



## Extent of Implementation of the Language of Instruction Policy at Lower Basic Education Level in Enugu State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study centered on extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The population for the study consists of 96 head teachers and 862 teachers. Questionnaire as instrument for data collection was designed by the researcher to elicit appropriate information from the respondents. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Alpha method. Alpha value was found to be 0.79 indicating high reliability of the instrument. Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Some of the major findings of the study indicated that there is a great extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. From the result of the findings, the two groups of respondents share the view that there is great extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. Based on this, it was recommended that Government should strategize and organize seminars, workshops and other programmes to give teachers proper orientation and direction, proper knowledge and application of the language of instruction policy.

### Introduction

In Nigeria, language policy on education dates back to the colonial era in 1927 then the British Advisory Committee on native education in tropical Africa recommended that indigenous languages should serve as medium of instruction in the lower years of lower basic education (Musa, 2012). Language policy on education which passed through many stages is a pressing contemporary concern in the highly multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Nigeria of about 500 indigenous languages spoken within its borders (Dollaghan, 2018). English language was the medium of instruction before the National Policy on Education advocated the use of indigenous languages in teaching at lower basic level of education. Lower basic education is the education given in institution for children aged 6 to 11years plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the lower basic level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. Lower basic education stands not only as the foundation on which other levels of education are built but also as the most complex of all other levels of education. Lower Basic education, according to Musa (2012), is the first level of education which a child undergoes before he/she moves on to the other levels of education. This level of education is complex

because not only are the children coming into formal education with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds but also with individual behaviours and or differences. Agbedo (2013) observed that Lower basic education specifically is the level of education that develops in the individual the capacity to read, write and calculate. It helps in the eradication of illiteracy. Lower basic education level is the only level of education that is available everywhere in both the developed and the developing countries, as well as in urban and rural areas. This explains why lower basic education level is the largest sub-sector of any education system as it contributes to the transformation of societies via the education of children (Musa, 2012).

According to Adesina (2015), Lower basic education is viewed as a foundation resource which must be evenly distributed because it is a pre-requisite for the equalization of opportunities for education across the country in all its known facets. The author maintained that the goals of Lower basic education must be the same in all the states of the federation. These goals invariably imply that Lower basic education level should be rich enough not only for the overall development of the child but also be capable of making the child fit well into the society after going through the curricular/co-curricular activities therein in



this level of education. In view of the above assertion, Adekola (2017) stated that appropriate curricular activities at this level of education include the development of literacy and numeracy, the study of science, social norms and values at both the local communities and the country as a whole.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) has prescribed the following subjects for Lower basic education level: Language of the environment, English, French, Arabic, Mathematics, Science, Physical and Health Education, Religious Knowledge, Agriculture/Home Economics, Social Studies and Citizenship Education, Cultural and Creative Arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music and Cultural Activities) and Computer Education. To effectively teach the subjects therein in its curriculum, the use of language is an essential medium for instruction. This is because, according to Adegbite (2013), the quest for an educational revolution must recognize language as a major factor, not only as its main medium of expression but also as a basic tool for human existence and survival. Thus, language is needed for survival of any educational programme and for the projection of the people's culture.

Language is an integral and important aspect of the people's culture and as such essential in lower basic school education. This is because the acquisition of language in any form is one of the achievements of childhood (Dollaghan, 2018). Crystal (2010) stated that language is a form of communication, whether spoken, written or signed. The attention being paid to the language of instruction is based on the fact that the Lower basic education level seems to be the right stage to develop the children's faculty in language, and right educational policy needs to put in place in order to achieve it (Udosen & Ubom, 2014).

According to Adegbite (2013), Policy is defined as plan of action, statement of aims and ideas, especially one made by government, political party, Business Company, among others. Language policy according to Shaibu (2013) is a language planning as concerned with both the symbolic function of language within a society, and with the instrumental use that its speakers make of their language. However, Crystal (2010) believes that language policy should be understood as a systematic attempt to resolve the communication problems of a community by studying the various dialects it uses and developing a viable policy concerning the collection and the use of different languages. Based on the importance of language, many countries of the world have come up with official

language policies. According to Shaibu (2013), official language policies have variously been enunciated in National Policy on Education in (2013). The policy, according to Agbede (2013) emphasizes the importance of Nigerian languages in the education of the child and the policy seems to have magic words for solving practically all the educational problems of the nation. The author thus stated that it would have been quite commendable if this aspect of the policy is being implemented. Adegbite (2013) reports that 34% of lower basic school children in River State could not speak any Nigerian language, Chukwu (2010) assessment report indicate the low achievement of learners in English and other subjects taught via the medium of instruction as stipulated to be used in Lower basic education. Bamgbose (2013) thus states that owing to a variety of reasons, including inadequate mastery of languages(s), limited teacher competence, lack of readiness on the part of pupils, lack of funds, the language of instruction policy is yet to be fully implemented. It is against this background that the researcher considered it worthwhile to examine the extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

### **Statement of Problem**

Nigeria, just like other nations of the world formulated its own language policy not only for national integration but also to see that her own culture is preserved. The National Policy on Education not only made the status/degree of usage of the different languages known, but went ahead to direct that some should be used as medium of instruction while others may be taught as subjects in the schools. However, there seems to be problems in the implementation of the policy. A shows reports that 34% of lower basic school children in River State could not speak any Nigerian language, from the report it was also indicate the low achievement of learners in English and other subjects taught via the medium of instruction as stipulated to be used in Lower basic education. As such many have blamed the policy statement. Others blame the dearth of textbooks and materials and policy-makers do not appear to have learnt the appropriate lessons from their misadventures. From the policy, Languages of the environment are recognized and used at early primary, but since children at this stage can neither express themselves in the indigenous language nor write with it or communicate, this becomes a problem. At late primary



when they are supposed to be taught in English language, they not only perform poorly in class but cannot equally express themselves in English. In Primary Schools in Enugu State, while accusing fingers point to the children’s lack of interest in their studies, others point to lack of human resources and material resources to implement the policy. It is against this background that the researcher considered it worthwhile to examine the extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to find out the extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. Specifically, the study intends to

1. Ascertain the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.
2. Ascertain the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. To what extent is English language been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State?
2. To what extent does Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State?

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses which will be tested at 0.05 level of significance will guide the study:

**HO<sub>1</sub>** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of head teachers and teachers regarding the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

**HO<sub>2</sub>**:- There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of head teachers and teachers regarding the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

**Method**

The design of this study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design, according to Ali (2006), is a study in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Hence, the researcher deems it necessary to use this design because a representative sample of the entire population was used for the study. The study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. It covers all the 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state. The population of this study is 9583 respondents which comprised of 8620 lower basic school teachers and 963 head teachers in public lower basic schools in Enugu state while the sample for the study is total of 958 respondents which comprised of 862 teachers and 96 head teachers. The researcher used proportionate sampling technique in the selection of the respondents. While the instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Extent of Implementation of the Language of Instruction Policy (EILIP)”. The instrument was developed by the researcher and it has two sections, A and B. Section A dealt with the bio-data of the respondents while section B dealt with information on Extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education. The instrument was faced validated while the reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method. Alpha value was 0.79, indicating high reliability of the entire instrument. Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

The results are presented in tables according to research questions.

**Table 1: Mean rating score of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.**

S/N	Head teachers			teachers		
	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec.



1.	English language is taught as a subject at all level in most UBE schools	2.65	0.99	G.E	2.70	0.97	GE
2.	English is used as medium of instruction at all levels in most UBE Schools	2.53	1.02	GE	2.51	1.02	GE
3.	English Language is been use to teach computer as a subject.	3.07	0.65	GE	2.98	0.85	GE
4.	There are specialist teachers that teach arts subjects in English language.	3.12	0.64	GE	3.17	0.63	GE
5.	English Language is been use to teach computer as a subject.	3.10	0.65	GE	3.02	0.69	GE
6.	There are specialist teachers that teach English and Igbo language as a subject.	2.64	0.89	GE	2.79	0.86	GE
7.	There are resource persons that see to the implementation of language of instruction policy in lower basic schools.	2.43	0.96	LE	2.49	0.99	LE
<b>Cluster Means</b>		<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>GE</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>GE</b>

The data on Table 1 above show that while the means for head teachers range from 2.43 to 3.12, that of teachers range from 2.49 to 3.17. In exception of item 7 with a mean of 2.43 for head teachers and 2.49 for teachers, other items have a mean above the acceptable benchmark of 2.50. In other words, there is a great extent to which English language is been implemented

as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. The cluster means are 2.81 for head teachers and 2.83 for teachers in a four point rating scale with corresponding standard deviation of 0.84 and 0.85 for head teachers and teachers respectively.

**Table 2: Mean rating score of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.**

S/N	Items	Head teachers			Teachers		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec.
8.	Igbo language is taught as a subject at all levels of UBE	3.07	0.65	G.E	2.96	0.70	GE
9.	Igbo language is used as medium of instruction at lower basic schools	2.57	0.89	GE	2.63	0.78	GE
10.	Teachers are adequately knowledgeable about Igbo language.	2.64	0.78	GE	2.57	0.89	GE
11.	Teachers have the same language environment with that of their class children.	2.97	0.70	GE	2.83	0.69	GE
12.	Igbo language is been use as medium of instruction in all the subjects	2.80	0.76	GE	2.97	0.70	GE
13.	There are specialist teachers that teach science subject in Igbo	2.53	0.95	GE	2.52	0.96	GE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.80</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>GE</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>GE</b>

The data on Table 3 above show that while the means for head teachers range from 2.53 to 3.07, that of teachers range from 2.52 to 2.97. All the items have a mean above the acceptable benchmark of 2.50. In other words, there is a great extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of

instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. The cluster means are 2.80, for head teachers and 2.79 for teachers in a four-point rating scale with corresponding standard deviation of 0.75 and 0.76 for head teachers and teachers respectively.

**Table 3: t-test of significant difference between the mean score of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.**

Group	N	X	SD	dt	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
head teachers	96	2.81	0.84				Not
Teachers	862	2.83	0.85	956	0.33	0.90	Significant

Table 3 above shows the independent t-test analysis of the mean difference in the response opinions of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. The results on Table 3 show that the calculated t-value (0.33) was less than the critical

value (0.90). The null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

**Table 4: t-test of significant difference between the mean rating scores of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.**

Group	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
Head teachers	96	2.80	0.75				Not
Teachers	862	2.79	0.76	956	0.27	1.03	Significant

Table 4 above shows the independent t-test analysis of the mean difference in the response opinions of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State. The result on Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value (0.27) was less than the critical value (1.03). The null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating scores of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

The findings of the study have shown that there is great extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State. In other words, respondents share the view that Igbo language is taught as a subject at all levels in lower basic education schools. In the study the respondents agreed that teachers are adequately knowledgeable about Igbo language. It was also revealed that there are specialist teachers that teach science subject in Igbo language. The findings agree with Sofunke (2010) who noted that uses of Igbo language have helped our pupils at lower basic education to understand concepts and content of other subject. The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which Igbo language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

### Discussion of findings

The findings of this study have revealed that the respondents shared the view that there is a great extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State. In other words, the findings show that English language is taught as a subject at all level of lower basic education schools. The result of the findings also revealed that English is used as medium of instruction at all levels of lower basic education Schools. The findings agree with Ruth (2019) who stipulates that the language of the immediate environment and English language should be used as modes of instruction in lower basic schools. The finding also agree with Goode (2011) who opined that adequate supply of English teachers in the system will help in the implementation of language of instruction.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered.

1. Government should strategize and organize seminars, workshops and other programmes to give teachers proper orientation and direction,



proper knowledge and application of the language of instruction policy.

2. Government should supply all lower basic education schools all the required material resources that will promote both the languages of immediate environment (Igbo) and English language.
3. Government should encourage professionals in language of immediate environment and if possible give special incentive to them, and write textbooks of different subjects taught in lower basic education schools with the language of the immediate environment (Igbo) then write textbooks of the senior primary schools in English language.
4. Government should set up a monitoring team or programme that will supervise the implementation of the language of instruction policy for effective and efficient learning in primary schools.

### Conclusion

This research study centered on extent of implementation of the language of instruction policy at lower basic education level in Enugu State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: The findings of this study have shown that French language is not been use as a mode of communication in the class in lower basic education schools. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating scores of head teachers and teachers on the extent to which English language is been implemented as language of instruction at lower basic education level in Enugu State.

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