwhelming evidence to the effect that the development of our indigenous language can contribute significantly to our overall national development. Nigeria's Indigenous languages are commonly classified into one of the following two ways:

- (a) **Demographically into *Major and Non-major languages*:** Three languages namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are classified as the major languages because together, they are spoken by more than half of the population either as mother

tongues (MT)/First Languages (L1) or as Second Languages (L2); They are also given the status of “*national languages*”. All other Nigerian languages fall under the category of non-major languages.

**(b) *Classification is also in terms of the level of standardization/modernization into developed, developing and undeveloped languages:***

The three major languages are developed while others are either developing or undeveloped depending on their state of readiness for use in education in terms of the number and quality of written material available in the language.

## **2.0 Review of Related Literature**

The indigenous languages of the various ethnic groups and societies that make up present-day Nigeria were mostly in oral form during the pre-colonial period. An exception is the Arabic which had developed into a written form and was spread across parts of Northern Nigeria by Arabs in the spreading of Islam, before the arrival of the Europeans in Nigeria. The use and teaching of Nigerian languages in formal education is as old as formal education itself in Nigeria. The early Christian missionaries were the pioneers of the standardization and use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction to reach out to the local people. To spread their religion, they studied these languages, developed them as best as they could, translated the scriptures into them and taught the people to read and write in their languages.

Later the British colonialists introduced formal education and promoted the use and teaching of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in the various local schools then to achieve effective administration of the various territories. The imperial education code and edict of 1926 gave official backing to the study and use of indigenous languages as media of instruction alongside English in schools. This official recognition gave impetus to the study, development and standardization of many indigenous languages for use as a medium of instruction in education. This sparked interest in the study and research on many of these local languages by various groups which include the missionaries, expeditionists, colonialists, ethnographers, lexicographers, educationists and others.

Studies were conducted on the communities where these languages existed and followed by their official listening. They were later standardized and reduced to writing, using especially the Latin script, thus integrating them into the formal system. Thereafter, philologists, lexicographers and grammarians began intensive study of many of these languages and developed their dictionaries and grammar

sketches. The initial efforts of G.P Bargary, R.C Abrahams and H.C Robinson were outstanding in the development of Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Idoma and Nupe dictionaries. These developments were a precursor to the establishment in Nigeria of the Department of Linguistics and/or Languages in universities and colleges of education. They also gave impetus to the teaching of Nigerian languages at primary and secondary levels.

The importance and vital role played by indigenous languages as an essential resource for nation-building has been well-researched by many authors and discussed in several fora. The Federal Government in recognition of the importance of indigenous languages in national development has made provisions for their use in the two most important documents that spell out our national life, namely, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education (NPE). Sections 55 and 97 of the 1999 Constitution states respectively that:

The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made.

The business of the State Houses Assembly may in addition to English, be conducted in one or more languages spoken in the state as the house may by resolution approve.

In the same vein, the National Policy on Education (NPE) which is the official document that spells out the philosophy and objectives that drive education in Nigeria, actively promotes multilingualism in both Nigerian and Foreign languages. The document provides for the use/teaching of the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE), one of the three major Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (other than the learners' MT), English, French, and Arabic in the Nigerian school system. Specifically, the National Policy on Education (2004), Section 1 (10a) captures and succulently expresses what the Federal Government of Nigeria intends to achieve with Nigerian indigenous languages as a tool for national development. It reads:

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 every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.

The major provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1977 revised 1981, 1988, 2004, 2007, and 2013) over the years as it relates to Nigerian Indigenous languages are summarized below:

- (a) The medium of instruction from pre-primary or kindergarten up to the first three years of primary school shall be the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE) while English features as a school subject.
- (b) From the fourth year of primary school onwards, the medium of instruction shall be English. Still, the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE) shall continue to be taught as a school subject up to the end of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level. In addition, students throughout the Senior Secondary School level shall study one of the three major Nigerian Languages: Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba other than their mother tongue (MT).

The Federal Government of Nigeria to ensure that its aims and objectives in education are realized, has continued to push for reforms to improve the educational system. One such reform is the Universal Basic Education (UBE), established by the UBE Act 2004. The UBE, which stipulates free education for six years of primary school and three years of Junior Secondary School, makes provision for the use and teaching of the three major Nigerian indigenous languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as well as other languages which include Arabic, English, and French. The UBE brings Nigerian Languages into greater focus as it emphasizes permanent functional literacy as one of its cardinal objectives. A study conducted by NINLAN for the UBE PEP-II Action Research for the UBEC/World Bank 2011 – 2014 on language and literacy confirms that children who are taught initial language and numeracy skills through their own or a known community language learn faster, better and are less likely to drop out of school.

It is quite evident from the content of the National Policy on Education that the Federal Government of Nigeria has good intentions to harness the rich resources of indigenous languages for national cohesion, unity, and development. This



informs the ample provisions made in the NPE for the use and teaching of Nigerian languages as a medium of instruction in schools. The objectives of the Language Policy in the NPE have only been partially realized. Despite concerted Federal Government efforts and reforms to ensure that its aims and objectives are realized as stated in the National Policy in Education, not much has been achieved for all the efforts and resources. There are some inherent inadequacies observable in the language policy of the NPE. These inadequacies only water down efforts and resources invested in the NPE and end up producing unappreciable or insignificant results. The following are particularly highlighted: Section 2 (20) (b) and (c) of the NPE specifically states that:

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as the medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects.

*The use of the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE) as a medium of instruction for the pre-primary school and the first three years of primary school is inadequate. This is because the child understands and masters the mother tongue/language of the immediate environment at this stage of his life (within the age bracket of 0 – 8 years) is still shallow and not profound. The shift from the use of the mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction only confuses the child and retards his development. This is because the child learns by first receiving and interpreting what he is being taught in his other tongue before translating it into English and proper assimilation. If he is not well grounded in his mother tongue/language of the immediate environment, it is bound to affect his understanding and mastery of English.*

The Language Policy of the NPE is outrightly skewed in favour of the English language at the expense of the indigenous Nigerian languages. There is no gainsaying the fact that English is given the status of an official language of administration; it is the language of deliberations in both National and State Houses of Assemblies. It is the medium of instruction from the upper primary school level onwards; it is a compulsory subject at the junior and senior secondary school levels, and a credit pass



is a requirement for admission into most Nigerian tertiary institutions. Clearly, this anomaly is the bane of Nigerian indigenous languages which are relegated to the background.

Another glaring area in the language policy of the NPE is the case of half-hazard policy implementation. Although it is spelt out in the NPE (2013) that the medium of instruction in primary schools shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years, only a few public schools in the country observe this policy while the majority of the privately owned schools do the contrary. They see the speaking of Nigerian indigenous languages in the school premises as taboo (Ogunremi, 1996). The supervision of educational policy implementation from the Federal level through the state level and down to the local government level is largely uncoordinated. The supervision of private schools by the relevant agencies of the Federal Ministry of Education as well as the State Ministry of Education are not effectively conducted, with the result that very little is being achieved in ensuring full compliance with policy requirements.

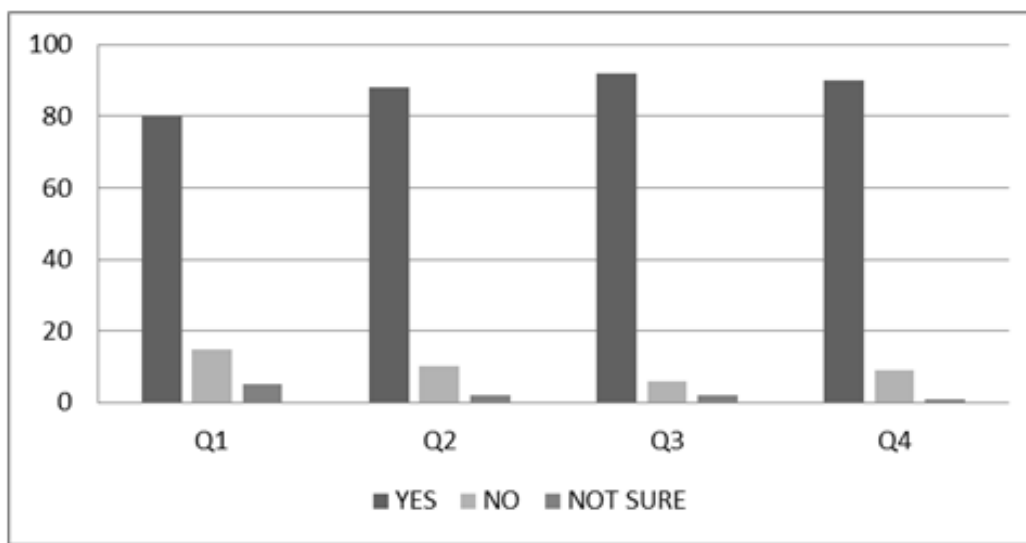
### **3.0 Research Methodology**

This study employs data elicited from school teachers. A total number of one hundred (100) teachers at the basic education level (this comprises pre-primary, lower primary, and junior secondary schools as contained in the National Policy on Education) in Aba metropolis, the foremost commercial city in Abia State, Nigeria, were selected as participants. The schools in Aba Metropolis were stratified into public and private schools, after which ten schools were randomly selected; five from each category. Ten teachers were randomly selected through a simple random sampling technique from each of the ten schools. A sixteen-item questionnaire was developed and administered to the teachers of the relevant subjects to find out students' perceptions of indigenous language education, the status of indigenous language education provisions in the NPE, teachers' skills in the Indigenous languages, and the future of Indigenous languages in Nigeria. The instrument was divided into four parts to cater to the variables examined, with each part having four closed-ended questions. The options to choose from were *yes*, *no* and *not sure*. The data were collated and analyzed using descriptive frequency.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussions

Table1. Students' Perception of Indigenous Language Education

Q1	Do you think students prefer to be taught in the English language rather than the indigenous language?
Q2	In your assessment, do students demonstrate more passion for learning when you switch to an indigenous language in a classroom setting?
Q3	Do you think students comprehend better when you explain a topic in an indigenous language?
Q4	Do you think students feel teaching indigenous languages may not prepare them well for international examinations?



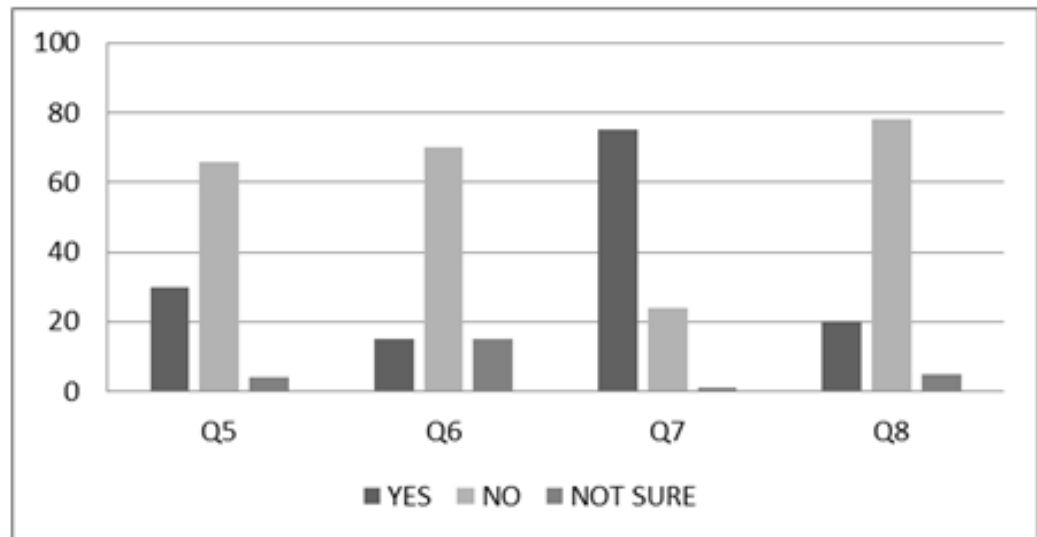
*Fig. 1: Percentage rates of responses for students' perception of indigenous language education*

From the analysis shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 above, 80% of the students are reported to prefer to be taught in indigenous languages to the English language while 15 percent are comfortable with the English language as the medium of instruction. 5% are not sure. The percentage of school teachers who believe that students show more passion for learning when the teacher switches to an indigenous language in a classroom setting is 88%. 10% feel that practising indigenous language education in the classroom is not significant to students' passion for learning while 2% of the respondents are not sure. 92% of the respondents believe that students comprehend better when they are taught in indigenous languages while 6% feel otherwise. 2% of the respondents are not sure. 90% of the respondents reported that the students feel that indigenous language education cannot prepare them for international

examinations while 9% reported otherwise. Only 1% is not sure.

**Table 2: Awareness on Indigenous Language Education Provisions of the National Policy on Education**

Q5	Are you aware of the provisions of the National Policy on Education on indigenous languages?
Q6	Have you been implementing the indigenous language provisions of the National Policy on Education?
Q7	Is implementing the indigenous languages provisions of the National Policy on Education not necessary for students' success in education?
Q8	Are there available textbooks and other relevant teaching materials in indigenous languages?



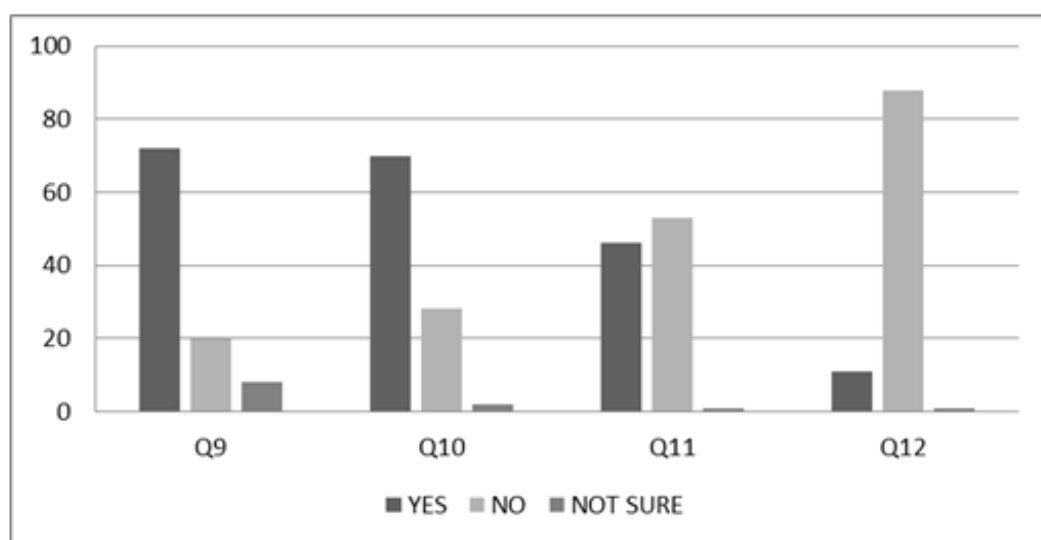
*Fig 2: Percentage Rates of Responses of Awareness on Indigenous Language Education Provisions of the National Policy on Education*

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that only 30% of the teachers used in this study are aware of the existence of the indigenous language provisions of the National Policy on Education. 66% are not familiar with the indigenous language provisions while 4% are not sure. Only 15% of the teachers have been implementing the indigenous languages provisions of the National Policy on Education while 70% have not been implementing these provisions. 15% of the respondents are not sure. 75% of the respondents think that it is not necessary to implement the Indigenous languages

provisions of the National Policy on Education, 24% feel otherwise while 1% are not sure. Only 20% of the teachers used for this study have relevant materials for teaching in the Indigenous languages, 78% lack the relevant teaching materials and 2% are not sure.

**Table 3. Teachers' Skills in the Indigenous Languages**

Q9	Are you proud of your skills in your indigenous language?
Q10	Do you speak your indigenous language at home?
Q11	Do you write your indigenous language with difficulty?
Q12	Is using your mother tongue to teach as easy to you as the English language?

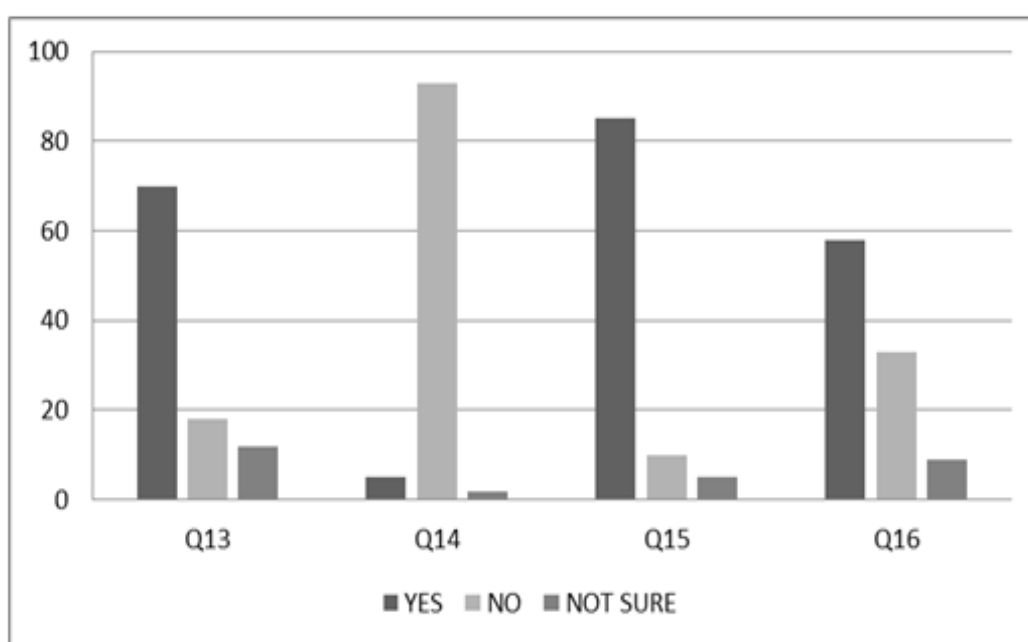


*Fig 3: Percentage Rate of Responses for Teachers' Skills in their Indigenous Languages*

Table 3 and Figure 3 reveal that 72% of the teachers used for this study are proud of their skills in the use of their indigenous language. 20% of the teachers are not proud of their skills in their indigenous language while 8% are not sure. 70% of the teachers speak their indigenous language outside the school setting, 28% of the respondents do not speak their indigenous languages at home, and 2% are not sure. 46% of the teachers feel that they find it difficult to write in their indigenous language, whereas 53% of the teachers do not find it difficult to write in their indigenous languages while only 1% said he is not sure. Only 11% of the respondents feel that their use of their mother tongue in teaching is as easy as the English language, 88% of the respondents feel otherwise, while 1% are not sure.

**Table 4: The Future of Indigenous Languages in Nigeria**

Q13	In 30 years' time, is it likely that indigenous languages will be used predominantly as the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools?
Q14	In 30 years' time, would any of the indigenous languages be able to compete with the English language?
Q15	Q3 In 30 years' time, do you believe that there will be more indigenous language lessons in basic education than now?
Q16	In 30 years' time, do you believe that Nigerians who can't speak their mother tongue will be seen as outsiders?



*Fig 4: Percentage Rate of Responses for the Future of Indigenous Languages in Nigeria*

70% of the teachers used for this study reported that in the next 30 years, there is every possibility that Indigenous languages will be predominantly used as the medium of instruction, 18% of the respondents reported otherwise while 12% are not sure. Only 5 % of the respondents reported that in the next 30 years, there might be an indigenous language that may compete with the English language as a medium of instruction, 93% reported otherwise while 2% are not sure. 85% of the

respondents believe that in the next 30 years, there will be more indigenous language lessons in schools than what is obtained now, 10% of the respondents reported otherwise, while 5% are not sure. 33% of the respondents are reported to believe that in the next 30 years Nigerians who couldn't speak their mother tongue will be seen as outsiders, 58 reported otherwise, while 9 are not sure.

Putting all the above analyses into perspective, it can be seen that the majority of the responses in the first section are in favour of students' preference for their mother tongue as a medium of instruction as they understand better when being taught in the indigenous languages. In the second part of the questionnaire in which the teachers were asked their opinions about the practice of indigenous language education provisions as stated in the National Policy on Education in Nigerian schools, the majority of the responses believed that the implementation of the provisions is not in any way encouraging. The third section assessed the teachers' skills in their indigenous languages. A significant number of the respondents indicated that they take pride in using their mother tongue as a medium of instruction in their teaching while a lesser number of them are not proud of using their mother tongue as a medium of instruction in their teaching. In the same vein, the majority of the responses indicated that they speak their mother tongue outside the school setting and as well find it easy to write in their indigenous languages. The last section of the questionnaire indicated that a significant number of the respondents believe that the future of Indigenous languages in Nigeria is somewhat bright. This stand may stem from the belief that as the orthographies of more and more indigenous languages are being developed and existing ones improved upon coupled with expected proper implementation on the part of the government, our indigenous languages will gradually become the predominant medium of instruction in our schools, or alternatively be able to compete favourably with the English language as a medium of instruction in our schools. From the results discussed above, this study arrives at the

following deductions:

- 1) Students prefer to be taught in their mother tongue as they demonstrate more passion for learning and achieve better learning outcomes when the medium of instruction is their mother tongue.
- 2) The majority of the teachers have not been putting into practice the indigenous language provisions of the National Policy on Education;
- 3) The government has not taken the implementation of the provisions any seriously.
- 4) Inadequate number of competent teachers to handle school subjects in the Indigenous languages;
- 5) Inadequate textbooks and other relevant teaching materials in Indigenous languages;
- 6) Teachers are proud of their skills in the indigenous languages even when they don't find it easy compared with the English language.
- 7) Indigenous languages will gradually start competing with the English language in the future;
- 8) The future of indigenous languages in the Nigerian educational sector is somewhat bright.

#### **4.1 Factors Militating against the use of Nigerian Languages**

Several salient factors militate against the realization of the objectives of the language policy of the NPE, especially concerning the teaching and learning of Nigerian indigenous languages. These factors which range from the lack of trained and experienced teachers of Indigenous languages to the poor implementation of the language policy of the NPE, are briefly discussed below:

**1. Lack of Trained and Experienced Teachers of Nigerian Indigenous Languages:** The full implementation of the language policy of the NPE has always been bedevilled by the lack or shortage of trained and experienced teachers of Nigerian languages over the years and there is yet no solution to this problem in sight. Studies have shown that there is a dearth of teachers of Nigerian languages both in terms of quality and quantity, even in the major languages. The 1988 report of the Technical Committee on the Production of Teachers for the Three Major Languages (Bamgbose, 2006) revealed that as of that date, a total of 55,237 teachers



were required to implement the provision made in the NPE for the teaching of the major languages as second languages (L2) but that only 6,383 teachers were available, giving a shortfall of 48,858 teachers. Though the situation has slightly improved at present, that gap is still very much there.

**2. Inadequacy of Instructional Materials/Media:** To fully actualize the NPE provision of using Nigerian languages as a medium of instruction, there is a need for textbooks in the indigenous languages for all the subjects taught in schools. The reality, unfortunately, is that the required texts lack standardization. There is also a need for other instructional materials such as language laboratories, cultural laboratories/rooms, audio and visual aids, diagrams, posters, charts, tapes, dictionaries, and albums written and labelled in Nigerian languages as can be found in English instructional materials. Instructional media which according to Iwu (1998) are vehicles carrying the stimulus mode to be presented to the students, exert a tremendous influence on the teaching and learning process. The non-availability of some of these instructional media in most of our indigenous languages partly accounts for the run of poor results recorded in these languages in external examinations.

**3. Negative Attitude towards the Use/Study of Indigenous Languages:** It is a known fact that Nigerians generally have a poor attitude towards the use and promotion of their Indigenous languages. Most parents, educated and non-educated alike, still prefer their children to be taught in English from the first day at school. Most Nigerians measure a good school by the facilities it has for teaching foreign languages, computers, mathematics, and the sciences. Even if facilities for teaching local languages are available (and in most cases, they are not), they may be appreciated by only a few but they are not reckoned with when judging for quality. Teachers of Nigerian languages, being part of the larger society, are invariably affected by this negative social perception which affects their morale, with the multiplying negative effects rippling down to the pupils and students in our schools, the result is the sheer unseriousness they exhibit in the learning of our indigenous languages at school which, to a large extent, account for the massive poor results recorded at the school certificate level at present.

**4. Poor Implementation of the Language Policy in the NPE:** The policy provisions on languages in the NPE are very explicit, however, their implementation by educational operators is fraught with a lot of challenges. These challenges have been identified by many scholars who categorized them into political/administrative, linguistic/pedagogic, financial and psycho-social challenges (Bamgbose, 1982, Adeniran, 1987, Emenanjo, 1990, Banjo, 1995 and others). There are no proper linkages and coordination between the Federal and State governments in the full implementation of the indigenous language provisions of the NPE. There is no clearly worked-out action plan that will guide implementation at the lowest level. This is partly attributed to conflicting policies and schemes sometimes adopted by the Federal and State Governments since both have the right to legislate on education, which is in the concurrent list, specifically, the second schedule, Part II, paragraphs 27 to 30 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

The following suggestions are therefore put forward by the authors which it is hoped will offer valuable resources for improvement in the indigenous language provisions and implementation in the NPE, as it affects primary and secondary schools:

- (1) There should be some modifications in the language policy of the NPE. Instead of what is obtainable at present, there should be an extension of the use of the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE) as the medium of instruction in school from pre-primary to junior secondary school. This is informed by the fact that various research and practices all over the world have shown that pupils/students who are taught in their mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment (LIE) in their basic education years (pre-primary to junior secondary) have revealed a better mastery of the subjects than those taught in foreign languages. This is exemplified by the Ife six-year Yoruba project (Fafunwa et al 1989).
- (2) The status of the Nigerian languages should be elevated to that of English and should be made compulsory in schools just like English. A credit pass in any of the Nigerian languages should be a requirement for admission into any institution of higher learning in Nigeria.

- (3) Privately owned primary and secondary schools should be effectively supervised by the relevant education agencies at the local, state and federal levels to ensure that they comply strictly with the language provisions of the NPE.
- (4) The credit hours allocated to the teaching of indigenous Nigerian languages should be increased. Instead of the present one or two periods per week in most schools, it should be increased to three or four periods per week, just as in English. This will attract more attention, time and effort by the pupils/students in the study of indigenous languages.
- (5) Language education programmes should be introduced for schools at the basic education level.
- (6) The Federal government should fully develop more educational resources and orthographies of indigenous languages to meet the demands of multilingual education.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The Federal Government has made conscious efforts and immense investment in harnessing the natural resources offered by indigenous Nigerian languages for national development. It has articulated, formulated and implemented various policies on Nigerian languages as stated in the NPE to build a strong, united and progressive nation. It has also set up institutional structures and infrastructure that will help realize this noble objective. A lot more still needs to be done as the level of achievement attained at present is still a far cry from the set objective level of attainment.

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