

## ISSUES IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY SINCE ITS FORMULATION AND ENACTMENT:

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### **Preamble: Ignorance of Language Policy**

At a seminar in 2004 in this same National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), I introduced my overview of Nigeria's language policy with the following observation "Some three decades ago not many people who should know were aware that Nigeria had in place a national language policy. Ubahakwe (1974) clearly expressed this view and then went on to make proposals for a national language policy in Nigerian education". The obvious reference in that opening remark was the Nigerian intelligentsia, and could even include the hoi polloi. They are people who at different times in their life time could not help their awareness of government – enacted policies or even mere intimations of certain public policies because shortly after enactment the working of the details of particular policies begin to impinge on their lives for better or for worse. For instance, the elite are aware when say Town Planning regulations restrict or prohibit the erection of structures in certain locations that have been attractive to them, with much grumbling or open protestations, they would move away to build their houses in some other less attractive locations. Or worse, in the case of economic policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Ibrahim Babangida era, or worse still in the dire straits in which Nigeria is now, even when it has not been so formally declared as a new economic policy once government makes statements relating to fiscal discomfort in the country, families not only take notice of the pronouncements but begin to adopt or adapt to new financial coping strategies in order to survive the impending recession.

On the other hand the same elite and people in general if ever are hardly aware of any language policy. Their awareness of language itself as a tool which impacts on their daily life is often of a relatively fleeting nature; it is limited to occasions when someone else's verbal usage is charitable (as in eulogies – praise poetry, cognomen) the speaker or singer is commended, or when his usage is offensive or insulting, the usage is condemned.

In both cases the awareness is impressionistic and can hardly be. People's consciousness of economic policies in contrast to their general ignorance of languages policy can easily be accounted for in terms of the nature of the constituent elements and operational indices in the formulation and measurement of particular kinds of policy. The constituent elements in economic policies are mostly tangible, palpable, and quantifiable. We can know how many metric tons of cocoa have been produced and exported, the selling price per ton and the total revenue that will be earned by the farmer and the government commodity board. So also can we know all that is involved in the production processes, the pricing regimes in the petroleum industry, the aggregate revenue from petroleum and other commodities and the implications of all these for economic policy formulation and its impact on the people.

### **Awareness of Language Policy**

By contrast knowledge of the constituent elements of language, its measurement and of consequent policy on it is completely lost on all except the well-known professionals – linguists especially, language educators, speech therapists, oral and written verbal artists and some few other individuals whose vocations occasionally make them to encounter some intricacies of language. The far greater

percentage of the peoples on earth, ‘the linguistically able’, until a dire need arises for it, hardly ever give thought to their God’s gracious endowment as homo loquens. But today the picture is changing. As one may deduce from occasional public interventions in the social media, apart from those earlier listed to have professional stake in language use and language policy, critical attention is now being paid to language, especially to the use of indigenous languages, and to language policy.

### **Nigeria’s National Language Policy**

What we refer to and now focus as Nigeria’s National Language Policy is relatively new. We are dealing with a policy formulated (1977) and severally revised (1981, 1988, and 2001) in our post-colonial era. It is right and easy to demonstrate that its precursor is in our colonial history. In what remains of this first paper is a brief historical background to the policy, placement of the policy in the sociolinguistic context (including aspects of its chequered implementation) and then attention drawn to some areas where emphases is needed for the policy to achieve the desired goal.

### **The term Policy**

As platform for further discussion I consider it useful to first cast a quick glance at the term policy; and a handy one to serve the present purpose (not a technically scientific one as in the usage of development exports) is to take the term policy as an agreed course of action. It has content which is to be explored and implemented and which hopefully would yield a desired goal or set of goals envisaged by its framers or the sponsors of its formulation. The formulation including its design is part of its history. A policy once enacted then becomes the hard stick for its evaluation in terms of its own set goal, and for judgement to be arrived at i.e. the extent to which it has or has not delivered the desired objectives, critical notice duly taken of the human and material factors in the context of implementation. We may now consider how Nigeria’s National Policy on Education fits into this theoretical mold.

### **Nigeria’s National Language Policy – a Symbolic Policy**

In relation to considerations of Nigeria’s national unity Suberu (1999: iv; 55) lists Nigeria’s national language policy alongside other public policies, namely, Re-organisational, Redistributive and Regulatory. He describes Nigeria’s national language policy as Symbolic. The subset of symbolic policies are “those public programme that are directly and explicitly designed to foster, inculcate or celebrate values, beliefs, sentiments or attitudes of national consciousness or loyalty”.

We accept the above as an adequate definition of symbolic policy but not entirely of language which is the focus in the present discussion for we know that language performs other functions apart from the symbolic. Its functions include the scientific and the technical, but still as policy how a country’s Educational Language Policy is able to perform the symbolic function will be best understood when we relate it to two other kinds of language policy in a country’s educational and overall development programme. Three other language related policies are:

a. **Official Language Policy**

This is a statement of the languages recognized by the government of a country for particular purpose.

b. **Educational Language Policy**

This is a statement of the languages recognized by the education authorities for use as media of instruction and subjects of study at the various levels of public and private education, and

c. **General Language Policy**

This can be said to be a reflection of government attitude in the form of recognizing or tolerating the languages used in mass communication, business, and contact with foreigners. (See Bamgbose 1990, Noss, 1971).

The (b) position of Educational Language Policy (and presumably in Bamgbose) is deliberate and strategic; it is meant to show it as central and nuclear to a nation's language policy. It is the generative policy the planning and execution of which would largely determine the features of the orientation and directions in the planning, implementation and eventual emergence of the nation's overall language policy. It assumes this status and is able to play the role because the formal school system uniquely provides the most suitable and conducive context for teaching not only language skills and for fostering the right attitudes toward language but for teaching new manipulative skills, values and other capabilities which the learners will require as they go through life. Whether a language is taught as a subject and even more when it is used as a medium of instruction, it has great multiplier effects: its use increases the competence of both the learners and teachers of the language. The payoff, over time, can be quite considerable.

**Brief Historical Background to Nigeria's National Language Policy**

We earlier described Nigeria's National Language Policy as new in order to reflect and stress the contemporariness of its provisions, but it has as precursor the British colonial language education policy the cardinal issues of which are now briefly narrated. For greater details see Bamgbose (1971), Banjo (1970), Spencer (1971), Tiffen (1968, Adeniran (1979).

**1.1 Language Education in the Colonial Period**

The European powers which had territories in Africa – The British, the French, the Portuguese jointly sponsored an investigation into the educational problems in the territories, including those which had to do with language teaching. Now usually referred to as the Phelps-Stokes Commission, the Commission published its report in 1922. The recommendations of the commission greatly influenced especially the British colonial education policy far more than they did the French.

They are that;

- a) The local language should be used in the lower elementary standards or grades.
- b) A lingua franca of African origin should be introduced in the middle classes of school if the area is occupied by large native groups speaking diverse languages, and
- c) The language of the European nation in control should be taught in the upper classes.

Based on these recommendations, the British Government Advisory Committee on Education in Africa produced, in 1927, a policy statement on language teaching. It emphasized the importance of the Mother Tongue in the education of the African child. In yet another policy statement the British Colonial office in 1943 issued a memorandum relating to the point of transition from the Mother Tongue to English as medium of instruction, the Mother Tongue was to be the medium in the first three years, in the fourth year English was to become the medium for teaching certain subjects, but later all subjects.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Colonial Language Policy

We must briefly observe the elitist orientation of the colonial language policy just summarized. Notice, as stated above that the indigenous languages were used as media of instruction, in most cases, only in the first three years, thereafter, they were taught only as subjects. At the secondary school level, only a few of the indigenous languages were available as elective school subjects, and quite often even these were contemptuously ignored by both the teachers and pupils. The end-in-view of the policy was the efficient running of the colonial administration, not the sociocultural integration and authenticity of the colonized peoples within the nation, nor of their economic and technological development. The products of the educational system were to liaise between the administration and the peoples as interpreters, and as court and simple account clerks. To this end, given native-speaker competence and assuming performance versatility in their different mother tongues, all that the prospective Nigerian employee needed was basic competence in English. Therefore it was English all the way from the fourth or fifth year of primary schooling through the secondary and higher education.

Although the indigenous languages and English have maintained virtually the same regime in the primary school system in the new policy as in the old, a basis for describing the present policy as new is the testamentary overtone of the statement of its underlying philosophy and of the arrangements made for the implementation of its provisions. We also notice that while the colonial education policy focused on language mainly at the primary school level, the scope of the present policy as we shall see, is multilevel, it reaches down to pre-primary as well as up to the secondary school levels.

## Sociolinguistic Context of the Educational Language Policy

In the logic of this discussion, as earlier suggested, placing Nigeria's National Language Policy in Sociolinguistic context entails its evaluation in terms of the policy objectives. Detailed statements of those objectives for all the levels of education are available in all the revised versions of the policy, and will be summarized shortly. The catchword for the aspiration of the objectives is 'Development', simply interpreted to refer to the well-being and self actualization of the educated individual person, and the overall development of the society in which he lives. This end objective is readily agreed to, but not so readily agreed to and therefore highly controversial, is the medium of educating that individual to equip him and to integrate him and his ethnocultural compatriots into the larger nation or country comprising other subnationalities where they all can peacefully and profitably prosecute and transact their existence. The controversy is perennial in most multilingual and multicultural societies especially in Africa; equally its articulation has become a classic in sociolinguistic literature. (see Fishman (1968) and Bamgbose (1993). The argument generated will be briefly summarised and may be found instructive by anyone who is still undecided on which side of the divide to her cast his or vote on the language of instruction as the different levels of education, and in nation building.

## 1.3 The Nationism and Nationalism Contest

Nigeria typifies the multilingual and multicultural states which, in their several and collective wisdom or lack of it, model their development after the West and measure the progress of their development efforts by Euro-American standards. The design of language policy in such societies, as Fishman (1968), (Bamgbose, 1993), have extensively remarked, is often vitiated by objectives pulls in two opposite and often culturally and ideologically contradictory directions. At one end is

a group of concerns for the demands of nationalism in the form of socio-cultural integration, the revival of autochthony and the pursuit of authenticity in the institutions and operations of the state. The linguistic tools most suitable for realizing these ends are the indigenous languages and their associated literatures. Most of the languages are, however, at present ill-equipped and inadequate to quickly fulfill such roles as are set for them in nation-building in this supersonic age. In the Nigerian case, for example, of the close to 500 languages found to be spoken in the country, only the three pre-eminently major (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) have been standardized and fairly sufficiently modernized and made adequate (that is, have appropriate terminology) for studying and teaching science, mathematics and social studies at the senior primary school level. Also only in these three languages are there available creative works and expository writings of merit to support the growth and dissemination of culture and in sufficient quantity to support political education and mass literacy. Some 20 to 25 others are just at the initial stages of standardization, terminology development and production of first primers and readers. In the well over 350 remaining, essential preliminary linguistic description and initial literacy activities, even graphization, have not started.

At the other end of the pull is the desire of the developing countries for modernity and efficiency in the operations of the emergent nation-states, all this is in addition to the need for these states to eliminate subnational loyalties within their borders. These are the demands of nationalism. The target is western-type modernity and efficiency in the form of visible economic growth (as defined by western yardsticks and parameters) and technological development made possible by equipment designed and fabricated in the west. It includes western-type bureaucratic organization and could even include convergence toward or congruence with western sociocultural forms (see Mazrui, 1974). The linguistic tools for quickly launching the developing societies into this western orbit are the development and readily available Western European language, especially English and French.

Above, in brief, is the dilemma faced by peoples in developing countries, and the web in which the design and implementation of their language policies are caught. The rest of this paper describes Nigeria's attempt to use an educational language policy and its prosecution as bases to resolve the kind of dilemma outlined and arrive at a workable and acceptable national language policy that will serve the objectives both of socio-cultural integration and authenticity (nationalism) and instrumental efficiency (nationism). The presentation in part follows the logic adopted in the NPE, namely, statement of the general objectives of education at the different levels of the system (or selections from such objectives), statement of the language teaching and learning policy at each level, and statement of the strategy for the implementation of the policy. These are excerpted straight from the NPE. We then make observations on the scope, objectives and operational strategy of the policy for each level. Later we consider some more general but serious structural and attitudinal problems (private and official) which have been a hindrance to the effective implementation of the policy and the realization of its objectives.

## **2.0 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

This is the level of formal education for children aged 3 to 5 plus, prior to their entering the primary school.

### **2.1 Objectives**

Among the objectives of pre-primary education are:

- effecting a smooth transition from the home to the (primary) school;

- preparing the child for the primary level of education;
- inculcating social norms;
- inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the
- exploration of nature and the local environment;
- teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play; and

2.2 teaching good habits, especially good health habits (Section 2:10).

### 2.3 Language/Instructional Medium Policy

Among other undertakings, NPE states that Government will "ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the Mother Tongue (MT) or the Language of the Immediate Community (LIC) ..." (Section 2:11 subparag. 3).

### 2.4 Implementation Strategy

In pursuit of the policy, NPE states that Government will

- a) develop the orthography for many more Nigerian languages, and
- b) produce textbooks in Nigerian languages ..." (Section 2:11 subparag 3a, b).

The policy enunciated above is known as the Mother Tongue Medium (MTM) policy in the most thorough-going sense of the term; that is, the use of the child's mother tongue (MT) or the language of his immediate community (LIC) for teaching him all the subjects on the curriculum, except English (see Bamgbose, 1977). LIC applies in a situation where the child's MT is a minority language, existing as a linguistic enclave around which a bigger language is predominantly spoken. The bigger language constitutes LIC and is used as medium of instruction as, for example, Hausa (LIC) predominates over the myriad of small languages in many parts of northern Nigeria or as Yoruba predominates over Egun in the Badagry area of Lagos State.

We notice the forthrightness of the statement of the MT/LIC medium policy. It shows foresight and gives the impression of a strong desire on the part of the issuing authority, the Government, to use the language resource to facilitate learning, and enhance social integration via the LIC medium thereby preparing the grounds for national unity; achieving all of this package by tackling the language question at the root, i.e., at the beginning of formal education. But when the approach to the implementation of the policy is seen in the socio-educational and sociolinguistic context, a description of the policy as window-dressing may not be totally unjustified; and government itself must be aware of its own weak position over the matter. Government intends to "regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education" (Section 2:11 subparag, 5) but it is the one level of education which remains entirely a private sector enterprise. No statutory resource (fund and personnel) allocation is made to it. Therefore high fees are charged on the pupils enrolled in it. The schools are expedient for the pupils who receive introductory tuition in them before enrolment at the primary level, and most convenient for their parents who could then go out to work leaving their children in the care of the teachers. These apart and more importantly is the tradition of English as medium of instruction in the pre-primary school. It has been a great attraction and remains a strong motivation for the parents who send their little kids into this level of education. While most of the parents can be said to be unaware of the cognitive problems which learning in a yet

unmastered second language cannot but create for their children, they are all acutely aware of and daily impressed by the advantages which, since the inception of the British colonial administration, the mastery of English has always conferred on the Nigerians who possess communicative skills in the language. Therefore, even at some degree of strain to their family budgets, parents pay the high fees charged. In turn, the pre-primary school proprietors do not only respect but endeavour to satisfy the curricular interest of the parents for their children, including the medium. The set-up thus constitutes a veritable context for conflict between MT/LIC and English as medium of instruction. Official policy prescribes MT/ LIC but the English medium, the desire of the parents and of their collaborating school proprietors, prevails.

### **3.0 PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

This is education for children aged between 6 and a little over 11 before entering the secondary school. We have just pointed out that the prosecution of educational language policy at the pre-primary level suffers the logistic handicap of government not being able to call and insist on the MT/LIC medium tune because it does not pay the piper. There is also a sense in which the government could perhaps be said to regard pre-primary education as elitist luxury when in its (government's) view, education, for the majority begins at the primary level. Government therefore assumes greater responsibility and provides the resources for running this level of education. Tuition is free and universal, i.e., available to all, and might even be made compulsory.

#### **3.1 Objectives**

These are

- the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
- the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity; and
- providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

#### **3.2 Language Medium Policy**

NPE states that "Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother-tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community (LIC) and, at a later stage, English (EM)" (Section 3: 15 subparagraph. 4).

The import of the MT/LIC part of this policy is best appreciated in relation to the curriculum for primary education and the objective principle that should guide its delivery.

**Curriculum:** The curriculum prescribed includes "the inculcation of literacy and numeracy, the study of science, the study of the social norms and values of the local community and of the country as a whole through civics and social studies ..." (Section 3:15 subparag. 2) while, concerning the pedagogy "Government will ensure that the teaching methods employed in the primary school de-emphasize the memorization and regurgitation of facts, encourage practical, exploratory and experimental methods, ..." (Section 3:15 subparag. 3).

The policy as stated above provides affirmative linguistic and psycholinguistic answers in respect of most of the general objectives of education at the primary school level. For example, considering that primary education could as well be terminal for a good percentage of the pupils, the MT/LIC is the better medium to ensure "permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively". It is the language to lay a sound basis for exploratory, scientific and reflective thinking, for citizenship education, for developing practical and manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society, etc. No other, and especially no exogenously derived second language can ensure these (see also Adeniran, 1992).

But we notice that the MT/LIC medium is only initial; it gives way to the English medium (EM) at a later stage. The medium transition year is left open, advisedly, to take account of and accommodate what differences there might be in the transition context between different locations, as for instance between the homogeneity/heterogeneity of classes, the development and availability of literacy and instructional materials, and even personnel. In some cases the change-over is effected at the fourth, in some others at the fifth year.

In terms of this policy the country is seen to have elected bilingualism/multilingualism as language policy, and chosen the primary school to lay its foundation. Of course, bilingualism is the realistic policy for Nigeria and is perhaps inevitable considering, overall, the linguistic density of the country and the competitive domineering status of, especially, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. There is also the necessity of a language for external communication, and for which English is the obvious choice. The question, however, is whether the enduring objectives of primary education as listed are not being compromised by an EM policy that is put in operation so early sometime within the first six years of formal education. We recall the fact earlier pointed out that most of the pupils might not have had the privilege of pre-primary schooling where they could have picked up some English.

EM or even the bilingual medium of instructions would even seem to be counter-instructive, seen against research findings on the role of language in cognition. Our reference is the Six Year Primary Project (SYPP), the now world-famous experiment in full MTM, carried out at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). In it, Yoruba was used as medium for all the subjects on the curriculum (except English) all the six years of primary schooling. English had specialist teaching as a second language (see Afolayan 1976, 1977; Bamgbose 1984). Independent evaluations of the experiment and follow-up studies of its products show the clear advantages of laying a solid foundation for a child's education in the language best known by the child. The experiment and its evaluations also show that recognising and teaching English as a second language in Nigeria have positive effects on the mastery of the language.

Similar to SYPP, though not on quite the same conceptual and/ or organizational scale, is the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) carried out by the Institute of Education of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. In it, Hausa functioned as MIT or LIC. English also had specialist teaching. The products were reported to achieve literacy faster in both Hausa and English. They were able to use the two languages more effectively and grasp mathematical and scientific concepts faster, among some other advantages of the scheme (Omojuwa, 1977).

As at the revised version of NPE (1981), if not earlier, the formulators of the language policy were aware of the findings of the experiments reported above, and their positive implications for knowledge acquisition and general language planning. But perhaps so much was societal and institutional demands for English and (misplaced?) anxiety about its early mastery that, by design, the introduction of English could possibly not wait until the secondary school; thus English again gained ascendancy over MT/LIC in the primary education system. An overview of language pedagogy at the primary school level will then be seen to have grave consequences for the ordinary Nigerian child who did not have pre-primary education nor go into the secondary school system. Learning to read and write his mother tongue for only three or four years does not guarantee for him permanent literacy and numeracy, nor the ability to manipulate the language for the other laudable objectives of primary education. And of course far less is to be expected of English. The whole design is thus futile and regrettable.

#### **4.0 SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

Secondary school education lasts six years and is run in two parts; three years apiece in the Junior and Senior Secondary Schools - JSS and SSS.

##### **4.1 Objectives**

The broad objectives of secondary education are

- i) preparation for useful living in the society; and
- ii) preparation for higher education (Section 4:17).

More specifically, secondary education, among others, should - develop and project Nigerian culture, art and language as well as the world's cultural heritage;

- raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate those values specified under our broad and national aims, and live as good citizens; and
- foster Nigerian unity with emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our adversity (Section 4: 18).

##### **4.2 Language Education Policy**

Language education is perceived as instrumental and explicitly proposed "to achieve" the objectives of education. The curriculum of secondary education comprises core, vocational and elective subjects. Among the core subjects at the JSS are English and two Nigerian languages. The policy states that "In selecting two Nigerian languages students should study the language of their own area (MT/LIC) in addition to any(one) of the three main Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, subject to availability of teachers" (Section 4: 19 subparag 4). At the SSS, English and one Nigerian language are listed among the core subjects.

In addition to being fundamental, the other status of a core subject is that it is compulsory (in contrast to an elective); and here perhaps is the radical and most remarkable feature of the new policy, namely, that in pursuit of the objective of "developing and projecting Nigerian culture, art and language", Nigerian languages are for the first time listed as compulsory school subjects. In the colonial period and immediately after, Nigerian languages hardly got mentioned in the secondary school curriculum; certainly not as compulsory subjects. If then there is firm commitment to its design and content, and the wherewithal (men and material) for its implementation is guaranteed, this policy has all the capability to transform the country's social landscape in the form of integrated interethnic relations, using the second indigenous languages the pupils now have to study as leverage. The English language of course remains for the country's outreach to the wider world from which information and influences for technological development will come.

The expectations above however now seem to be mere possibilities as, between the JSS and SSS levels, the policy itself so radically modifies the indigenous language component in a way which makes the expectation of interethnic integration via indigenous language use forlorn. While English remains constant on the core list of both levels, one Nigerian language has been dropped off the SSS list. This has serious implications.

First is that unless a child is otherwise strongly motivated, the law of pursuing the line of least resistance suggests that at the SSS his choice predictably will be his MT/LIC. The child has thus had only three years of learning a second indigenous language where the facilities for doing so were available. In most schools all over the country the facilities are not always available. Even if they were, three years are hardly enough to attain the degree of proficiency required to facilitate smooth interethnic social relations and business transactions.

Second is that as we have reported elsewhere (Adeniran 1992), state implementation committees sometimes misread the policy to mean that the one compulsory language at the SSS must be a child's second language. Where there are no facilities for doing this, no indigenous language is taught whatsoever; not even the MT.

Third, and perhaps far more frustrating as Lawal (1989) has reported is that the (advisory) National Council On Education itself sometime in 1987 "suspended the compulsory teaching of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba in secondary schools owing to shortage of teachers". It is of course unimaginable that any advisory council would for any reason decide to suspend the teaching of English. The prestige differential and perceived as well as functional value is different, and higher. The system therefore supplies teachers of English in considerable quantity even if some of the teachers are not always of the right caliber. And thus, contrary to the initial expectations of a balanced bilingual pedagogy at the secondary school level, English once again has gained salience over the indigenous languages.

## **5.0 TERTIARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

Tertiary education is offered in Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and the Universities. There is no language policy designed for this level. However, English, since its advent in Nigeria, has/been the medium of higher education; it therefore probably seemed superfluous to re-state the established practice as policy.

In Polytechnic institutions which offer courses in the liberal arts, in Colleges of Education and in most of the conventional universities (those not solely of Technology), English and the major Nigerian languages are taught as subjects. A difference is however noticeable; this is in the nature of larger enrolments in the English than the indigenous language programmes. It is partly a carry-over of low societal attitude towards the indigenous languages in education and also a result of the absence of an official policy to vigorously encourage the study of the languages at this level. Yet, learning the indigenous languages should have been perceived as clearly the means by which tertiary institutions and their students could fulfill the integrativist role envisaged for them in nation-building. NPE expects the "Universities to serve as effective instruments for cementing national unity" (Section 5: 37). Therefore, having noticed "widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves," NPE stipulates that universities should institute "a compulsory first-year course in social organization, customs, culture and history of our various peoples. The award of degrees will be made conditional upon the passing of the paper in this course" (Section 5:37 subparagraph v). We assume that some reference will be made to language in the culture component of the General Studies programme but a passing reference to an indigenous language is hardly one to "cement national unity". By contrast, running parallel with the sociology component is a compulsory course in the Use of English. There is a whole examination paper in it which must be passed. The need for general remedial English and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is understandable in the context of falling standards. It just has been the case that here again we have greater weight accorded the learning of English over the equally required indigenous languages. Somalia pursued its own national language programme better by requiring that Somali students in all the departments of the national university learn Somali sufficiently to be able to append to their first degree dissertations a full or summarized abstract in the national language (see Andrezejewski, 1980).

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Upon the attainment of sovereignty and also confronted with pressure for modernization, a new education policy was designed for Nigeria. It was hoped that the implementation of the policy would help the country strike and establish an identity which will be characterized by authenticity as well as promote modern development. On the grounds that language does have a role in this endeavour (as content and medium of knowledge acquisition) we surveyed the language provisions of the NPE - their scope, provisions for policy implementation, and the fate of such provisions in the socio-educational and sociolinguistic context. For certain levels in the educational system we find no specific provisions made. In the cases where provisions are made, we find that the design does not always take account of all necessary factors. Overall the policy then appears to have been ineffective with reference to the objective of using language to meet the demands of nationalism and nationism. This concluding part briefly considers the causes of the ineffectiveness.

First is that the policy has some inherently disabling structural features at different levels. An example is the inappropriate location of the complements, MT/LIC and English both within a short six-year primary education system. Another is the disproportional curricular weighting in favour of English at all the levels.

Second is the unfavourable attitude towards the indigenous languages in education. At the level of the overwhelming majority of Nigerians there is scepticism about the role of the indigenous languages in education especially their doubtful capability. Sometimes the attitude to the languages are downright negative but quite favourable to the increased learning and use of English in spite of the pervasive inverse relationship between the high cost of promoting the language (English) and performance in it. The cognitive and nationalistic motives underlying the development and promotion of indigenous languages do not seem to impress most Nigerians much apart from the linguists and language educators. The tie between language and the nation is perceived by most Nigerians in fixed chauvinistic ethnolinguistic terms, hardly ever in wider Nigerian nationalism. In terms of this attitude, the idea of promoting the major Nigerian languages to the status of national lingua franca in place of English at a future date almost amounts to treason. Thus for instance one S.M.K. Taribo, contributing to the language controversy in the Sunday New Nigerian of February 19, 1989 says:

*The collectivization of majors and minors into a geographical Nigerianity is as much an accident of history as it is traceable to the enterprise of alien dreamers. If there is a dire need to supplant the English language as a lingua franca because it is foreign, there must exist the corresponding imperative to dissolve both Nigeria and the federation because they, too, were created and midwived by the same colonial masters.*

The point of isomorphism between the English language and the Nigerian nation is clearly made but also overheard is the minority fear of insecurity and his search for refuge in the English language.

Finally, there is also noticeable official ambivalence in the implementation of the language policy. Adequate resource allocation is not always made, and as reported earlier, even an important agency of government, apparently overwhelmed by both the high costs and some other implementation logistics, and decided to lower the core status of the major indigenous languages within the secondary school curriculum.

Some five years ago, official lukewarmness towards the language policy reached the disquieting degree at which it was being interpreted as indication that government was about to renege its commitment to the details of the original objectives if not the entire spirit of the policy. But recently the new leadership in the Federal Government Ministry of Education has infused new impetus into educational language policy implementation in the country. The former Language Development Centre (a division of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council) and the National Institute for Nigerian Languages were both inaugurated. They are agencies for language planning and language development - promoting indigenous language research and propagation, language curriculum development, language teaching, and for generally co-coordinating language-in-education activities. In the activities of these agencies lay the hopes of realizing the potential contributions the indigenous languages and English can make to Nigeria's national development.

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