

Education Policy as a Tool for Enhancing the Professional Development of Igbo Language Educators in Higher Institutions for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This paper examined education policy as a tool for enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all the Igbo language educators in higher institutions in south-east Nigeria numbering 600 comprising Igbo language lecturers in Igbo language education. The sample of the study was 400 Igbo language educators drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique from higher institutions in South-east Nigeria for the study. Twenty-nine (29) – item statements questionnaire titled “Education Policy and

Professional Development of Igbo Language Educators Questionnaire (EPPDILEQ)” was designed for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in Language Education and another from Measurement and Evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.81 using Cronbach Alpha method. The results were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings showed that, the measures of improving the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria for sustainable national development in Nigeria include: the organization of workshops, conferences, seminars, collaboration method among the Igbo language education, among others. Furthermore, the results showed that, the challenges associated with the professional development of Igbo language educators in Nigeria include inadequate curriculum, poor funding of education, inadequate infrastructure, facilities and equipment, inadequate sensitization programmes for teaching Igbo language, poor implementation of education policy towards the professional development of Igbo language educators, among others. The study recommended among others, the adequate or functional implementation of education policy towards the regular sensitization of Igbo language educators through in-service training, workshops, seminars, and conferences to enhance the professional skills, knowledge, right attitudes and values in order to enhance their efficiency as well as the academic achievement of the students in schools.

Key words: Education policy, professional development, Igbo language educators, higher institutions, sustainable development.

Introduction

Education has remained the bedrock for national change and development. It is a social process of facilitating learning and the medium through which relevant knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and attitudes for individuals' and nations' survival or existence in the ever dynamic world are ensured. Harrison (2018) observes that, education is a veritable tool for the development of modern society. According to Ogbonnaya (2014), education enables individuals acquire skills, knowledge, right attitudes and values which enables them to be functional to themselves and the society at large. This shows that the invaluable contributions of education in the development of individuals and society cannot be overemphasized. However, it is pertinent to note that all these activities of education are aptly contained in her education policy.

Education policy consists of the principles and government policies in the educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of educational systems. Coggins (2017) observes that, education policy is a past or up to date statement or series of statements which explain, recommend or exclude a course of action to be taken to run the system of education. Coggins further states that, these statements are usually written, but they could be oral. Thus, education occurs in many forms for many purposes through many institutions which include; early childhood education, kindergarten, two to six year colleges or universities graduate and professional education, adult education and job training (Edua, 2018). From the above, education policy can directly affect the education which people engage in all ages. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, in her National Policy on Education (2014) observes that, education in Nigeria is an instrument "per excellence" for affecting national development

with active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as government intervention on educational roles.

The educational roles are implemented in the classroom by the professional educators at the pre-primary, primary, post-primary and the higher institutions in Nigeria which play an important role in sustainable development. A profession refers to something a little more than a job. It is a career for someone that want to be part of a society, who becomes competent in their chosen sector or career though continuously professional development and commits to behaving ethically, to protect the interests of the public (Lavade, 2019). Lawanson (2019) observes that, a profession is an occupation founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to supply disinterested members and service to others, for a direct and definite compensation, wholly apart from expectation of other businesses' gains.

The term, profession is a translation of liberal profession which is, in turn, an anglicization of the French terms, "profession liberate". Originally borrowed by English users in the 19th century, it has been re-borrowed by international users from the late 20th century thought the (upper-middle) class overturns of the term do not seem to survive retranslation. According to the European Union's Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualification (2005), those practiced on the basis of prevalent professional qualifications in a personal, responsible and professional independent capacity by those providing intellectual conceptional services in the contrasts of the client and the public. From the above definitions, it can be inferred that a profession exists when any trade or occupation transforms itself through the development of formal qualifications based upon education, apprenticeship, and examinations, the emergence of regulatory bodies with powers to discipline members, and some

degree of monopoly rights as well as major attributes or features.

The features of a given profession refer to specific attributes shared by the body that are distinct from other bodies. Harrison (2018) asserts that, the major attributes of a profession include;

- i. An occupation becomes a fulltime occupation.
- ii. Are established of a university school,
- iii. The establishment of a local association,
- iv. The establishment of a national association of professional ethics,
- v. The establishment of state licensing laws. By the above, a profession is not a trade or industry but autonomous in all spheres of its composition, laws and operation.

Thus, professions tend to be autonomous which means, they have a high degree of control of their own affairs. Professionals are autonomous so far as they can make independent judgements about their work and freedom to exercise their professional judgement (The World Medical Association Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-relation, 2012). The maintenance of autonomy and status of a profession requires research or constant professional development of its members in order to be efficient and effective in their chosen career.

The word, “development”, has an interdisciplinary application in all fields of human endeavour. Edua (2018) states that, development has a multi-faced dimensional application in all spheres of human life and its application depends on the prevailing circumstances, Eric (2019) observes that, development can be on the areas of political, economic, historical, environment, socio-cultural, educational and the like. Jacobs (2018) observes that, development refers to a situation where by a nation-state makes use of the tangible and

intangible available water to improve the material well-being of the people. Jacobs further explains that, development connotes situations where income per capital of individuals is rising, low inflation and unemployment rates increase standard of living, low mortality rate, among others.

In educational palace, development has its application or basic interpretation to policies and programmes geared towards teaching and learning in schools. According to Edua (2018), development in education exists in situations where condusive atmosphere is provided such that the teaching and learning conditions are palatable to all in the school system. By this, all the facilities and equipment, teachers' skills and knowledge are in the right proportion for education practice to operate optimally. Operationally, development in education exists where all the necessary inputs are in place for teaching and learning to prevail, especially in the context of professional acquisition of skills, knowledge, values, attitude, aptitude or other behavioural systems by the teacher to enhance their potentials and competencies to make teaching and learning very effective and attractive.

Professional development refers to the regular or constant updating of the knowledge or skills, values, attitudes, beliefs or other behavioural systems required of a person that belongs to a specific profession just like teachers in different levels of education enterprise. According to the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (2008), professional development is learning to earn or maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees in formal coursework attending conferences, and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive, collaborative and ideally incorporating an evaluative stage of any education process that aims at improving performance of individuals or groups (Speck and Kulpe, 2005). Speck et al further observe that, there are a variety of

approaches to professional development which include consultation, coaching, communities, practice, lesson study, mentioning, reflective supervisions and technical assistance given to those who deserve them. The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion further explains the approaches or methods of professional development as:

- i. **Case Study Method:** The case study method is a teaching approach that consists in presenting student or educators with a case, putting them in the role of a decision maker facing a problem.
- ii. **Certification:** This involves the process of ascertaining and evaluating the competencies or potentials of educations based on a given set of certification offered by Centre for Teacher Accreditation which aims to recognize outstanding educators.
- iii. Consultation is meant to assist individual or groups of educators to clarify and address immediate concerns by following a systematic problem-solving process.
- iv. Coaching entails to educate and aimed at enhancing competencies in a specific skills area by providing a process of observation, retention and action.
- v. **Communities of practice:** This aims at improving professional practically engaging in shared inquiring and learning with people who have a common goal.
- vi. **Lesson study:** This involves a system of solving a specific problem or dehm as related to intervention or institution through effective participation with other professionals in systematically examining practice.
- vii. Monitory requires promoting an individual's awareness and refinement of ones professional development by providing and recommending structured opportunities for reflection and observation.

- viii. Reflective supervision requires to support, develop, and ultimately evaluate the performance of educators or employees through a process of inquiry that encourages their understanding and articulation of the rationale for their own practices and,
- ix. Federal assistance which involves assisting individuals and their organizations to improve by offering recourses and information, supporting networking and change efforts. The discussion above shows that, professional development is a process and periodic as it aims at improving the potentials or competencies of employees so as to enhance organizational productivity through case studies, combinations, lesson study certification, in-service training and institutional education, among others.

Thus, professional development is the process whereby the competencies and potentials of individuals are updated periodically to enhance productivity and an organization. According to Edet (2018), professional development manifest in the form of formal education given to organizational personnel in an effort to enhance the productive potentials of the workers aimed at making the organization to break-even. In the same vein, Edua (2018) explains that, the essence of professional development is to enhance the output of a given organization so as to enhance the workers to make appreciate use of the factor inputs to produce an output that are in need by the consumers or the people. Operationally, professional development aims at improving all personnel potentials through the updating of the skills, knowledge, values and the behaviour system of the individuals in line with the organizational demands, especially in the education system.

In educational palace, professional development may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education or advanced profession learning intended to

help administrators, teachers or educators to enhance their professional knowledge, competence, skill and effectiveness. Edua (2018) observes that, when the term professional development is used in educational context without qualification, specific examples or additional explanation, however, it may be different to determine precisely what “professional development” is referring to. Okoro further states that in practice, professional development for educators encompasses an extremely broad range of topics and formats. An instance is professional – development experiences which may be funded by local, school or government funds or budgets and programmes, or they may be supported by a foundation grant or by a private funding agent. But if the professional development is carried out by private or public outlets, the primary objective is to ensure the effective and efficient acquisition of skills and knowledge by educators in higher institutions of learning for sustainable development especially, the Igbo language teachers. Operationally, professional development in education refers to the process of updating the professional skills, knowledge of the school administrators and educators to improve educational productivity. This is contained in National Policy on higher institutions in Nigeria,

Higher institutions of learning refer to those institutions above secondary education level. Hills (2019) observes that, higher institutions refer to those institutions above secondary institution which cover colleges of educations, polytechnics and the universities. The educators therein are expected to be updated in skill and knowledge to be efficient in the delivery of institution’s or schools goals to enhance sustainable development.

Sustainable development exists where development meets the needs of the present, without compromising the needs of future generations. According to Eric (2019)), sustainable development is about finding better ways of doing things, both

for the future and the present. It is therefore imperative to note that, education policy has a dominant role to play in the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria as development perse means, the adequate use of tangible and intangible resources for the benefit of all and the society in general. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), in her National Policy on Education, education services facilitate the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions, through the implementation of education policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of education system. The policy further observes that, the goals of educational services shall be, among others, to develop, assess and improve educational programmes, enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers, or educators make learning experiences more meaningful for children, develop and promote effective use of innovative materials or practices in schools. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in her policy, further explains that the federal, state and local government authorities shall establish Teachers' Resources Centres where teachers or educators will meet for discussing, investigating studies through study, workshops, short courses, and conferences to update their skills and knowledge for higher educational attainment. These centres shall also be used for the development and testing of teaching materials especially as it concerns Igbo language educators or teachers in higher institutions in Nigeria.

The Igbo language is one of the major languages in Nigeria apart from the Hausa and Yoruba languages. Lavade (2019) observes that the sustainability of Igbo language from extinction is the prime objective of the education policy at all levels of education sector in Nigeria, at least to be in comparasm with other major languages in Nigeria. The Igbo language is majorly spoken by the people of South-eastern

region of Nigeria, and to sustain its existence, there is the need for the professional development of the educators in higher institutions in Nigeria for sustainable national development.

The professional development of Igbo language educators is fraught with some challenges. According to Abel (2018), poor funding of education and high cost of education in Nigeria are the most crucial impediments towards the professional development of Igbo language educations as stipulated by the education policy. According to Lavade (2019) and Ezeokpe (2019), the statutory allocation to the nation's educational sector yearly is less than 6% of the annual budget and as such, human and material resources needed for professional development of Igbo language education in higher institutions in south-east become illusive to attain.

Other notable challenges were also identified as impediments or challenges to the professional development of Igbo language educators in Nigeria in line with the stipulations of the education policy for sustainable development in Nigeria. Ezeokpe (2019) outlines the challenges as: poor motivation of Igbo language educators, inadequate instructional materials/resource centers, neglect of Igbo language and inadequate sensitization programmes for Igbo language educators. All these militate against realization of the goal of teaching Igbo language and culture in higher institutions in South east Nigeria, among others.

Statement of the Problem

Igbo language is one of the major languages spoken and taught in schools in South-east Nigeria, and other Geo-political Zones in Nigeria. For the language to be sustained and prevented from going extinct there is an urgent need for the professional development of Igbo language educators for sustainable development in Nigeria. Unfortunately, Igbo language educators are not abreast of the innovations or new

trends in the teaching and learning of Igbo language in higher institutions in Nigeria due to some challenges. These challenges have been of a great source of concern to the stakeholders in education sector including the parents, educators, the learners, the government and the general public. Could this be attributed to lack of knowledge of the need for the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria as no study known to be researchers has been carried out in this direction?. It is based on this background that the researchers investigated the study titled, education policy as a tool for enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria. Unfortunately, Igbo language educators are not, abreast of the innovations or new trends in the teaching and learning of Igbo language in higher institutions in Nigeria due to some challenges. These challenges have been of a great source of concern to the stakeholders in education sector including the parents, educators, the learners, the government and the general public. Could this be attributed to lack of knowledge of the need for the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria as no study known to be researchers has been carried out in this direction? It is based on this background that the researchers investigated the study titled, education policy as a tool for enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the rationales for professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria?

2. What are the ways or measures for improving the professional development of Igbo language?
3. What are the challenges associated with the enhancement of the professional development of Igbo language educators and higher institutions in Nigeria?

Method

The researchers adopted survey design for the study. According to Nworgu (2006), survey design concerns obtaining data on a particular feature of a given population in a systematic manner that the findings are expected to be generalized to the entire population, the design was chosen as the data collected will be generalized to the entire population. The area of the study was all the Federal institutions in South-east Nigeria comprising Igbo language educators numbering 300. The researchers developed a 29 questionnaire titled, “Educational Policy and professional development of Igbo language educators questionnaire (EPPDILEQ)” to obtain relevant information for the study. Items 1 – 9 dealt with the rationale for the professional development of Igbo language educators, items 10 – 19 dealt with the measure or ways of enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in line with education policy in Nigeria while, items 20-29 were on the challenges towards the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria for sustainable development in Nigeria. The instrument was structured on a 4-point likert scale which the respondents reacted to. The instrument was weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 4, 3, 2, 1 points respectively. The criterion means was 2.50. The instrument was face validated by two experts in Language Education and another in Measurement and Evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to

determine the reliability of the instrument. It yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.83, which showed that the instrument was reliable. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. Any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted value whereas, items with a mean rating below 2.50 was not accepted.

Research Question One: What are the rationales for professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses of Igbo language educators, on the rationale for professional development of Igbo language educators, in higher institutions in Nigeria.

N = 400				
S/N	The rationale for professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria	Mean	Std	Decision
	To improve the skills and knowledge of Igbo language educators in the classroom.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	It helps in the attainment of educational objectives.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	Professional development helps in the	2.50	0.38	Accepted

	professional development of teaching.			
	It gives room for educators to be abreast of the new trends and innovations in teaching and learning.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	The educators become aware on the new teaching methods using the Information Communication and Technology in schools.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	It enables the educators to be abreast of the curriculum in line with the education policy.	2.50	0.38	Accepted
	It helps the educators to interact with each other during the sensitization programme.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	The educators are armed with the measures of dealing with behavioural problems of the learners in school.	2.50	0.38	Accepted
	It helps the educators to participate in curriculum planning and implementation.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
	Grand mean	2.50	0.32	Accepted

Research question 1 identified the rationale for the professional language of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that, items 1-9 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, which showed that they are the major rationale for the professional development of Igbo language of educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the ways or measures of improving the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria?

Table 2: Means and standard deviation of the responses of Igbo language Educators in Higher institutions on the ways or measures of improving the Professional Development of Igbo language Educators in Higher Institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria.

N=400

S/N	The ways or measures of improving the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria	Mean	Std	Decision
19	The organization of: Conferences	3.00		Accepted
11	Workshops	3.00	0.35	Accepted
12	Seminars	3.00	0.35	Accepted

13	Research groups	3.00	0.35	Accepted
14	Expository-out of school experiences	3.00	0.35	Accepted
15	Engaging in academic debate	2.50	0.38	Accepted
16	Consultation with professional colleagues	3.00	0.35	Accepted
17	Reflective study	3.00	0.35	Accepted
18	Case study method	3.00	0.35	Accepted
19	In-service education	2.85	0.36	Accepted
	Grand mean	2.94	0.35	Accepted

Table 2 above shows the responses of the Igbo language educators on the ways or measures of enhancing or improving the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher intuitions in Nigeria through education policy. All these items rated positive, as they met the criterion mean of 2.50 and above. Based on the grand mean of 2.94 and standard deviation of 0.35 of table 1 above, it is established that the above are the measures or ways of enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria for sustainable national development through education policy in Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges associated with the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions through education in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the responses of the respondent on the challenges associated with the professional development of Igbo language Educators in higher institutions for sustainability through education policy in Nigeria.

S/ N	Challenges associated with the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions as stipulated by the National policy on Education in Nigeria	Mean	Std	Decision
20	Poor funding of education sector.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
21	Inadequate infrastructure	2.50	0.38	Accepted
22	Neglect of Igbo language and culture by the public schools.	2.70	0.36	Accepted
23	Inadequate of Igbo language resource centres	2.50	0.38	Accepted
24	High cost of education	3.00	0.35	Accepted

25	Poor management of resources by school administrators.	2.50	0.38	Accepted
26	Inadequate attendance to sensitization programmes by Igbo language educators	3.00	0.35	Accepted
27	Poor implementation of education policy as it concerns the professional development of Igbo language teachers.	2.72	0.36	Accepted
28	Poor knowledge of Igbo language and culture by Igbo language educators.	3.00	0.35	Accepted
29	Inadequate motivation of Igbo language educators	3.00	0.36	Accepted
	Grand mean and standard deviation	2.50	0.33	Accepted

Table 3 above shows the responses of the Igbo language educators in higher institutions in Nigeria on the challenges to the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development in Nigeria. The challenges include; poor funding of education by all levels of government, inadequate Igbo language educators death of teaching materials or infrastructure, neglect of Igbo

language and culture, high cost of education, poor management of resources, inadequate sensitization of Igbo language educators through seminars, workshops, conferences, poor implementation of education policy, poor knowledge of Igbo language and culture, inadequate motivation of Igbo language educators as all these items rated positive as they met the criterion level of 2.50 and above.

Discussion

Discussions are made in accordance with research questions 1, 2, and 3 posed for the study. The evidence from the study revealed the rationale for the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institution for sustainable development in Nigeria which include: improvement in the skills and knowledge of the Igbo language educators, attainment of the National educational objectives, professionalization of teaching educators are made abreast of the innovations and trends in teaching and learning, it helps in the integration of ICT in teaching and learning, educators can easily interact or collaborate among themselves to solve common educational problems, handling discipline problems in schools and effective participation in curriculum planning and implementation, among others.

The finding is in accordance with the view expressed by Lavade (2019), FRN (2014), Ogbonnya (2014), Edua (2018) and National Profession Development Center on Inclusion (2018) who observed in different occasions that professional development of educators of teachers are meant for them to acquire new skills and knowledge as a competent educator to enable them implement it in classroom situation through sensitization programmes like seminars, workshops, conferences, in-service training among others. This will into furl measure helps in the attainment of the education policy

in line with the National policy on Education (2015) for sustainable development in Nigeria.

The findings of the study also showed that, the ways or measures for enhancing the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development include: the organization of conferences, workshops, seminars, engagement with research groups, exploratory – out school experiences, engagement in academic debates, consultation with professional colleagues, the adoption of case studies and mentoring approaches among others. The above findings are in line with the studies undertaken by Speck and Kulpe (2005), Edua (2018) and Hills (2019) who in different occasions agreed that professional development of Igbo language educators takes the form of seminars, workshops, conferences, among other. When appropriately utilized, it will help to boost the professional competence of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for sustainable development through education policy in Nigeria.

The result equally showed that the challenges to the professional development of Igbo language educators to the professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions for Nigeria sustainable development through education policy in Nigeria include: poor funding of education by the government at all levels, inadequate infrastructure, neglect of Igbo language and culture, inadequate Igbo language resource centers in higher institutions, high cost of education, inadequate attendance to sensitization programmes such as seminars, workshops, conferences, team work, collaboration of ideas among Igbo language teachers, poor implementation of education (language) policy, among others. These findings are in line with the studies carried out by Harrison (2018), Edua (2018), and Ezeokpe (2019) who agreed that, the identified challenges are the basic implementations towards the

professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in South-east Nigeria through the education policy towards the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The need for professional development of Igbo language educators in higher institutions in South-east Nigeria is very essential elements geared towards the enhancement of the knowledge, skills and dynamic approaches to teaching and learning. As such, these skills of the educators in higher institutions supposed to be updated along side with new knowledge economy in line with the demands of the education policy for sustainable development in Nigeria. The educators play no small role in impacting the skills, knowledge, right values and attitudes to students in schools for present and future generations. Based on this premise, the researchers made useful recommendations to that effect.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Igbo language education should be exposed to sensitization programmes such as conferences, workshops, seminars, in-service training to update their knowledge on the rudiments of teaching and learning in line with the education policy.
2. Education should be appropriately funded by the government.
3. Adequate motivation of Igbo language educators.
4. Igbo language resource centers should be established and furnished with necessary equipment and facilities.
5. The cost of education should be borne through public – private partnership.

6. Instructional materials should be adequately provided for higher institutions in Nigeria
7. The education policy as it concerns the professional development of Igbo language educators should be pursued vigorously.

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