

## **Funding: A critical issue in the implementation of language rights of speakers of languages with a few population**

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### ***Abstract***

*Funding holds the key to effective language planning and language policy implementation. No doubt failure to effectively implement language policies has been the bane of language development in Nigeria since after the first National Curriculum Conference in 1969. The importance of indigenous language in the cognitive and psycho-social development of the learner is not in doubt, unfortunately, indigenous language development especially for speakers of languages that have few population have not been adequately addressed due to factors which include unavailability of funds, dearth of linguists in those languages and so on. It is obvious from the research that the Kogi State government does not seem to be favourably disposed to recognizing the language rights of the children from these language groups inspite of the fact that language policy recognizes the use of those languages in teaching and learning from pre-primary to early primary (Primary 1 – 3). Consequently, this study sets to explore the causes and consequences of non-implementation of the multilingual policy at the lower basic education as the researchers think that this challenge could be responsible to why indigenous languages are not offered as courses in Kogi state University, Anyigba. The study will be a descriptive survey research and its theoretical basis stems from Joshua's Fishman's theoretical of paradigm for language rights and recognition. Recommendations will be made based on the findings of the research.*

**Keywords:** funding, implementation, indigenous language, language rights and speakers of language with a few population

## **Introduction**

Language rights and linguistic human rights are two interrelated concepts which have an incidence on language preference of or use by state authorities, individuals and other entities. Be that as it may, language rights is considered broader than linguistic human rights but, both terms will be used to discuss the minimal and possible extra measures that can be taken to effectively implement the rights of linguistic minorities particularly, in Kogi State. As language is essential and central to human nature and culture, and is an expression of identity, issues surrounding language are particularly important to linguistic minority communities seeking to maintain their distinct group and cultural identity, sometimes under conditions of marginalization, exclusion and discrimination.

According to UNESCO, linguistic human rights can be described as a series of obligations on the state authorities to either use certain languages, in a number of contexts, not interfere with the linguistic choices and expressions of private parties, and may extend to an obligation to recognise or support the use of languages of minorities or indigenous people (7). It further asserts that the rights include prohibition of discrimination, freedom of expression, right to private life, the right to education, and the right of linguistic minorities to use their own language both in the classroom and outside the classroom.

Language rights are the human and civil rights concerning the individual and collective right to choose the language or languages for communication in a private or public atmosphere. These rights according to the European Character for Regional or

Minority Language (1992) include among others, the right to one's language in legal, administrative and judicial acts, language education, and media in a language understood and freely chosen by those concerned. The most basic definition of language rights is the right of individuals to use their language with other members of their linguistic group, regardless of the status of their language. The individuals language rights are provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 2 – all individuals are entitled to the right declared without discrimination based on language.

Funding is a key element to the survival, success and development of any academic institution in the world. The dwindling in the implementation of language rights of the citizens, particularly, languages with a few speakers in our primary school, post primary and even to the university level is mostly as the result of poor funding of the policies or rights. This has led to the drawbacks in teaching, research and publications in those languages.

The Kogi State educational systems in recently fears are in shambles due to neglect by the state government to such an extent that no budgetary allocation to revive already disappearing indigenous languages (Egbune, 13). The traditional mandates of our educational institutions at all levels are teaching and learning, research and innovation as well as community services. For this institution to function effectively in upholding its mandates, there must be adequate funding (Yusuf, 6). The decline in funding adversely affects the quality of teaching and research in the systems starting from primary – post primary and the university levels and as well as condition of service of workers. The situation creates in the systems, rate of overcrowding, deteriorating physical facilities and lack of resources for non-

salary expenditures such as library, teaching and research materials, laboratory equipment, consumables and maintenance (Ramphell qtd. in Yusuf, 4). The Kogi State educational system is decaying to such an extent that there is no single effort on the implementation of language rights in the system; indigenous languages are not mostly taught in primary and post primary schools and where such a teaching exists, it is usually handled by non linguists as a result of unavailability of language teachers. This in no doubt is not fit for any child's educational prowess, cognitive development and even mental reasoning. This ugliness is prevalent in the state's educational systems due to gross under-funding.

### **Theoretical framework**

The work adopts the theoretical framework of paradigm for language rights and recognition. The theory was propounded by Joshua Fishman in 1968. Before the advent of this theory, there has been a growing effort to develop models of language planning processes and to gather data from wide variety of cases in order to refine and to test these models. With the development of its own sets of important theoretical issues, the field of language planning has led to a basic change in the analysis of language in society and to a redefinition of the task of specialists in the sociology of language.

Such as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "everyone has the right--- to seek, receive, and import information". The UNESCO statement on the use of vernacular languages in education is the foundation for a continuing discussion of language rights in education (UNESCO, 53).

While many researchers have adopted the evaluative paradigm in recent years, Fishman is responsible for its

elaboration in a series of studies examining the resource value of language and multilingualism. The theory states that where a stable social consensus regarding allocation of function exists, multilingualism may be a positive factor in the development planning or national integration. Thus the paradigm may pertain at the national group, or individual level. At the governmental level, the evaluative paradigm is the basis for constitutional and legal approaches to language in education. With this, government at all levels is duty bound to create condition for the fulfillment of communication needs and language rights for all nationalities.

### **Language rights**

Language rights protect the individual and collective right to choose one's language or languages for communication both within the private and public spheres. They include the right to speak one's own language in legal, administrative and judicial acts, the right to receive education in one's language, and the right for media to be broadcast in one's language (Mavlonov, 43). For minority groups, the opportunity to use one's own language can be of crucial importance, since it protects individual and collective identity and culture as well as participation in public life. Although Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ensures that linguistic minorities can use their own languages in their community but, problems often exist at the national level. While states are permitted to adopt more than one, they cannot discriminate against minority languages that cannot officially be recognised. States have often restricted official use of minority languages due to the idea that it is necessary to use only specified languages. This can create a distinction between groups that do have their languages recognised – who are often majority groups – and those that do

not. This is exactly what anti-discrimination measures aim to prevent. Yet it has taken a long while for restriction on language to be viewed as discrimination and the protection afforded to minority groups is still inadequate.

Language rights according to Arzoz concern with rules that public institutions adopt with respect to language use in a variety of different domains (14). Constitutional speaking, language rights refer to a particular language or small group of languages in a defined society. Obviously, speakers of dominant languages do also have language rights; but those rights are well guaranteed and enforced by social rules and practices, irrespectively their being constitutionally or legally entrenched (Arzoz, 16). With regard to speakers of dominant languages, there can be intralingual regulations governing the acceptable usage of a single language: the imposition of one dialect within a national school system inevitably favours one class or one region over another, and disadvantages native speakers of ‘non-standard’ or even stigmatized dialects as such as the imposition of a language disadvantages native speakers of non-official language (Kibbee, 17).

Language rights have more disputed characters than what some seem to suggest. There is no universal understanding of language rights. They are not essentially given and do not exist prior to positive enactment. Language rights are local, historically – rooted claims, not fixed universals. In fact, this does not differ very much from the actual status of many human rights.

### **Why the implementation of language rights is particularly important?**

The importance of language rights is straightforward: In addition to the obligation of respecting human rights, there are numerous

impacts associated with language use that go to the core inclusion and participation in the society of minorities.

### **It improves access to and quality of education of minority children**

Minority children around the world are much more likely to receive little or no formal education. According to World Bank (2000) “Fifty percent of the world’s out of school children live in communities where the language of the schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home., This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving education for all: a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels dropout and repetition. “When mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction for at least 6 – 8 years, the results are impressively positive: enhanced confidence, self-esteem and classroom participation of minority children, lower dropout rates, higher levels of academic achievement, longer periods in school, better performance in tests and greater fluency and literacy abilities for minority children in both the mother tongue and official or dominant language (Hassana, 40).

### **It promotes equality and empowerment**

Minority children are among the most marginalized individual of the world (Ekkehard, 2). They are also have had less access to school and their mother tongue not used in classroom instructions at all, thereby making them feel inferior among their equals. Research shows that children perform particularly well when taught in their own language, thus increasing the likelihood of pursuing further their studies or of breaking out of the cycle of isolation and poverty which in turn makes them to meaningfully contribute their quota to the development of the state.

**It enhances better use of resources**

The use of minority languages in public education and other areas is financially more efficient and cost – effective. Official language - only educational programmes can “cost about 8% less per year than mother – tongue schooling, but the total cost of educating a student through the six year primary cycle is about 29% more, largely because of the difference in repetition and dropout rates (World Bank, 20). It is also neither efficient nor cost – effective to only spend money and resources on public information campaigns or public broadcasting if it is in a language not well understood by the whole population. The use of minority languages in this case is a better use of resources in reaching all segments of society.

**It promotes diversity**

The loss of linguistic diversity is a loss for humanity’s heritage. States should not only favour one official language or a few international languages, but value and positive steps to promote, maintain and develop, wherever possible, essential elements of identify such as minority languages. Respectively, and actively accommodating linguistic diversity is also the hallmark of an inclusive society, and one of the keys to countering intolerance and racism. Embracing language rights is a clear step to promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue, as well as building stronger foundations for continuing respect for diversity.

**Funding university education in Kogi State**

The overall goal of the Kogi State University is the production of her citizens that are highly skilled and who will be well prepared for the world of work, sustainable national development and global competitiveness in term of expertise. However, deep

concern has been expressed over the years about the manpower in the preparation of graduates for the world of work and for global competitiveness. In Kogi State, the demand for proper education is very high because education is not only an investment in human capital, but also a pre-requisite as well as a correlate for economic development (Adeyemo, 14).

According to Udoh (8), Kogi State as one for the developing states in Nigeria is currently witnessing increased enrolment of university students. This increase in enrolment demands corresponding increase in funding which is not the case in the state. In Kogi State University, fund allocation does not increase to meet the demand of fund occasioned by the enrolment increase and demand of the contemporary society. The unfortunate expectation of both parents and students according to Carol Benson, are apprehensive of any new initiative in the management of the institution to mean introduction of tuition fees. The university faces difficulties in meeting her only 10% internal fund generation quote despite normal government subventions to university. These can only be facilitated through adequate financing.

The underling rationale for public funding of education particularly university education is to equip people with the requisite knowledge, skills and capacity to enhance the quality of life, argument productivity and capacity to gain knowledge of new techniques for production so as to be able to participate evocatively in the development process. According to Afolayan public sector funding of education in Nigeria is anchored on the notion (64).

In the last three decades, university education in Nigeria has witnessed a significant growth in terms of expansion of access through increase in enrolment and establishment of additional

institutions. However, it is saddening to note that many of the indices that can guarantee qualitative education are not taken into proper consideration in the country's quest to meet quantitative target. Ekundayo observed that political factors are the main motives behind many of the expansion policies especially in the university system (28). In fact, capital profits to meet the expanding programmes could not take off, in case where they took off, they had to be abandoned due to the paucity of funds.

The numbers of damages caused to the university system due to non-availability of funds are enormous. According to Akintoye (8), the by-effects of dwindling funds in university education is explicated in the mechanism such as:

1. Curtailment of laboratory/practical classes
2. Limited number of field trips
3. Curtailment in the attendance of academic conferences
4. Curtailment of the purchase of library books, chemicals and basic laboratory equipment
5. Freezing of new appointments
6. Virtual embargo study fellowships
7. Reduction in research grants
8. Too narrow strategic profiles and core areas, loss of variety in research, close down of studies not in demand at present or expensive studies
9. Dependence from external principals increased in the administrative burdens at the expenses or research and teaching
10. Reduced coordination between universities because of increase competition.

The financial constraints in the state have made education to suffer. Government may not be able to fund university education

effectively and efficiently due to inaccurate statistics to plan our economy and prevalent economic situations. But steady review of government activities and wide consultations with all the stakeholders in the industry will help stem the ugliness in the systems.

## **Methodology**

Participant observation and interviews were the major data gathering techniques in the research. The two authors are serving lecturers with Kogi State University, Anyigba and they have over the years been with the primary and post primary sectors. The researchers are both language teachers and have been involved in the senate committee on curriculum for the faculty of education in Kogi State University, Anyigba. The researchers have thus selected some schools at primary, secondary and university levels to assess the teaching and learning of some minority languages as enshrined in Article 47 of international covenant of civil and political rights of citizens particularly speakers of languages with a few population. The researchers' focus is to identify the causes and the possible consequences of non-implementation of multilingual policy at the primary, post primary and university levels in Kogi State.

## **Data presentation and analysis**

### **Pre-primary education level**

The 1969 Curriculum conference attended by a cross section of Nigerians that gave birth to the National Policy on Education, published in 1977, revised in 1981, 1995, and with the third edition published in 1998 recognizes the importance of language rights in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people language and their rights (Amadi et al., 20).

Section 2(ii) according to (Amadi, 22) specifies that at the pre-primary level, the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and to this end will develop the autography for many more Nigerian languages and produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.

**Table 1: Pre-Primary School Status in Kogi State**

School Type	Medium of Instruction	Autography Level	Learning Materials	Instructors
Government Pre-Primary Schools	English/Igala	Logographic	Available but not used	Not available
Mission Owned Pre-Primary Schools	English/Igala	Alphabetic level	Available but not used	Not available
Private Pre-Primary School	English/Igala	Logographic	Available but not used	Not available

### **Primary education level**

The education policy as contained in paragraph 15(4) states that: Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or language of the immediate community, and at a later stage, English (8).

**Table 2: Primary school status in Kogi State**

School Type	Medium of Instruction	Autography Level of Igala Language	Learning Materials	Instructors
Government Primary Schools	English	Alphabetical	Available but not used	Not available

Mission Owned Primary Schools	English	Phonemes	Available but used	Not available
Private Primary School	English	Phonemes	Available but used	Not available

### Post primary education level

In the section on secondary education, the policy stipulates English language and two Nigerian languages to be studied at the junior secondary school level. In selecting the two languages to be studied, the policy stipulates that students should choose the language of their own mother tongue in addition to any of the three main Nigerian languages.

**Table 3:**

School Type	Medium of Instruction	Autography Level	Learning Materials	Instructors
Government Secondary School	English	Phonemes	No material	Not available
Mission Secondary Schools	English	Phonemes	No material	Not available
Private Secondary Schools	English	Phonemes	No material	Not available

**Table 4: University education in Kogi State**

School Type	Indigenous languages taught	Indigenous language teachers	Learning Materials
Government owned institution	None for now	None for now	None for now

## Discussion

From the data above, it becomes clear and mandatory for every Nigerian child to be taught in his/her mother tongue or the language of his/her immediate community; that means the curriculum for primary education shall include the following languages:

- a. Mother tongue or language of the immediate community
- b. English
- c. French

The data further show that the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. However, from the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be as a subject.

The data show that the policy on secondary education shall include English, French, language of immediate environment (L1), and a major Nigerian language (L2) to be taught as core subjects. The language of environment is to be taught as L1 where the orthography has been developed and where it has literature. Where it does not have developed orthography or literature, then only orally will be emphasized in teaching it as L2.

It is obvious from the current status of education at all levels – pre-primary, primary, secondary and university as shown in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 that the language rights are not fully implemented both at the state owned institutions, Mission controlled institutions and privately owned institutions. The tables further showed that even where there are partial

implementations, orthography level is very low and underdeveloped. The absence of an implementation chain from the state to the local level has a number of implications for the development of minor languages in the state.

From the data gathered, government has not lived up to the expectations in the implementation of language rights in the state. The government of Kogi State, both past and present did/does not fully understand that the successful provision of fundamental mother – tongue education and the realization of its associated advantages in a linguistically complex state, like Kogi requires considerable human and material resource development and effective planning. The state is politically yet to realize that apart from the English language, all the indigenous languages in their present state, are ill-equipped for use in domains defined outside the value cluster of traditional life. And if the` state’s policy of “providing equal educational opportunity for all citizens of the state at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels” is to be taken seriously, it would seem that massive efforts at developing these minor languages would have to be made; in order to protect the rights of linguistic minorities in this regard. Such development would usually entail:

- ◆ The provision of codification and adequate lexical and stylistic elaboration in the various languages, to support the production of educational materials.
- ◆ The production of a corps of teachers with the appropriate language background and training to operate the bilingual education system.

Government therefore needs to release funds to the university to allow for variation of educational language policy that has direct bearing on the citizens as a way to help preserve and sustain their

language and culture through effective implementation of language rights to avoid language death or extinction as the case may be. Since Kogi State is a multilingual state, government needs to accommodate more meaningfully the differences in the prevailing linguistic conditions. Preferably the national educational policy should be more in the form of specified criteria for decisions on educational language use, rather which as blanket policies that have limited implementation potential, as has been evident from actual practice.

In conclusion, the financial constraints in the state have made the language rights of the citizens to suffer. Government is not in any way sensitive to the full implementation of the language rights and this is due to paucity of fund or misappropriation of public funds by government officers. The consequences of the government's failure to implement these rights are colossal and irreparable; a serious damage to the culture and to the children yet unborn.

To sustain and preserve the language rights of the citizens, the following recommendations are hereby made: The Kogi State government should ensure that allocation for financial resources in the university is based on quality of research and number of students. Twenty – six percent of the state and local government annual budget should be allocated and properly managed for education as UNESCO demands. The government should ensure policy makers consider the full implementation of autonomy of the university.

All stakeholders must become involved in the financing and implementation of the language rights at all levels – primary, secondary and even at the university. The state government should develop a realistic education data – bank as this will help

in adequate planning and funding of this level of education, for its success will serve as a panacea for language – related problems.

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