

Restructuring the Curriculum of Igbo Language Education for Job Creation and National Development

BY

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Abstract

Nigeria is facing serious security challenges occasioned by religious and cultural intolerance. The rate of armed robbery, kidnapping, boko haram insurgency and banditry is alarming in the country. Today, jobs are no longer available for our graduates and they are roaming the streets seeking for jobs. This is as a result of the curriculum content of education in the country which lacks vocational and entrepreneurship skills for graduates. The need to restructure the curriculum of Igbo language education to create jobs and empower our youth; calls for this paper. The paper adopted descriptive research method and literature were reviewed. The paper focuses on the inclusion of vocational education in Igbo curriculum in order to inculcate aspect of crafts such as pottery, mat weaving, hair making among other Igbo vocation. The paper makes useful suggestion that will proffer reaching solutions to the problem of employment.

Key words: - Restructuring, Curriculum, Igbo Language, Job Creation and National Development

Introduction

The increasing rate of unemployment resulting from poor and incompetent labour force among the youths and

graduates is so alarming. Ajibola (2007) believes the problem is a curriculum issue. Oghiagbephan (2015) says that the analysis of the Nigerian educational policy reveals the challenges of incoherence in policy formation and implementation and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the society. Hence, restructuring of Igbo Language curriculum education to meet job requirement is optimistic.

Restructuring denotes rebuilding or reformation of a system or unit in order to have an effective and efficient system or organization. It is the rebuilding of an educational system that provides quality teaching and learning for students of all races, sexes, economic backgrounds and varied other students' characteristics. For an effective restructuring of Igbo curriculum in our school system, entrepreneurship, creativity, constant learning and practical work should be enshrined in the system for job creation.

Awotutua (1999:117) defined curriculum as all the planned activities/experiences which a school wants its students to have so that students at the end of schooling, would have realized the optimum development to function in their social environment.

According to Ike *et al* (2012:12), curriculum is aimed at developing the pupils mentally, physically and morally. It is the totality of the student's experience that occurs in the educational process. It is an instructional educational programme through which the students achieve the goals, ideals and aspirations of life. Educators and policy formations must ensure that the general course contents and curriculum especially at all levels of education are structured to meet our needs as a developing nation.

In view of the above, Ogwu *et al* (2014) sees curriculum as a planned and guided learning experiences

carried out in the institution for the purpose of living a useful and productive life in our contemporary society today. The above views imply that the curriculum should be skill based courses or subjects where learners acquire entrepreneurship studies which will reduce the rate of unemployment and enhances job creation in the society.

Igbo language as a means to job creation and national development

Job can be seen as anything that someone engages that yields revenue or someone being paid for the work done. Creation is defined by Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000) as the act or process of making something that is new or causing something to exist that does not exist. From the above, job creation is the ability of someone to create work in order to produce something for a living. It is the provision of new opportunity for paid employment.

Wikipedia (2010) buttresses the above assertion on job creation programme by saying that job creation programs are programs or projects undertaken by a government of a nation in order to assist unemployed members of the population in seeking employment. The above explanation shows that individuals, groups or government can embark on job creation for the employment of person or group of people. The recent upsurge in armed robbery, kidnapping, boko haram, banditry, child trafficking and other social vices are direct result of lack of jobs for the youth. There is a saying, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” When one is fully engaged or employed, there won’t be time for idle thoughts. Education provides a foundation for development which is the groundwork on which economic and social wellbeing is built. It is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistence.

It is clear that to come out of poverty, the people of the nation need job and education. This can only be achieved effectively if there is adequate education of the populace mostly the youth. Education contributes to the overall economic growth of a country thereby improving the efficiency of workforce which leads to a higher growth in productivity.

The progress of a nation is a function of the resourcefulness of the people which to a reasonable extent, relates to the level and quality of training and purposeful development of education in the nation. It also leads to versatility in all aspects of life, such as political, economic, social, moral and cultural aspiration which leads towards advancement of the country. It also increases the individual knowledge and fosters national development. In support of the above, Nwalozie (2006) states that adequate intellectual development enables a child to function well in the society thereby moving the nation forward. A well trained child can be creative, initiate ideas and solve problems he/she encounters in day to day activities without seeking for assistance. Qualitative education can provide individuals with the necessary market skills to be relevant in the society. Consequently, for a well-developed nation with full employment to be achieved, the members of the society must be educationally sound in all aspects of life.

Igbo language is one of the three (3) major Nigerian languages approved by the government to be used in our schools in Nigeria. Igbo language is spoken among the people of Eastern part of Nigeria. Among them are Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo states. Igbo language speakers are also in parts of Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Benue and Kogi States.

Igbo language education has a lot of potentials for job creation for unemployed youths in Nigeria. Umar (2004) says that teaching and learning Igbo language in Nigeria does not only help in National Unity but also as manpower development. Language is an instrument for communication between buyers and sellers. Commerce and trade can only thrive effectively with language. Therefore, teaching and learning Igbo language will help in boosting the economy of the nation.

Achieving national unity and development is a task that must be accomplished. Teaching and learning Igbo language has major roles to play. The qualities of curriculum enshrine in school system play a vital role in the overall development of individuals and also determine what their future or economy of a country will be. To have a well-balanced nation, the young ones must be properly channeled and directed towards attainment of undependable existence and living. This could be achieved through the inclusion of vocational, entrepreneurship and practical in the curriculum.

A country like Nigeria with high level of unemployment among the youths needs to over-haul her curriculum in order to achieve the objective of graduating competent and reliable graduates in the society. No nation survives and develops in isolation of the youth/children. Youths are the future of tomorrow. No wonder Babalola (1999), contends that it is in childhood that every individual's path to greatness or misery is made. In recognition of this fact, Proverb (22:6) admonished us to "... train a child in the way he should go, so that when he grows, he will not depart from it." An Igbo adage says; "A naghị amụ aka ekpe na nka." The manner and way we train our children determine what they will be in future. In support of this, Nwalozie (2006) affirms that "children are like seeds that germinate and grow into

many trees and produce fruits if adequately nurtured in other words the seeds wither away if not properly taken care off'. Language has major role to play in man-power development. For this reason, it has to be handled with all the seriousness it deserves.

Restructuring Igbo Language Curriculum for Job Creation

It has been observed that the Igbo language curriculum lacks the capacity of producing graduates that are self-reliant due to non-inclusion of vocational and technical skills in the curriculum. Most of the courses offered in our schools are theoretical not practical. This has resulted to unemployed youths seeking for white cola jobs that are not in existence in the country.

In Nigeria today, graduates seek employment in the areas where they do not specialize. One can get graduates in Christian Religious Studies working in oil sector or language graduates working in the bank as accountant. This is corruption. This could be corrected if vocational and technical skills are enshrined in the curriculum. It is very necessary to reorganize the Igbo language curriculum and enshrine vocational and technical skills in the system. This will boast the Igbo graduates to be relevant and competent in their day to day activities in the society.

Let us look at the present Igbo language curriculum and highlight the areas that need change. We shall make use of Igbo L₂ curriculum as an example.

Table I Shows Course Content for NCE I (L2) First Semester

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Status
IGBO L ₂ 111	Nka Nziritaozi Onu I	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 112	Nduba na Nka Onunu na Odide n' Igbo	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 113	Nduba n'Omeneala na Ewumewu Igbo	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 114	Nduba n'utoasusu Igbo	1	C
	TOTAL	4	

Table II Shows Course Content for NCE I (L2) Second Semester

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Status
IGBO L ₂ 121	Nka Nziritaozi Onu II	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 122	Nka Ogugu na Odide I	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 123	Mmalite Utoasusu Igbo	2	C
IGBO L ₂ 124	Usozo Nkuzi Igbo I	2	C
IGBO L ₂ 125	Oru Mbara na Nnabata Omenaala	2	C
	TOTAL	8	

Table III Shows Course Content for NCE II (L2) First Semester

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Status
IGBO L ₂ 211	Nka Nziritaozi Onu III	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 212	Nka Ogugu Na Odidi II	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 213	Aguguala na Omenaala Igbo	1	E
IGBO L ₂ 214	Usoro Nkuzi Igbo II	1	C
	TOTAL	4	

Table IV Shows Course Content for NCE II (L2) Second Semester

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Status
IGBO L ₂ 211	Ntughari I	1	
IGBO L ₂ 222	Nduba na fonoloji na Nsorodide Igbo	1	
IGBO L ₂ 223	Agumagụ Igbo	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 224	Usoro Nchọcha n'Igbo	1	E
	TOTAL	4	

Third Year First Semester

Omumu nkuzi Igbo na Ulo akwukwu (Teaching Practice)

Table V Shows Course Content for NCE III (L2) Second Semester

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Status
IGBO L ₂ 321	Ejiji igbo	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 322	Ntugbari II	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 323	Edemedede Ekereuche	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 324	Projekiti	1	C
IGBO L ₂ 325	Abu Igbo	1	C
	TOTAL	4	

From the above tables, we observed that there was no practical, vocational and entrepreneurship courses from NCE I to NCE III academic of L₂ Igbo students. This is one of the reasons why unemployment of our graduates are rampant. Candidates cannot empower themselves or rely on themselves to do one thing or the other after graduation. Most of the courses offered in schools are theory, it lacks technical and vocational know how that will help and empower the students.

In view of the above, we proffer that the following technical, vocational and practical courses be included in the curriculum of Igbo language studies as an effective measure to eradicate unemployment and create job for graduates of Igbo language in our country Nigeria.

- a. **Hair dressing:** - Students should be taught in school on how to dress hair. Hair dressing includes both cutting and plating of hair styles. If hair dressing is included in Igbo curriculum as one of the entrepreneurship offered by students from NCE I to NCE III, it will reduce unemployment of youths in the country. On graduation, the candidates will be reliable and self-employed instead of looking for white cola job.
- b. **Bead Making:** - Bead making is a lucrative job in the society today. Teaching of bead making can be included in the curriculum as one of the practical. Students of Igbo language studies can be taught in school on how to produce different beads styles before their graduation.
- c. **Pottery making:** - This is one of the crafts of the Igbo people. They produce different items like pots, cups, spoons, basins, guns, etc. Introduction of pottery in Igbo language curriculum will boost employment for graduates.
- d. **Weaving:** - This is also a lucrative job. Inclusion of weaving in the Igbo language curriculum will go a long way in creating jobs for graduates thereby reducing unemployment and as well boost the country's economy.
- e. **Agriculture:** - Inclusion of agriculture into Igbo curriculum will help to improve poverty in the society. Education improves food security and reduces malnutrition. Today, youths overlook farming and seek for white cola job where there is none or limited ones. By educating Igbo language youths on agriculture and farming techniques as part of their curricular activities, they become capable of growing

and selling their own food. This will create a source of income and healthy living.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that the Igbo language curriculum be reorganized to inculcate practical, vocational and technical skills in the curriculum for effective empowerment of our youths after graduation.

- ❖ Igbo language teachers should be adequately motivated that will encourage them to perform effectively and efficiency.
- ❖ The Igbo curriculum should capture the culture related courses to enable the students acquire the culture of Igbo people.
- ❖ Students should be exposed to different craftworks for them to know that opportunities await them after graduation.

Conclusion

Unemployment has become a cankerworm eating deep among youths in Nigeria. This has resulted to insecurity in the country. Restructuring Igbo language educational curriculum to inculcate vocational, technical and practical has the potentials of job creation and youth empowerment.

The paper recommends some of the entrepreneurship that should be included in the Igbo educational system such as hair dressing, pottery, bead making etc. It is hoped that if the suggestions raised in this paper are considered and applied, progress and success will be achieved.

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