

# TWO NATIONS, TWO LANGUAGE POLICIES: WHAT INNOVATIONS AND HULLABALOOOS!

<sup>1</sup>OFODU Graceful Onovughe; <sup>2</sup>FASUAN, E. E.; <sup>3</sup>AWE, O. N. and <sup>4</sup>NAFTAL Nyakundi

<sup>1-3</sup>Department of Arts and Language Education, Faculty of Education,  
Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria

<sup>4</sup>Department of Languages and Literature Education,  
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

## Abstract

*This paper examines the language policies of two African nations, Nigeria and Kenya. We explain the subtleties and obstacles that could either facilitate or hinder the execution of these national language policies. Over the years, the Nigerian government has struggled to document its linguistic preferences and mandates. The introduction of the New National Language Policy in 2022 is a welcome development; however, its implementation is not yet visibly feasible. In contrast, Kenya's language policy emphasizes the role of Kiswahili and mother tongue education, as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the national language policy. The paper draws on extensive literature and critical analysis of the national language policies of the two nations. It highlights the contents and explicates various innovations enunciated in these policies. The paper, therefore, concludes that parents, government, and all stakeholders involved in the use of language should do the needful for the proper implementation of the policies to preserve the indigenous languages for generations born and unborn. It recommends that various stakeholders and the government wake up to their responsibilities toward the proper implementation of the policies. Additionally, the government should publicize the necessary roles of various stakeholders for the fruitful implementation of the language policies.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous Languages, Language preservation, Language Policies, Multilingualism, National Policy on Education

## Introduction

Education serves as an essential instrument for national advancement, with Nigeria and Kenya illustrating the profound impact that educational policies can have on a nation's progress. Strategic educational planning is crucial to address national requirements, especially in light of the colonial legacies that both nations have inherited. The system of Western education represents a legacy bequeathed by colonial powers, necessitating careful planning to address the educational requirements of both nations. The origins of education policy in Nigeria can be traced back to 1914, a pivotal year when Lord Lugard unified the Lagos Colony with the Southern and Northern Protectorates, subsequently leading to the naming of the region as Nigeria by his wife. This combination posed difficulties, as

individuals from various geopolitical and cultural backgrounds were compelled to be ruled by a singular authority under a common legal framework (Fabunmi, 2005). The British Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa advocated for the use of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction during the early years of education (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). This assertion aligns with Ofodu's (2014) proposition that utilizing one's mother tongue is among the most effective methods for acquiring and disseminating knowledge. She asserts that if children comprehend more effectively in their native language, which is predominantly spoken at home, then grasping the instructions provided will not pose a challenge. She further asserts that enhanced learning occurs in various contexts as children engage readily and

enthusiastically with their mothers, neighbors, siblings, grandparents, and others.

Similarly, in Kenya, language policies have played a significant role in shaping the educational landscape and fostering national unity. The constitution of Kenya (2010) lays the foundation by recognizing Kiswahili as the national language and both English and Kiswahili as official languages. The Language Policy in Education (2005) mandates the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years of schooling, a directive further supported by the Basic Education Act (2013). Additionally, the National Policy on Culture and Heritage (2009) underscores the importance of preserving Kenya's linguistic and cultural diversity through the promotion of indigenous languages. The importance of language in education is thus recognized in both countries, with Kenya's education system undergoing several reforms to address linguistic diversity and promote the use of indigenous languages (KIE, 2005). The integration of indigenous languages into the curriculum reflects a commitment to linguistic diversity and cultural preservation, mirroring Nigeria's efforts (Muthwii, 2004).

The National Policy on Education (NPE) serves as the foundational framework for the efficient governance, oversight, and execution of educational initiatives across all levels of government in Nigeria. The National Policy of Education serves as a comprehensive articulation of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards, and requirements aimed at ensuring the delivery of quality education in Nigeria (Ezenwo, 2013). There have been calls for a policy that will guide the use of indigenous languages in education at the lower levels (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). This was regarded as a method for advancing the more than 500 indigenous languages that are present in Nigeria.

Language serves as a cohesive element within a nation, uniting a variety of individuals beneath a shared linguistic framework. (Adebayo, 2003). In Kenya, language policies are designed to promote national unity while safeguarding indigenous languages, demonstrating a profound dedication to cultural and linguistic diversity (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Language constitutes a significant phenomenon, both natural and constructed, within any societal framework. (Ofodu, 2014). Chinwe and Anyanwu (2020) articulate that language serves as a cohesive element among individuals. Consequently, matters pertaining to language ought to be approached with utmost gravity.

A language policy represents a calculated initiative by the government aimed at overseeing the coexistence, advancement, and application of all languages in the pursuit of national development, (Adamu, 2022). The new National language policy primarily focuses on the utilization of language, in contrast to earlier policies that addressed education more broadly. The implementation of a language policy in Nigeria represents a significant advancement, addressing the linguistic challenges faced in the country while also reflecting parallels with Kenya's methodology. Both policies advocate for cohesion and concord within their respective nations, grounded in the tenets of liberty, equity, and fairness. Nonetheless, a shared foundation exists between the newly established National Language Policy (NLP) and the National Policy on Education (NPE). The new NLP and NPE exhibit numerous parallels, as both policies aspire for citizens to coexist in unity and harmony, forming an indivisible, indissoluble, democratic, and sovereign nation grounded in the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. (NPE, 2013). The principles underlying NLP are rooted in the broader philosophical framework of the nation, which underscores the importance of unity

and harmony within a singular, inseparable, democratic, and sovereign entity, established upon the tenets of freedom, equality, and justice. (Natural Language Processing, 2022).

Also, the issue of language was categorically stated in the NPE that every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or language of the immediate community (LIM) for the first four years of basic education which was not different from what is stated in the new NLP but with the inclusion of how the mother tongue of a child or the language of the immediate community of a child should be used along with English language up to the tertiary education of the child was clearly stated in the NLP. Kenya's policies also emphasize the use of local languages alongside English and Swahili throughout the education system (KIE, 2005).

In this paper, attempts will be made to answer the following questions: What are the innovations of the new national language policy in Nigeria? What are the stipulated materials in the new national language policy that can help in the implementation of the NLP? What are the venues or institutions that can aid the implementation of the NLP? What are the hullabalos of the new NLP? Additionally, what are the innovations and challenges in Kenya's language policies, and how do they compare with those in Nigeria?

### **Innovations in Language Policies: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and Kenya**

The newly established National language policy recognizes languages as significant instruments for transformation, as well as socio-economic and political advancement, a perspective that was less emphasized in the NPE. Furthermore, the study of natural language processing recognizes the profound relationship between language and the cultural identity of individuals. It serves as a reflection of the

traditions, norms, and values that characterize the diverse populations of Nigeria. The policy acknowledges that every language constitutes a national asset and a treasure, deserving of preservation and transmission to future generations. It extends to recognize that the languages in Nigeria possess boundless potential to stimulate economic activities, generate employment, create wealth, act as a catalyst for effective equality and equitable education, and offer access and opportunities that foster positive outcomes and enhance global competitiveness (NLP, 2022). The framework of the national language policy is founded on the principles of social transformation, aimed at fostering sustainable development, particularly in the realm of human capital enhancement.

In Kenya, similar innovations are evident in its language policies. The Kenyan education system places significant emphasis on the role of language in cultural preservation and socio-economic development. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) establishes Kiswahili as the national language and both English and Kiswahili as official languages, creating a solid foundation for linguistic unity and national identity. Additionally, the Language Policy in Education (2005) mandates the use of mother tongue in early education, reflecting a commitment to preserving the linguistic heritage of the diverse communities within Kenya. This policy supports the idea that early education in a child's mother tongue or the Language of the Immediate Community (LIC) enhances comprehension and educational outcomes (Muthwii, 2004). Moreover, Kenya's language policies have been integrated into broader national development agenda, aligning with socio-economic goals. The Basic Education Act (2013) further reinforces the use of indigenous languages in early education, promoting equity in education by ensuring that learners from different linguistic backgrounds have access to quality

education in a language they understand. This approach not only fosters educational success but also strengthens cultural identity and cohesion among various ethnic groups.

Kenya's National Policy on Culture and Heritage (2009) emphasizes the importance of cultural preservation, with language as a key component. This policy promotes the use of indigenous languages in various domains, including media, education, and public life, recognizing them as essential tools for national development and social cohesion. By integrating these languages into public and cultural spheres, Kenya aims to prevent the endangerment and extinction of its indigenous languages, similar to Nigeria's efforts under the NLP. Furthermore, the Kenyan government has initiated various programs to support the development and use of indigenous languages. These include the establishment of language boards and the promotion of local language programming in the media, such initiatives are designed to ensure that all Kenyan languages are given a platform, thus fostering a multilingual society that values its linguistic diversity as a national resource.

NLP recognizes various sectors of Nigeria where language is used such as:

**Education-** The policy mentioned various levels of education in the country like basic education, post basic education, mass and Nomadic education, tertiary education which extends to university education, teacher education, technology, innovation and enterprise institutions.

Other sectors include: Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

- Culture, Tourism and Entertainment
- Government and Administration.
- Legislature
- Judiciary
- Security Sector
- Town planning, Environment
- Health and Agricultural extension Services

- Commerce, Trade, Banking, Financial and Economic sector were the various sectors which the NLP recognizes and makes language provision for which is very innovative. One of the innovations of the new NLP is to ensure the promotion and preservation of Nigerian languages as the Nation's heritage to be transferred to the subsequent generations. Also, the policy recognizes mother tongue or the language of the immediate community (LIC) as a medium of instruction at designated levels of education. The NLP ensures the utilization of languages within the various sectors for National development.

The NLP facilitates the organization and execution of research, as well as the systematic codification and documentation of Nigerian languages. The policy delineates the status, functions, and roles of languages across various levels and branches of government within society, facilitating effective interaction and communication across diverse domains. Furthermore, it seeks to integrate prior governmental initiatives and provide regulatory frameworks for the utilization and advancement of languages in Nigeria, with the objective of averting the endangerment and extinction of languages while promoting national cohesion. It posits that languages possess the capacity to facilitate socio-economic activities and foster opportunities for sustainable development.

Kenya's approach reflects similar principles, as the country promotes the use of indigenous languages to preserve cultural heritage and support educational and socio-economic development (Constitution, 2010). The Kenyan policy framework also emphasizes the importance of local languages in various sectors and integrates them into the national development agenda, supporting the creation of opportunities and equitable access to resources.

The innovations of the NLP seek to integrate prior governmental initiatives while establishing comprehensive and effective regulatory frameworks for the utilization and advancement of language in Nigeria. The policy's recognition of the significance of preserving Nigerian languages is commendable, as it aims to protect them from endangerment and extinction. Furthermore, it seeks to promote linguistic and national unity by ensuring that each language receives equitable recognition and attention within the national context. The NLP advocates for the enhancement of Nigerian languages to facilitate effective communication across both print and electronic media. It is indeed a noteworthy endeavor that the NLP seeks to enhance the management of culture and cultural diversity by implementing regional and international initiatives focused on the development and utilization of Nigerian and other languages. The policy is fundamentally rooted in the principles and concepts derived from sociolinguistics, language description, and pragmatics, drawing upon established models and practices that focus on the utilization, development, planning, and administration of language.

The National Language Policy is based on the integrated and multilingual approach, which is a convenient blend of models and approaches. The models and approaches that provide the basis from which the principles, strategies and concepts are drawn and utilized are as follows:

Status Planning Model, which focuses on social roles and standing of languages, Corpus Planning Model, which stipulates and focuses on language research, codification, standardization and documentation, Language-in-Education Model, which focuses on language regulatory provisions in the education sector including issues of instructional medium, curriculum and instructional materials across the various levels of education,

Prestige Planning Model, which is inclined towards boosting the status or role of languages, Domain-sensitive Model, which emphasizes special attention to policy guidelines and stipulations on the use of languages in the various spheres of national development.

The guiding principles of the NLP take cognizance of the Nigerian ecology and context; and are aware of the related language issues in the various domains. Therefore, the policy is based on the use of a variety of established language policy models, principles and strategies that address the language issues in Nigeria.

One of the noteworthy advancements in NLP is its application of an evolutionary approach to policy development, which entails a comprehensive examination of the linguistic stipulations found within existing legal and regulatory frameworks. This includes documents such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, amended in 2011), the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (revised 2020), and the National Cultural Policy (1988).

The NLP additionally opts to acknowledge the Language of the immediate Community (LIC) across Federal, State, and Local Government tiers, while factoring in constitutional and other policy stipulations, the dissemination of language, its development, and other recognized equitable criteria, which is notably innovative.

### **The stipulated sources in implementing national language policies in Nigeria and Kenya**

Upon examining the provisions outlined in the NLP alongside the actual circumstances, it becomes evident that following a two-year period since the policy's inception, there has been a notable lack of progress regarding the proposed implementation strategies. These strategies

include the mass production and dissemination of the NLP via diverse channels such as print and electronic media, consultations with stakeholders, press briefings, and social media platforms (NLP, 2022).

The provision and dissemination of the policy serves as a mechanism to ensure that it reaches those who will put it to use. Until now, a significant number of individuals remain uninformed about the release of the new policy, with many asserting, “I am only familiar with the one from 2013.” Furthermore, it was indicated that the NLP will be generated in both written and multimedia formats, encompassing Nigerian and foreign languages (NLP, 2022). The inclusion of NLP in both foreign and Nigerian languages would have constituted a commendable initiative to facilitate the policy's implementation. However, two years post-policy formation, it remains exclusively accessible in English, with no provisions made for other foreign languages, much less for Nigerian languages. The absence of a policy promoting the use of the local language for child education, particularly in any of the three predominant Nigerian languages among the over 500 indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria, signifies a concerning trend.

Similarly, in Kenya, the implementation of language policies faces challenges related to resource allocation and dissemination. Although the Kenyan constitution mandates the use of local languages in education, the practical rollout of these policies often lags behind due to insufficient resources and awareness campaigns (Muthwii, 2004). Although the Kenyan government has made efforts to integrate local languages into the curriculum and educational materials, but the extent of dissemination and implementation across all regions remains uneven. For instance, the production of teaching materials in indigenous languages and the training of

educators to effectively use these materials have been inconsistent, particularly in rural areas where such initiatives are most needed. Additionally, while the Basic Education Act (2013) supports the use of mother tongue in early education, the execution of this policy has been hindered by a lack of adequate infrastructure and educational resources in many communities (Constitution of Kenya, 2010; KIE, 2005).

In both Nigeria and Kenya, effective implementation of language policies requires robust strategies for dissemination and resource allocation. For the NLP in Nigeria, it is crucial to address these gaps by ensuring that the policy is available in multiple languages and widely communicated to all stakeholders. Similarly, in Kenya, increasing resources and improving communication about language policies can help enhance their effectiveness and reach.

### **Strategic action plans stipulated by the national language policies in Nigeria and Kenya**

Promoting Stakeholders' ownership and participation such as mapping the NLP to project its relevance and benefits to each stakeholder, production of the NLP in written and multi-media formats in Nigerian and foreign languages, interfacing with Community Based Organisations, Faith Based Organisations, Non-Governmental Organization, Press and Traditional institutions.

Another action plan of the policy the legislative and regulatory actions such as passing of appropriate legislation on the NLP, making relevant aspects of the policy enforceable, empowering communities to take appropriate actions in line with NLP objectives, reviewing existing regulations to promote broadcasting in Nigerian languages providing incentives that will promote and encourage programming and broadcasting in Nigerian languages, developing

programmes that are in harmony with the NLP.

Involvement of resources mobilization is another development of strategic plans (which include human resources planning, resources audit, resource use efficiency and training plans, for the NLP, conducting a linguistic Needs Assessment, mapping of Nigeria into areas or zones on the basis of their linguistic and cultural needs, developing appropriate plans to address these needs, assigning mandates to tertiary educational institutions regarding the identified needs in the relevant areas and zones.

Creating NLP Database is a plan that is aimed at aggregating and developing a database for NLP across all sectors and agencies, developing and disseminating open-access template tools, mandatory aggregation of Nigerian Languages output across all sectors in order to provide data to diverse use. What is stipulated in the NLP as ways of implementing the policy is a beautiful plan but up till two years of the policy formulation, not much has been put in place towards the implementation of the policy.

Kenya's strategic action plans for implementing its national language policies share similarities with Nigeria's approach, particularly in promoting stakeholders' ownership and participation. The Kenyan Constitution (2010) and the Language Policy in Education (2005) emphasizes the role of local languages in education and cultural preservation. The government engages various stakeholders, including educational institutions, community organizations, and media outlets, to ensure the relevance and benefits of language policies are communicated effectively. However, dissemination efforts are still ongoing, and more work is needed to reach all regions uniformly.

Legislative and regulatory actions in Kenya involve aligning language policies with existing laws, such as Basic Education

Act (2013) and the National Policy on Culture and Heritage (2009). These frameworks aim to preserve Kenya's linguistic diversity by promoting the use of indigenous languages alongside English and Kiswahili. Incentives for broadcasting in local languages and developing culturally relevant educational programs are also part of Kenya's strategic action plan.

Resource mobilization is a significant aspect of Kenya's strategy, with a focus on allocating resources for the production of educational materials in local languages and training educators to teach in these languages. Additionally, Kenya has undertaken initiatives to assess linguistic needs across its diverse regions, aiming to address these needs through targeted educational and cultural programs.

While Kenya has made progress in integrating local languages into its education system and cultural policies, the full implementation of these strategic plans is still a work in progress, much like in Nigeria. Both countries face challenges in ensuring that their national language policies are effectively communicated and implemented across all regions and all sectors.

### **Institutions and stakeholders that will aid the implementation of national language policies in Nigeria and Kenya**

The NLP mentioned some key institutes and stakeholders that will assist in the implementation of the policy. The specific roles of stakeholders are stated below accordingly:

The specific roles of governments would be to ensure the effective implementation of the National Language Policy. It was mentioned that government will ensure that appropriate legislation is put in place to guide the use of Nigerian languages in all sectors of the economy. It was stated that relevant Ministries, departments and agencies at Federal, states and the FCT shall

oversee the implementation and funding of the policy.

Roles of education agencies and parastatals would be to organize conferences, workshops and seminars in Nigerian and foreign languages. Also to coordinate and promote language research and developmental activities that will ensure the effective implementation of the policy. Instructional resources such as curricula, books, orthographies, meta-language etc. would be developed for the teaching and learning of Nigerian and foreign languages. There would also be programmes that will build the capacity of teachers and other personnel in the use of Nigerian language curricula and other related materials. Plan would be put in place for the development of database on the various aspects of Nigerian Languages. Education agencies would conduct immersion programmes for Nigerian and foreign languages; these will serve as centers for exchange of information and the study of Nigerian and foreign language.

Specific roles of linguistic and language associations would be to organize conferences, workshops and seminars geared towards the actualization of the policy, collaborate with other associations and agencies for the purpose of training and retraining of teachers of Nigerian languages, conduct advocacy for the Nigerian languages and the Policy. Also, efforts would be put in place to support the development of Nigerian and foreign languages by providing expertise in training and development.

However, teacher training institutions, regulatory agencies and departments of linguistics and languages in tertiary institutions would be charged with the responsibility to organize conferences, workshops and seminars in Nigerian and foreign languages, conduct pre-service training for teachers of Nigerian and foreign languages, organise advocacy and sensitization programmes for various

Nigerian languages. There would be research into the status and use of various Nigerian and foreign languages. Also, teachers training institutes would ensure the certification and quality control of teachers of Nigerian and foreign languages. The responsibility of broadcasting organisations and their regulatory bodies would be to ensure that broadcasting corporations broadcast at the national and state levels complying with the provisions of the NLP.

The roles of Nigerian tertiary institutions would be to encourage the development and production of ICT facilities and applications such as Human Language Technology (HLT), Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Computational Linguistics (CL), etc. which will address Nigerian language needs, conduct research and develop capacity in Robot Interaction Language (ROILA), develop artificial language and capacity to transform traditional narratives into cartoons and diverse science motifs based on Nigeria languages for media, entertainment, science, fiction and security.

Federal and state ministries of information and culture would oversee the implementation of language policy provisions in the various sub-sectors within their domains, carry out relevant activities relating to language use and promotion in their areas of operation. Also, national film and video censors board (NFVCB) would regulate, monitor and track activities in the film and entertainment industry to ensure compliance with the provisions of the NLP. The security agencies were not left out, their duty would be to incorporate the provisions of the NLP into all training programmes and policies.

Funding and donor agencies would assist in the provision of required funding in the development of Nigerian languages, synergize with relevant government agencies and language associations for the production of teaching and learning resources, as well as the training of Nigerian



and foreign language teachers. Other stakeholders such as the National judicial institute and other relevant judicial training agencies shall collaborate with institutions responsible for language development and learning to train Judges, Magistrates and interpreters in the Nigerian languages used within their respective judicial provinces. Also, it was stated in the policy that NERDC in collaboration with other relevant bodies shall develop curricula for short-term courses in Nigerian languages that will meet the language needs of security agencies, legislature and the judiciary. Relevant government agencies and Nigerian language departments in tertiary institutions shall provide relevant training for town planners on the use and appropriate rendition of essential town planning terms and concepts in Nigerian languages.

The health care sector was saddled with the responsibility of using English and Nigerian languages as the media for providing healthcare services all over the country. With regard to commerce, trade, investments and financial sector of the economy, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Federal Ministry of Finance shall be pivotal in ensuring the implementation and adherence to the tenets of policy by all stakeholders.

The Ministry of trade and investment and all stakeholders in the financial, commerce, trade and investments sector shall ensure the inclusion of the National language policy provisions in their overall corporate policy, and also ensure a comprehensive implementation of the policy in all the areas of coverage. The objectives of the policy are well stated but actions towards the realization of the stated objectives are yet to be implemented. What wasted efforts!

The implementation of Kenya's language policies involves a range of institutions and stakeholders, each playing a vital role in ensuring the success of the policies. The Kenyan government, through

its relevant ministries and departments, is responsible for enforcing language policies as stipulated in the Constitution (2010) and other legal frameworks like the Basic Education Act (2013) and the National Policy on Culture and Heritage (2009). These bodies are tasked with integrating indigenous languages into various sectors, particularly education, to promote cultural preservation and linguistic diversity.

Educational institutions in Kenya including the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and teacher training colleges are key players in the development and dissemination of educational materials in local languages. These institutions organize workshops, seminars, and training programs to build the capacity of teachers to effectively deliver instruction in indigenous languages. The KICD, in particular, is responsible for developing curricula and instructional materials in local languages, ensuring that these resources are available across the country's diverse linguistic regions.

Linguistic and cultural associations in Kenya collaborate with government agencies to promote the use of local languages in education and other sectors. These associations are involved in advocacy efforts and the organization of events aimed at raising awareness about the importance of linguistic diversity. They also contribute to research and development activities that support the implementation of language policies.

Media organizations, including broadcasting companies, play a crucial role in promoting the use of local languages by producing and airing content in indigenous languages. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) oversees compliance with language policy provisions in the media, ensuring that local languages are adequately represented in programming. In the judicial sector, training programs are organized for legal professionals, including judges and court interpreters, to ensure they are

proficient in the languages used within their jurisdictions. The National Council for Law Reporting and other relevant bodies are tasked with translating legal documents and proceedings into local languages to enhance access to justice.

In the healthcare sector, the ministry of health promotes the use of local languages to improve communication between the healthcare providers and patients, particularly in rural areas where indigenous languages are predominant. This approach aims to enhance the delivery of healthcare services and ensure that language barriers do not hinder access to care. Kenya's financial and trade sectors are also involved in the implementation of language policies. The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) and the ministry of trade, through various initiatives, ensure that financial literacy programs and trade related information are accessible in local languages, thereby promoting inclusivity and economic participation across all regions.

While Both Nigeria and Kenya have outlined comprehensive strategies and assigned roles to various institutions and stakeholders to implement their respective language policies, the realization of these goals requires sustained efforts and corroboration across all sectors. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of these policies.

### **The hullabaloo of the language policies in Nigeria and Kenya**

By hullabaloo in this paper, we refer to the issues, deficiencies, and obstacles encountered. Consequently, it is a commonplace assertion within the realm of NLP to declare that "all Nigerian languages are equal and none shall be regarded as superior or inferior to another" NPL, 2022 (14). This assertion is utterly perplexing, as in reality, only three major languages—Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba—are afforded

recognition among the more than 500 indigenous languages. It is indeed quite striking to observe a definitive assertion in the NLP that "the mother tongue or the Language of the Immediate Community (LIM) is used as a medium of instruction at designated levels of education" (NLP, 2022), particularly when, in reality, no Nigerian language is mandated for all students in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations. The Yoruba language, for example, is mandated for Art students, whereas it is available as an elective for students in other disciplines. Moreover, it presents a perplexing contradiction to include this objective within the realm of NLP, which aims to safeguard Nigerian languages from endangerment and extinction, while simultaneously, school pupils and students face repercussions for using their native tongues, with some even derogatorily labeling the Yoruba language as "a dirty language." If the objective of the NLP is genuinely to preserve Nigerian languages from extinction, then it is imperative to adopt a more proactive approach to its implementation, rather than simply creating a commotion.

Moreover, the 2022 edition of the language policy should be an extension of what is stated in the NPE 2013, rather, the policies tend to contradict each other. For instance, it was stated on the NLP 2022 that "sustained efforts shall be made to develop and regularly review the curricula for teaching and learning of all Nigerian languages" when in the actual fact, it was stated in the NPE 2013 that "any Nigerian language that has curriculum will be offered as humanity course which is an indication that not all the Nigerian languages has a written curriculum which should be done before thinking of enforcing it on any child for learning.

Again, it was clearly stated in the NLP that "efforts shall be made to develop and produce educational materials in various Nigerian languages, registers in Nigerian

languages for the various school subjects shall be developed. Also, that Government at all levels shall make efforts to develop science and technology textual and other instructional materials in various languages" (NLP, 2022 Pp 20) These statements are all creating commotions because in reality, professionals that could teach the language or do the job are getting reduced on the daily basis either by retirement without replacement or by individuals changing from language to studying related humanity courses. A part from English language, no other language (be it international i.e. French or any of the three mayor Nigerian languages can be said be superior, when in the reality, Nigerian languages are seen and treated as inferior.

For University education on the other hand, it was stated in the NLP (2022) that "general studies shall be extended to include language of the immediate community of every institution. Also, projects, dissertations and thesis shall have an additional abstract written in language of the immediate community or the mother tongue of the student if not the same with LIM. The biggest of the hullabaloo is that, government shall encourage the establishment of universities whose medium of instruction shall be any of the Nigerian languages (NLP, 2022 p22), this is a big confusion. The reality of this is that enrollment of students for the study of Nigerian languages is reducing gradually and people that ought to further their career by pursuing a higher degree in Nigerian languages are fast changing to other courses. Many Nigerian students are ashamed to speak any of the Nigerian Languages.

Moreover, the NLP on culture, tourism and entertainment sectors, cleanly stated that it would promote the use of Nigerian languages within the domain, facilitate the export of Nigerian language through culture tourism and entertainment, promote Nigerian cultural heritage and tourism, then generate and sustain interest in

the use of Nigerian languages in Nigeria and the diaspora (NLP, 2022), this idea would have been a very good one if the policy was followed up with actions.

Kenya's language policies also face several hullabaloo, particularly in the gap between policy formulation and implementation. The Kenyan Constitution and the Basic Education Act mandates the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Early Childhood Education, especially in rural areas where the Language of the Immediate Community (LIC) is expected to be used (Muthwii, 2004). However, in practice, this policy faces significant challenges. Despite the stipulation, the implementation is inconsistent, often hindered by the lack of adequate educational resources in many local languages and the preference for Kiswahili and English as the languages of instruction. This creates a disparity between policy and reality, with many schools opting to use English or Kiswahili instead of the mother tongue, thereby undermining the objectives of the policy.

Additionally, while the policy emphasizes the development of instructional materials in local languages, the reality on the ground is quite different. Many local languages have not been adequately developed or standardized for educational purposes, and there is a shortage of trained teachers who are proficient in these languages. This situation is exacerbated with using local languages in formal education where English is often perceived as the language of upward mobility (Kembo-Sure & Webb, 2000) Furthermore, the policy's goal to promote the use of local languages in various sectors, such as the media, has not been fully realized. Although there have been some efforts to broadcast in local languages, these are often limited and do not reflect the full linguistic diversity of the country (Githinji, 2014). This creates a situation where, despite the good intentions of the policy, the implementation remains

weak and uneven, leading to a growing concern about the potential extinction of some Kenyan languages.

In higher education, while there is a policy to encourage the use of local languages in research and documentation, the implementation is minimal. The requirement for Theses and Dissertations to include abstracts in local languages is rarely enforced, and the academic focus remains predominantly on English and Kiswahili. The hullabaloo here is the dissonance between policy aspirations and the on-the-ground realities, where dominance of English continues to marginalize local languages.

The policies in Kenya seem promising on paper but fall short in practice, leading to a series of unfulfilled promises and unmet objectives. Without significant changes in the approach to implementation, these policies may continue to be more of a hullabaloo than reality.

## **Conclusion**

The newly introduced language policy in Nigeria signifies a pivotal shift in the nation's strategy towards embracing linguistic diversity and fostering cultural cohesion. By incorporating both indigenous and global languages within the educational framework, the policy aims to reconcile the realms of tradition and modernity. The significance of a language policy in Nigeria cannot be overstated. The policy recognizes the significance of safeguarding Nigeria's abundant cultural heritage while simultaneously providing its citizens with the essential skills required to excel in a globalized context. The emergence of NLP represents a significant advancement, particularly in an era where modernization is rapidly influencing language and cultural practices. Socialization has led some individuals to perceive their language and culture as outdated relics that must be discarded to attain a status of education. However, in reality, language represents a

profound aspect of identity that deserves to be treasured.

The language of the society should be learned along with the culture. For the LIM to be learnt, the culture of such a community should be accepted and learnt too. Fengping (2005) believes that the integration of language and culture learning is by using the language as medium for the continuing socialization of students. The emphasis of the policy is on the language while the area of culture is suffering a serious neglect.

The home is a very strong stakeholder that should be identified and regarded as a vital tool in order to preserve people's language and tradition. The first people a child comes in contact with are the parents. (Ofodu et al, 2023). The language policy does not recognize the home and parents as stakeholders in language development of children. Similarly, Kenya's language policy also underscores the significance of promoting indigenous languages to foster national unity and cultural identity. The Kenyan government has made substantial efforts to incorporate indigenous languages into the education system, as outlined in the Constitution. However, challenges in the effective implementation of these policies persist, particularly in terms of resource allocation and societal attitudes towards indigenous languages being overshadowed by dominant languages, which further complicate the goal of preserving linguistic diversity. The Kenyan policy aims to address this by promoting the use of local languages in both education and governance, but the execution often falls short due to limited resources and inadequate support at the community level. Efforts should be intensified towards active implementation of the policies regarding language in both nations. For a country to have many languages (for example, Nigeria has over 500 languages) is a blessing that should be cherished. Cultural resources must be preserved and transferred to the

younger generation. Implementation of these policies should be regarded as a national assignment that should be handled properly by all stakeholders involved. If all the recommendations on the policies are taken into consideration and necessary measures are put in place, these policies will be truly innovative and not just a bunch of hullabaloo.

### Recommendations

In light of the short comings found in the new national language policy, the following are recommended:

- The home should be seen as a major sector of the Nigerian and Kenyan society that plays a very vital role in the language learning and language acquisition of a child. Similarly, in Kenya, the role of the home is crucial in ensuring that children are exposed to their mother tongue and other indigenous languages from an early age.
- Various stakeholders and government should wake up to their responsibilities towards the proper implementation of the policy. It is one thing to make a policy but the most important thing is the proper implementation of such policy. In Kenya, this includes the active involvement of local communities and educational institutions to ensure that the policy is not just a document but a living practice.
- Government of both countries should give the policies the publicity necessary for the documents to get to various stakeholders that will implement the policies. This will include translating the policies into many local languages to ensure they are accessible to all communities.
- Curriculum planners should make indigenous language learning a compulsory subject and not an optional subject or a subject limited to only the art students as it operates presently in Nigerian secondary schools. In Kenya, this means integrating indigenous languages into the national curriculum at all levels of education and ensuring that these languages are taught across all streams.
- Efforts should be made towards the production and provision of instructional materials in languages of the immediate community of the learners. In Kenya, the development of such materials should be a priority, and they should be readily available to support teachers and students in the effective learning of indigenous languages.
- Parents should not refer to any native language as a dirty language or vernacular, rather they should expose their children to all the languages spoken in their immediate community or the child's mother tongue. Attitudes towards indigenous languages must be positively reinforced to preserve linguistic diversity. Children should be properly oriented to know that speaking a native language does not prevent them from being academically sound, rather it helps the child to develop culturally, morally and intellectually.
- Owners of private schools should be mandated to teach their pupils and students the language of their immediate community.
- Nine, the governments should intensify more efforts in the training and retraining of the indigenous language teachers. This should involve continuous professional development for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and methodologies for teaching indigenous languages effectively.

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