

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The teaching and learning of Igbo language both as L1 and L2 has been bedeviled with a lot of problems. One of the major problems is the nonavailability of trained teachers in this area. Some schools do not even have the teachers at all and so do not offer the subject. Lack of necessary encouragement from school authorities is another problem as teachers complain that the periods allocated to the subject is few and that lessons are fixed at odd times. This fact and the negative attitude of both the parents and students to the language do not make some of the teachers to have the zeal and enthusiasm that can make the teaching/learning of Igbo language interesting. Lack of adequate teaching materials and language laboratory also constitute a major problem to the teaching and learning of the subject.

It is an accepted belief that education holds the key to peace and progress of any society. Indeed, the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2004) categorically stated that Education is an instrument "per excellence" for national development and that efforts should be made to relate education to overall community needs. In general terms, the curriculum is a systematically organized body of knowledge through which the goals of education can be achieved for the fulfillment of the needs and aspirations of any given society (Igbokwe & Eze, 2009).

In Nigeria, the government planned that progress along the educational cycle will be based on achievements made on specific subjects at the various levels towards the attainment of the overall objective of education is outlined in the National Policy on Education. One of the specific subjects studied at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels include Igbo language and others. Igbo language is one of the core subjects at the primary and secondary levels whose importance is based on its relevance towards the realization of the overall educational objectives of secondary education. The National Policy on Education prescribes the use of the mother tongue or language of the immediate community of the child as medium of instruction especially at the junior primary school level. Language is a veritable instrument of communication. It is believed that the child learns better in her mother tongue because if the language used to communicate facts and figures is inaccessible to the child, then little or no concept development is feasible. The three major Nigerian languages are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

The issue of the teaching and learning of the Nigerian languages has received much attention from language scholars and educationists in the country. These efforts include the production of learning and instructional materials for major Nigerian languages. A worthwhile curriculum is never static, it is dynamic, the curriculum embraces purposeful experiences provided and directed by educational institutions to achieve pre-determined goals. When

analyzed, the intended objectives, the learning experiences, the methods of instruction, the methods of evaluation, all parts of or steps in curriculum development have continued to change.

The idea of adding or removing items in the curriculum implies revision or renewal. To renew a curriculum is to revise or modify an existing curriculum with the hope of providing a better programme. Curriculum revision may originate at any step of the curriculum process. For instance, when there are new aims of education arising from changes in cultural beliefs, values, ideas, philosophy of the society like our new economic agenda, the learning objectives change. Subsequently, changes in content and methods also occur.

In line with government reforms in education, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was directed by the National Council on Education (NCE) to review and realign the existing senior secondary school curriculum in Igbo language and other subjects to meet the targets of the reform in the context of National Economics and Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (NERDC, 2009).

The exercise was completed and the new curriculum was introduced into the schools in 2009, the critical target of NEEDS are value re-orientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower the people. Whenever any change occurs in any stage of the curriculum process or in the entire curriculum, and when the learning experiences that the pupils are exposed to is affected, we conclude that new life has been given to the existing curriculum. These changes will pose challenges to the implementation. The challenges experienced by teachers in the achievement of the objectives of the new Igbo language curriculum is one of the aims of the study.

Government has laudable policies for the teaching of Igbo language in the nation's secondary schools. The success of the policy in teaching of Igbo language in schools depends on the availability of both human and material resources among other social-cultural problems. The policy makers highlighted the important role of teachers in the implementation of curriculum by stating that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Good teachers adopt suitable methods and use appropriate instructional materials and evaluation techniques to achieve curriculum objectives. However, in the implementation of Curriculum, teachers face some challenges.

CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW IGBO LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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