

Mother Tongue-Based Classroom Management as a Catalyst for Academic Excellence in Nigerian Primary Education

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Abstract

The concept of this paper examined effective classroom management of public primary school pupils by the application of the mother tongue as an essential weapon for enhanced performance. On a specific note, sub-themes treated include: the concept of management and pupils' performance; justification for the management of primary school pupils' classes with mother tongue; and strategies for effective mother tongue approach management. The discourse concluded and recommended among others, that, teachers of public primary schools across States and localities should fashion out and create improvised instructional materials that blend with the first language in consonance with the norms and culture of their environment; and that professional English language teachers should be employed and trained to provide unique teaching of the subject to pupils as second language.

Keywords: Classroom, Language, Mother, Performance, Tongue

Introduction

The extent of inconsistencies in the degree of pass and fail of pupils in the foundational schools has become alarming in recent times, and even before now. Scholar Egbebi (2016) reported that the worth of education is measured by the quality of its output. Unfortunately, there is diminishing quality of outputs of educational institutions at various levels in Nigeria and many of the outputs of educational institutions are now myopic in academic competency and quality thus implying that all is not well with the system that is producing them (Olagunju, 2012). The first language of a child may be responsible for the ugly incident. One of the goals

of basic education in Nigeria is to inculcate in a child, permanent literacy, numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively (Aduwa and Omajuma, 2021). The expectation of parents as regards pupils' academic performance in primary school is, however, high and exorbitant school fees usually being charged in institutions.

Teachers always teach with English language across all levels of educational institutions in Nigeria including primary education. The mode of communication in primary schools is expected to be managed with the language of the immediate environment (Aduwa and Omajuma, 2021). Language in this order took an indispensable role in the upbringing of a child in school. Ogbonnaya & Ezema (2018) opined that language is people's most important gift and upheld that language is a vital instrument aimed at thought and creativity. Managers of education in the sector has to be conversant of this scenario. Laguarda and Woodward, (2013) elucidated that Language is culture-bound and is passed from one generation to another. Effective communication refers to the key for every human interaction in any society, usually communicated through the instrumentality of a language with which the sender and decoder share mutual agreement and understanding of the idea that is being passed across to each other for a result (Abijo, 2014). In another development, Fafunwa (1974) added that mother tongue education is the use of the native language or the first language to teach at formal and non-formal levels of educational pursuit in life. Of important note, Fisherman (1978) noted that teaching plus and instructions have pedagogy (Egbebi, 2019). It is not an exercise that is meant for all comers. It is meant to be organized for and implemented by a professional teacher. Mackenzie & Walker (2013) supported Abijo's opinion and stated that children's potentials are often wasted when language acquisition is attempted without the use of native language which results in lack of development and educational failure. Fafunwa (1974) furthered that mother tongue education is the systematic way of training and instructing a child using the medium of first language as the means of communication. Ezeokoli and Ugwu (2019) corroborated the earlier study carried out by Fafunwa in the Akinyele area of Oyo State and concluded that mother tongue should be employed to manage the language of instruction in classes.

Hitherto, what ought to be effective communication in classes in primary schools has been done with the English language alone. Babatunde Fafunwa conducted research for three and a half years at Obafemi Awolowo University with the scope of the study in Osun State on the use of the language of the environment to teach pupils in the control and the experimental group classes. The Yoruba language was used to teach the pupils in the experimental group class; all textbooks were interpreted to Yoruba and the teachers taught in the language of the environment. It was found that pupils in the experimental group performed better than the control group. In the developed nations of the world, most especially China and India, pupils

were been taught the language of the environment. Tanjia (2017) found that the mother tongue has an important role to play in foreign language classrooms, facilitating classroom management and reducing the frequency of first language usage among pupils. More so, managing the use of mother tongue language in K-12 education explored the impact of mother tongue instruction on pupils' learning outcomes (Sobrecarey, 2018). The paper therefore examined effective classroom management of public primary school pupils by the application of the mother tongue as an essential weapon for enhanced performance.

The Concept of Management and Pupil Performance

Pupils had outstanding learning outcomes from their academic exercises in classes taught with first language. Management in general is talking about detailed planning, organizing, coordinating, budgeting, motivating, coordinating, directing, and controlling all activities that have to do with the learning process of learners. Anyadiegwu, (2007) asserted that this starts from curriculum planning and implementation activities by the teachers to write out from the syllabus the scheme of work; log book; lesson notes; class presentation of stated objectives, a summary of lessons; evaluation; and giving of assignments. Planning and organizing for the instructional materials to be adopted in classes are indispensable. The general belief by the application of the mother tongue is that if pupils receive an instructional package in the language of the environment, with necessary instructional materials, pupils' performance will be outstanding (Fafunwa, 1974). Effective educational management commences majorly from the ability of the teacher to communicate well with the pupils in the language they will understand and perform excellently during evaluation for the attainment of the school's overall objectives. According to Egbebi (2019), management in the other way round is the act of directing people towards accomplishing a goal. Musah (2021), gave this assertion to explain educational management to bring in people and resources to achieve a common goal. The educational process involves different categories of people who use all sorts of resources. He classified the people in education into three distinct categories, namely learners, teachers, and educational managers. He furthered that educational resources groups include learners, personnel, curriculum finance and infrastructural facilities/materials among others. Management in education refers to the elites that run the affairs of the education sector through team efforts to make optimal use of the available resources to achieve the set goals (Musah, 2021). This development starts with the interaction of teachers and pupils in the classrooms. In a nutshell, effective management of primary pupils' classes with mother tongue is expected to promote and enhance pupils' academic achievement. Still in the process of facilitating effective classroom management of pupils' learning tendencies, other factors that are expected to be put into consideration may include but are not limited to academic qualifications of teachers, teaching experience, conducive learning environment; adequate

instructional materials well displayed, teacher' personality, teacher' experience and mastery of the subject matter (Egbebi, 2019). The present discourse hence examined effective classroom management of public primary school pupils by the application of the mother tongue as an essential weapon for enhanced performance.

Justification for the Management of Primary School Pupils' Classes with Mother Tongue

Effective classroom management in Nigerian public primary schools by the application and incorporation mother tongue as a mode of instruction cannot be overestimated. Managing classes with the language of the immediate environment and not the English language may lead to improved understanding pupils to learn better when concepts are explained in a language they understand, thus, promoting academic performance; cultural relevance preservation of cultural heritage that promotes inclusivity; enhanced communication of teachers to communicate more effectively with pupils, thus fostering a supportive learning environment (Acculturation Theory, 1978).

Now, it may be advocated that the English language as a bilingual means of communication in schools now be taught as an important subject and made compulsory. Johnkenedy, Ozoemena' Ngwoke' and Basil (2021) ascertained that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with a multiplicity of different languages among several tribes in their locations may give adequate room to nurture and train teachers to disseminate instructions in schools with the first language of the immediate environment but with the condition that they may create instructional materials with adequate and relevant local materials to support their teaching efforts. More so, managers of curriculum development, planners, plus the implementer group may start to develop instructional materials that will suit each of the tribes and their languages. This may resolve the issue raised by John Kennedy, Ozoemena' Ngwoke & Basil (2021) regarding the complexities of diverse dialects across all tribes in states and localities may lead to when it affects the language of the immediate environment.

Strategies for Effective Mother Tongue Approach Classroom Management

To achieve huge success in the teaching and learning process, the teacher and other managers of education may adopt a unique approach or more than one tagged strategy. In the opinion of John Kennedy, Ozoemena, Ngwoke, & Basil (2021), the following strategies may be embraced in the management of the mother tongue instruction process in the classroom.

1. Develop Reading and Literacy Skills with the child's first language: Encourage reading and writing in the mother tongue to improve literacy skills in the language of the environment.

2. Fusing African Culture: fusing indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into the curriculum of primary school pupils.
3. Encourage accountability: Encourage pupils to complete assignments and participate in class activities with their first language.
4. Set up clear rules: Set clear expectations and consequences to maintain order in the class interaction to promote mother tongue speaking.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that the mother tongue took a prominent role in classroom management during the dissemination of instructional objectives to the learners. The first language of the child's environment always will facilitate effective teaching delivery for enhanced performance as against the English language. The English language may be used as a compulsory subject in primary schools anyway in order to meet communication demands outside of Nigeria. Other factors to be added to the mother tongue as a means of effective communication in schools include a conducive environment; teacher qualification; teaching experience; instructional materials; adequate instructional facilities; and a good climate.

Suggestions

The following recommendations are hereby suggested for the enhancement of better academic performance in public primary schools with the application of the mother tongue as the language of the immediate environment in classroom management.

1. Teachers of public primary schools across States and localities should fashion out and create improvised instructional materials that blend with the first language in consonance with the norms and culture of their environment.
2. Professional English language teachers should be employed and trained to provide unique teaching of the subject to pupils;
3. The National Educational Research and Development Commission, NERDC should begin to design curriculum, and thus write and interpret textbooks in the language of different communities in Nigeria school administration;
4. Other stakeholders such as the State Universal Basic Education Board; Ministry of Education; and Head Teachers of public primary schools should create awareness and promote the management of classes with the mother tongue as a means of communication; and
5. Respective communities in Nigeria should communicate to their children with first language in homes to facilitate their performances in schools.

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