

Appraisal of Compliance to Implementation of National Language Policy as it Affects Yoruba Language in FCT Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Despite the fact that the National policy on Education has for years unequivocally stated the importance of Nigerian Languages in effective and functional teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, governments at various levels and other implementers of the language policy has been reluctant to implement its content to the letter. Consequently, teaching and learning of Nigerian Languages, including Yoruba has suffered a serious setback. The focus of this research is the appraisal of the compliance level of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) education policy makers, stakeholders and school administrators to the teaching of Yoruba language in FCT primary and secondary schools, using eighteen (18) randomly selected schools as areas of study. Those primary and secondary schools were selected across the six Area Councils with consideration for the urbanity and rurality of the school environment to achieve reliable and valid results. Questionnaires were distributed and analyzed; Descriptive Survey Design was employed for the analysis and frequency count, percentage and mean were used to arrive at reliable results. The outcome of the research was used to illuminate how the low compliance to the implementation of the National Language Policy in FCT has militated against proper teaching of Yoruba language in FCT government primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Nigerian Languages, Yoruba Language, National Policy on Education, Language Policy, FCT Primary and Secondary Schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Decades before the great change brought about by the Language Policy section in the National Policy on Education, teaching of Nigerian languages in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions were limited to only areas where they have large populations of their speakers. Therefore, the teaching of Yorùbá language was limited to the present Yorùbá- speaking Ekiti, Ondo, Ọsun, Ọyọ, Ogun and Lagos states formerly called Western Region, parts of present North Central (Kwara and Kogi states) and the Yorùbá-speaking area of the present Edo state. In

the same vein, the teaching of Hausa was limited to the Northern Region while the teaching of Igbo was limited the Eastern Region.

The 'nationalisation' of the three major languages of Nigeria namely Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá was made possible through the advocacy of some people (among who were Professor Babatunde Fafunwa, the erstwhile Education minister under the former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, Prof. Ayo Bamgbose, a scholar of Linguistics and Yoruba Language and several others) who believe

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that Nigeria was doing herself a lot of intellectual harm by placing emphasis on learning of and teaching with foreign languages, especially English, the language of our British colonial masters. The intellectual agitators believed that instead of promoting the teaching and learning of foreign languages, our indigenous languages should be used as media of instructions as done by the Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and Koreans who became scientifically and technologically advanced through the use and promotion of their indigenous languages as media of instructions in their schools.

Language which is the major characteristic that makes human beings unique among all creatures has been defined by several scholars. For the purpose of this research work, two or three definitions are to be made use of. Sapir (1949) in Oyedeji (2007:93) defines language as “a purely human and non-instructive method of communicating ideas, emotions, desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols”. Akaito and Danyaro (2007) define language as “a method or means, a system of sharing ideas, thoughts, feelings, experiences using sounds, signs, or symbols”. The import of the definitions above is that language is used for communication and interaction among human beings. Language can be used usually through sounds (voices) and it can be communicated in writing through signs and symbols. Alonge, Odetunde & Lasisi (2021:308) quoting Wallwork (1969: 12) mentions the functions of languages as the following: “For phatic communication i.e as a social regulator, for ceremonial purposes, as an instrument of action, to keep records, to convey orders and information, to influence people and to enable self expression and to embody and assemble thoughts”

Nigerian Languages in Nigerian Educational Development

Nigerian languages which is synonymous to Nigerian indigenous languages or mother tongues are the languages spoken in Nigeria. They are not imported or foreign. According to Greenberg (1963) “most of the languages spoken in Nigeria can be classified into four major groups. They include the Afro-Asiatic language family, the Khoisan, the Niger-Kordofanian and the Nilo Saharan.

As stated in Ethnologue; Languages of the World 11th edition published in 2009, “Nigeria has a total number of 527 languages, out of these number, 514 are living languages” (Bukar, 2016:9). Out of the 527 languages spoken in Nigeria as stated by Bukar, the three major ones are Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá. There are several other minor languages in Nigeria that have also been developed and are being taught in several learning institutions, especially in the areas

occupied largely by their speakers. They include Edo, Nupe, Fulfude, Tiv, Igala, Ibibio, Efik etc.

The issue of prioritising the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages did not receive any major or noticeable attention until 1970’s. Although some people raised their voices, advocating for teaching of indigenous languages in schools and ensuring that they should not be regarded as “vernaculars” but their advocacy did not receive the required attention. The failure of Nigerian leaders and educational planners to give the appropriate attention to Mother Tongue instructions in primary and secondary schools has done a lot of harm to the development of science and technology in Nigeria.

Corroborating the fact that a man can not think with another man’s language. Pasquah (1997:3) says “people must find their own language to articulate the world in their own terms and to transfer reality in search of their own dreams” (Bukar, 2011:11). Nigeria has been a nation that got political independence without scientific and technological independence because all their intellectual activities are mostly a carried out in foreign languages. The five major national goals of Nigeria as stated in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria are building of: a. free and democratic society b. a just and egalitarian society c. united, strong and self-reliant nation d. a great and dynamic economy and e. a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2013, Section 1, sub-section 5). Although all the goals of Nigerian education stated above are well articulated but they would be difficult to achieve without using our own national languages to educate our children in our primary and secondary schools.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education has for decades highlighted the teaching of our indigenous languages in our primary and secondary schools, but the critical question is: is the context of the language policy implemented to the letter? Are the educational policy makers, head of schools, teachers, pupils/students and parents favourably disposed towards the teaching and learning of mother tongue in schools? Capital ‘NO!’ According to the National Policy of Education under the Basic Education Programme: “in Primary Classes one, Nigerian language is to be taught with other subjects” in primary classes 4-6 “one Nigerian language is to be offered with other subjects”. In the Junior Secondary Education, one Nigerian language must be offered with other subjects. Under the Post- Basic Education and Career Development (Senior secondary education), every student of Humanities is expected to offer “a Nigerian language” with other subjects (NPE 2013, section, subsection 38. 2.3 Humanities).

Under the language programme planned for pre-primary, primary and secondary education in the policy “..... The vital nature of language in the educational sector contributed in making the government to introduce policy in its FRN (2004) which states that the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity, each child is encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than its own mother tongue. In the constitution, the government considers the three languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.” The importance and relevance of Nigerian Languages in Nigerian educational is corroborated by Odewunmi (2005) that: “The quest for the mother tongue education also remains the best vehicle of education when it comes to laying a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking. It is rather unreasonable to separate the thinking from language”

As enunciated in Juliana Unumen’s write up, in 1976, there were only a few primary schools in the Abuja Area due mainly to the Federal Government Universal Primary Education Programme (UBE) that was introduced that year, the FCT administration inherited 54 primary schools from the various states governments from which the territory was excised when it took over the administration of the territory in 1980. Up to 1979, there was no post- primary school or any tertiary educational institution in the FCT. About 80% of the population had no western education and therefore, only about 16% read up to primary school level. A negligible one percent of the population had secondary education while 0.1 percent had university education (Mabogunje and Abumere, 1984). The Federal Military Government of Nigeria promulgated Decree No. 6 on 4th February 1976 which initiated the removal of the Federal Capital from Lagos to Abuja. The initial move for Abuja planning and implementation were carried out by the military government of General Murtala Mohammed and General Olusegun Obasanjo. The historic movement to Abuja from Lagos was on December 12, 1991(<https://guardianingopinionabj...>).

Educational Development in the Federal Capital Territory

Education in FCT had been on a slow pace before the Federal Capital was moved from there in 1991. Between 1981 and 1996, there was tremendous growth in the enrolment of pupils in primary schools. It rose from 17,943 in 1981 to 108,703 in 1996 (Source IBC, Abuja Handbook Incorporating Yellow Pages, Lagos 1998, p71). By the end of 2002, primary school enrolment figure for public primary schools was about 267,517 made up of 138,712 males and 128,805 females (consequence of migration from Lagos, a former federal capital situated in a Yoruba city).

With regard to post primary education, there was a rapid growth in both institutions and enrolment figures. It was in 1980 that the first sets of 5 secondary schools were established. By 1984, there were 31 secondary schools, 1996, 34 and 40 in 2002. The post- primary school enrolments in 1981 was 2, 273 in 1982, 27,276 in 1990 and 45,749 in 1996 (Source, i BC, Abuja Handbook Incorporating Yellow Pages, Lagos, 1998, p72). The increase from 1993 was due to the fact that the civil servants compulsorily moved to Abuja in late 1991 and some of them moved with their families to the FCT.

Federal Capital Territory and Indigenous Language Education

It was Murtala Muhammed administration that constituted a panel named Aguda Panel that recommended the movement of Nigerian capital from Lagos to Abuja. The first official movement did not take place until 1981. However the real movement took place in 1991 when the government of General Ibrahim Babangida hurriedly moved to Abuja after the failed Okar Coup. The movement of 1991 led to the mass movement of several ministries, parastatals and agencies when many civil/public servants then moved their wives and children to Abuja from Lagos. That led to an astronomical increase in the number of pupils and students to be enrolled in schools. Consequently, more primary and secondary schools were established.

Due to the mass movement of pupils and students with Yoruba background, (Lagos is a Yoruba speaking state), it is naturally expected that Yoruba language should be offered in all public Primary schools, Junior Secondary Schools and Senior Secondary Schools because apart from the fact that many Yoruba parents who were civil servants relocated to Abuja, there were several contractors, professionals, traders and politicians whose children have Yoruba background. They may not be Yoruba by tribe but living in Lagos as federal workers had exposed them and their children to Yoruba language. Consequently, those children, those children should have been made to get further exposure to Yoruba Language learning in FCT primary and secondary schools. The focus of this research therefore is to assess the extent of implementation of the national language policy in FCT as stated in the National Policy on Education, with emphasis on Yoruba language.

Research Objectives

This research is being carried out to achieve the following objectives:

- a. To examine the factors that led to low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools.

- b. To identify how the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools has affected the enrolment of Yoruba language learners.
- c. To identify how the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools has affected the interest of head-teachers of government primary and secondary schools.
- d. To examine how the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools has affected the performance of Yoruba language learners in the subject.
- e. To identify how the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools has affected the recruitment of Yoruba language teachers.
- f. To identify how the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools has affected the perception of parents.

Research Questions

- a. What are the factors that led to low level of compliance to the implementation of National language policy in FCT primary and secondary government schools?
- b. How has the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools affected the enrolment of Yoruba language learners?
- c. How has the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools affected the interest of head-teachers in Yoruba Language instruction?
- d. How has the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools affected the performance of Yoruba language learners in the subject?
- e. How has the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools affected the recruitment of Yoruba language teachers?
- f. How has the low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT government primary and secondary schools affected the perception of parents about Yoruba Language?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework chosen for this research work is Shannon –Weaver's Model of Communication Theory. The model views communication as consisting of 5 parts: Sender, Encoder, Channel, Decoder and Receiver. It emphasises the importance of encoding and decoding messages for them to be sent (e.g turning them into written words, mose, codes etc). The model is useful for this research work because it deals with educating of learners by their teachers through the use of Yoruba Language in a school setting as a medium of teaching grammar, literature, arts, culture and even business, science and technology.

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the Descriptive Survey Method. The design enabled the researcher to gather information about the population.

Instrument

The instrument for data collection was Adopted Structured Questionnaire. The questionnaire is a 4-Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) at the grade of 4,3,2,1 respectively. The instrument consists of respondents demographic data, gender, age and class. The data collected were analysed using Descriptive Analysis. Research questions were answered using frequency count, percentage and mean.

Population Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study consists of pupils and students chosen from eighteen selected schools in the Federal Capital Territory. The breakdown is six primary schools, six junior secondary schools and six senior secondary schools chosen across the six Area Councils at the rate of 61 pupils from primary schools, 61 students from junior secondary schools and 61 students from senior secondary schools. The study population consists of all the Government primary and secondary school learners in the Federal Capital Territory. From each Area Council, a primary school, a junior secondary school and a senior secondary school were chosen, making the number of the selected schools eighteen (18). Sixty-one (61) learners were randomly selected from the six (6) selected primary schools, sixty-one (61) learners were randomly selected from the Six (6) selected junior secondary school and sixty-one (61) learners were randomly selected from the six (6) selected senior secondary schools.

Method of Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, percentage and mean were employed to analyse the data collected.

Descriptive Analysis

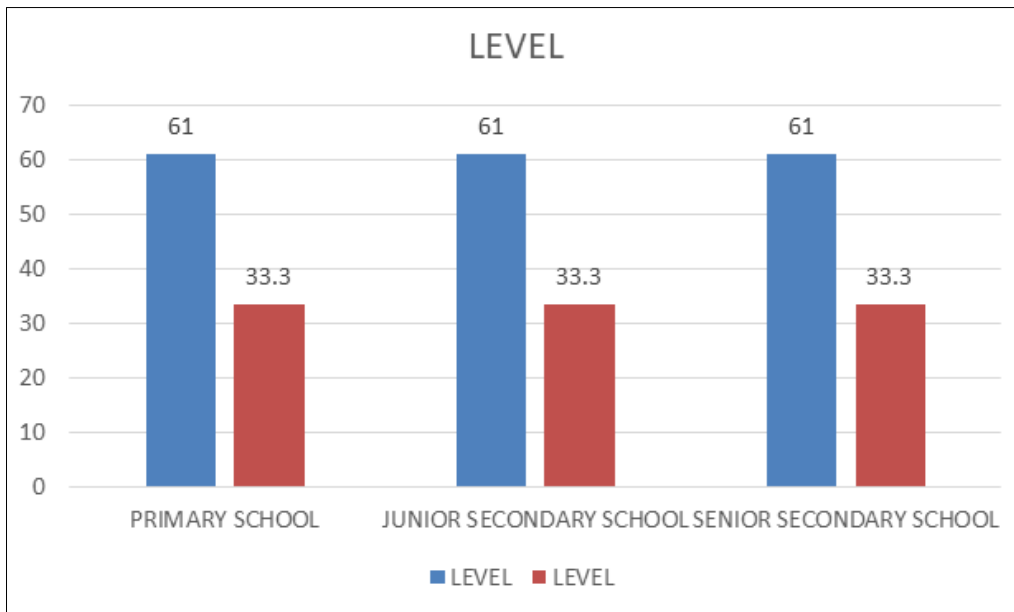


Figure 1: Level

The table displays a descriptive analysis of data categorized by educational levels: Primary School, Junior Secondary School, and Senior Secondary School. Each category has a frequency of

61, representing the number of occurrences or observations for each educational level. The percentages are uniformly distributed, with each level accounting for 33.3% of the total data.

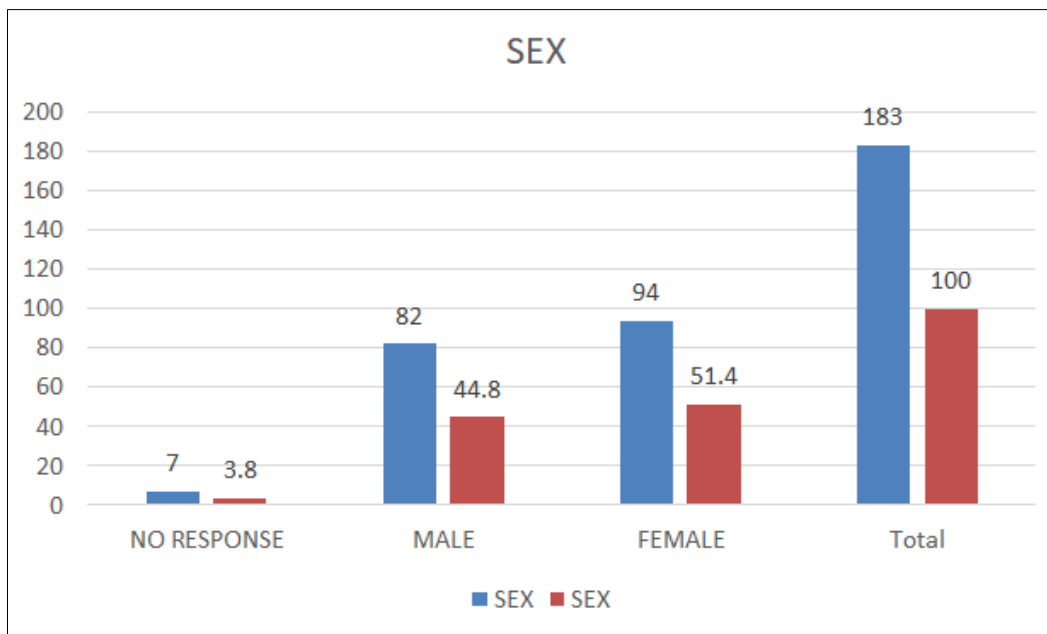


Figure 2: Sex

The data presented in the bar chart provides a clear overview of the gender distribution among the respondents. The sample is composed of 183 individuals, with a slightly higher representation of females compared to males. Specifically, 94 respondents, making up 51.4% of the total, are female. In contrast, there are 82 male respondents,

which constitutes 44.8% of the sample. This indicates a nearly balanced distribution between the two genders, though females have a slight edge in numbers.

Interestingly, the chart also includes a small group of 7 respondents, accounting for 3.8% of the

total. The nature of this group include those who chose not to disclose their gender.

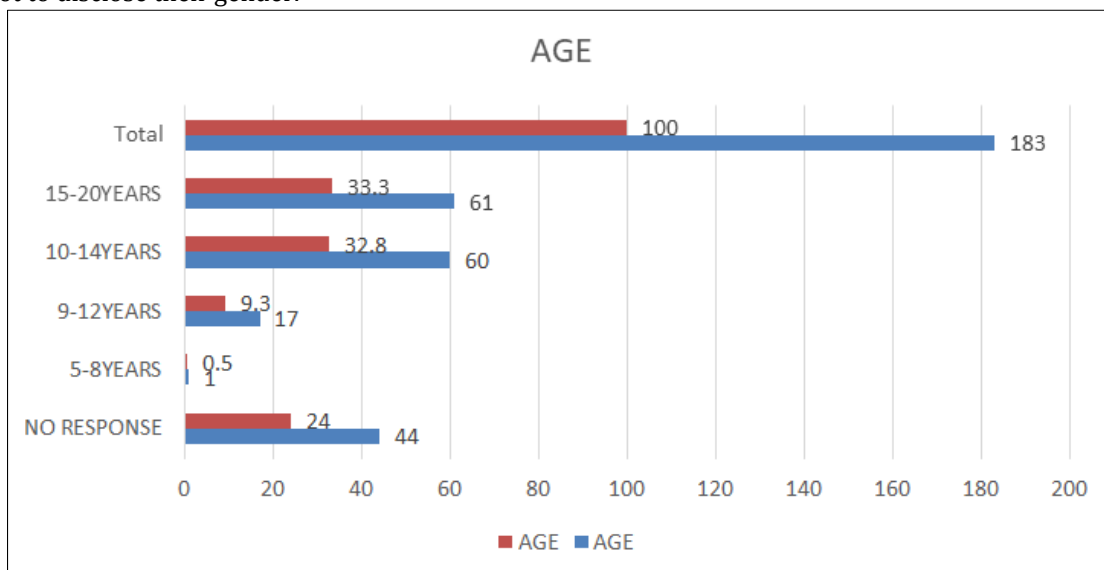


Figure 3: Age

The age distribution of respondents reveals an interesting spread across different age brackets. The majority of respondents fall within the 15-20 years and 10-14 years age groups, indicating a youthful demographic. Specifically, the largest group is those aged 15-20 years, with 61 respondents, making up 33.3% of the total. Close behind are those in the 10-14 years bracket, with 60 respondents, representing 32.8% of the sample. This nearly equal distribution between these two groups suggests that a significant portion of the respondents are in their teenage years, a period often associated with significant developmental and educational milestones.

The next largest group is those aged 9-12 years, with 17 respondents, which accounts for 9.3%

of the total. This smaller percentage indicates that there are fewer younger adolescents in the sample compared to the older age groups. The presence of this age group, though less pronounced, still contributes to the overall demographic makeup.

A very small segment of the respondents, only 1 individual (0.5%), falls within the 5-8 years age group. This minimal representation might suggest either a lower level of participation or relevance of this age group to the study's context.

Interestingly, the chart also includes 44 respondents (24%) who chose not to disclose their age bracket. This group, however, forms a substantial part of the sample, suggesting that its presence should not be overlooked in the analysis.

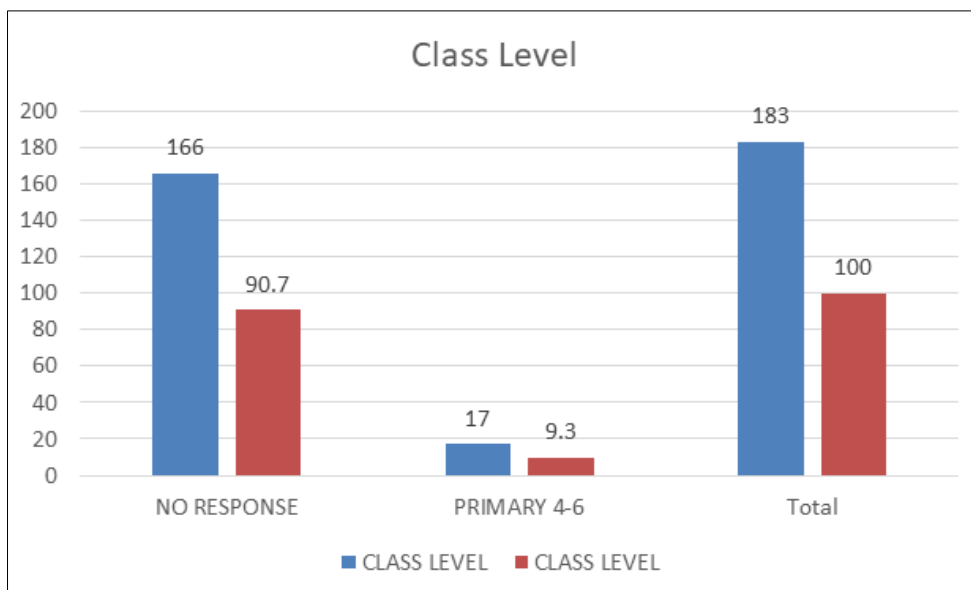


Figure 4: Class Level

The chart provides insights into the class level distribution of the respondents, revealing a notable discrepancy in the data collected. A substantial portion of respondents, represented by the "No Response" category, did not specify their class level. This group consists of 166 (90.7%) individuals, accounting for a significant part of the sample. The presence of such a large "No Response" group suggests either a lack of clarity in the survey question or a reluctance among respondents to disclose their class level, which could potentially impact the overall analysis of the data.

In contrast, the "Primary 4-6" category is represented by only a small fraction of the respondents. Specifically, there are just 17 (9.3%) individuals in this group, making up a very minor percentage of the total sample. This indicates that very few respondents were from these specific primary school levels, raising questions about the representativeness of this data.

Research Question:

How does the low level of compliance with the National Language Policy affect Yoruba language education in FCT primary and secondary schools?

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD
1	Some factors led to low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT primary and secondary schools education sector	94 (51.4%)	68 (37.2%)	13 (7.1%)	8 (4.4%)
2	The low level of compliance to the Implementation of National Language in FCT education sector led to low enrolment of pupils in Yoruba Language in FCT government primary and secondary schools	91 (49.7%)	53 (29.0%)	25 (13.7%)	14 (7.7%)
3	The low level of Compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT in education sector led to lack of interest in Yoruba Language instruction by FCT government primary and secondary schools Head-teachers	73 (39.9%)	61 (33.3%)	30 (16.4%)	19 (10.4%)
4	The low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT education sector led to poor performance of pupils in Yoruba Language in FCT government primary and secondary schools	77 (42.1%)	62 (33.9%)	28 (15.3%)	16 (8.7%)
5	The low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language Policy in FCT education sector led to low recruitment of Yoruba Language teachers in FCT government primary and secondary schools	93 (50.8%)	55 (30.1%)	23 (12.6%)	12 (6.6%)
6	The low level of compliance to the implementation of National Language policy in FCT education sector led to poor perception of some parents to Yoruba Language instruction in FCT government primary and secondary schools	80 (43.7%)	48 (26.2%)	25 (13.7%)	30 (16.4%)

The result of the analysis in the table shows that a significant majority of respondents, 94 (51.4%) strongly agreed, and 68 (37.2%) agreed that various factors have contributed to the low level of compliance with the implementation of the National Language Policy in FCT primary schools. This high level of agreement, totaling 159 respondents (88.6%), indicates a broad consensus on the existence of barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the policy. Only a small fraction of respondents, 13 (7.1%) disagreed, and 8 (4.4%) strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that the challenges in policy compliance are widely acknowledged among stakeholders. Similarly, when asked about the impact of low compliance on the enrollment of pupils in Yoruba language classes, 91 (49.7%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 53 (29.0%) agreed that there is indeed a correlation.

This view is shared by 144 respondents (78.7%), highlighting that the low adherence to the policy may have discouraged students from enrolling in Yoruba language classes in government primary schools. In contrast, a smaller group, 25 (13.7%) disagreed, and 14 (7.7%) strongly disagreed, indicating some variation in perspectives but still reflecting a majority view that compliance issues are affecting enrolment rates.

Regarding the interest of head teachers in Yoruba language instruction, 73 respondents (39.9%) strongly agreed, and 61 (33.3%) agreed that the low level of compliance with the policy has led to a lack of interest among head teachers. This suggests that almost three-quarters of the respondents believe that policy shortcomings are directly influencing the attitudes of school leadership towards Yoruba

language instruction. Meanwhile, 30 (16.4%) disagreed, and 19 (10.4%) strongly disagreed, reflecting some dissent but not enough to outweigh the majority opinion. The table also indicates that 77 respondents (42.1%) strongly agreed, and 62 (33.9%) agreed that the low level of compliance has led to poor performance in Yoruba language among pupils. With a total of 139 respondents (76%) agreeing or strongly agreeing, this finding underscores a strong belief that policy compliance directly affects educational outcomes in this language. On the other hand, 28 (15.3%) disagreed, and 16 (8.7%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that while the majority view is clear, there are still some who believe other factors may be at play.

In terms of teacher recruitment, 93 respondents (50.8%) strongly agreed, and 55 (30.1%) agreed that low compliance has resulted in fewer Yoruba language teachers being recruited. This perspective is shared by 148 respondents (80.9%), pointing to a significant issue in staffing that could be traced back to the lack of policy enforcement. However, 23 (12.6%) disagreed, and 12 (6.6%) strongly disagreed, indicating that while the majority sees a direct connection, a small portion of respondents might consider other factors affecting teacher recruitment. Finally, the data reveals that 80 respondents (43.7%) strongly agreed, and 48 (26.2%) agreed that low compliance has led to a poor perception of Yoruba language instruction among parents. With a combined 128 respondents (69.9%) agreeing, it is evident that compliance issues have not only affected school operations but have also shaped parental attitudes towards Yoruba language education. In contrast, 25 (13.7%) disagreed, and 30 (16.4%) strongly disagreed, indicating some divergence in opinion, possibly reflecting varying experiences or expectations among different communities.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal a critical gap in the implementation of the National Language Policy, particularly concerning Yoruba language education in FCT government primary and secondary schools. It is evident that multiple factors contribute to this non-compliance, such as inadequate funding and bureaucratic hurdles, which have been highlighted by Danos and Turin, (2021) pointing out that systemic issues often impede effective policy application, echoing the sentiments expressed by many respondents in this study.

Moreover, the correlation between low compliance and declining enrolment in Yoruba language classes suggests that the policy's lack of enforcement directly affects students' choices. Research by Oyekanmi, (2021) supports this notion,

showing how indigenous languages struggle against dominant languages like English, thereby impacting student engagement. This disconnect is crucial, as it demonstrates how policy adherence not only affects administrative practices but also shapes student attitudes toward language learning.

The role of head teachers is also pivotal. Their lack of interest in promoting Yoruba language instruction appears to stem from a broader systemic disregard for indigenous languages. Obiakor, (2024) emphasizes that school leadership is integral to policy success; without their active support, language programs are likely to suffer. This is compounded by the observation that many parents perceive Yoruba language education as less valuable compared to English, a finding that aligns with Bamgbose (2005), who noted the socioeconomic implications of language preferences among Nigerian families.

Interestingly, the under-recruitment of qualified Yoruba language teachers raises additional concerns. Gorlewski and Porfilio, (2013) highlights that insufficient teacher recruitment is often a byproduct of poor policy enforcement, creating a vicious cycle that undermines educational quality. Without dedicated educators, the prospects for effective Yoruba language instruction diminish significantly.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study highlights significant gaps in the implementation of the National Language Policy concerning Yoruba language education in FCT government primary schools. Factors contributing to this non-compliance include inadequate funding and bureaucratic challenges, as noted by Danos and Turin (2021). Furthermore, the relationship between low compliance and declining enrolment suggests that ineffective policy enforcement impacts student choices. Research by Oyekanmi (2021) illustrates how indigenous languages struggle against dominant languages like English.

The lack of interest from head teachers in promoting Yoruba language instruction reflects a broader disregard for indigenous languages, as emphasized by Obiakor (2024). Additionally, many parents perceive Yoruba language education as less valuable than English, aligning with Bamgbose's (2005) observations on socioeconomic implications.

The issue of under-recruitment of qualified Yoruba language teachers further complicates the situation. Gorlewski and Porfilio (2013) argue that insufficient teacher recruitment is often a consequence of poor policy enforcement, creating a cycle that undermines educational quality. Thus,

dedicated educators are essential for effective Yoruba language instruction.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the unfavourable consequences of the poor compliance to the implementation of the National Language Policy on the teaching and learning of Yoruba Language in FCT government primary and secondary schools, it is hereby recommended that the policy on Nigerian Languages instruction should be implemented to the letter in order to reverse its present terrible state. By so doing, the seriousness, performance and enrolment of pupils/students would become encouraging; Yoruba Language teachers' recruitment would improve and parental perception about Yoruba Language instruction would become positive.

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