

PROMOTING QUALITY CONTROL IN YORUBA LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The printed book is a vital tool for economic, social and cultural development of societies. It is an irreplaceable means of information, transmission, critical reflection and education. This paper discussed the concept of Yoruba language, its introduction into the Nigerian School Curriculum, quality control issues and textbook production in Nigeria and recommended some guidelines for promoting quality control in Yoruba language textbooks under the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE).

INTRODUCTION

Yoruba language has been described in different way by various writers. Yusuf (1992) defined it as one of the language that originated from Kwa language under Niger-Congo. According to the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Yoruba is one of the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). Considered being the language of wider communication in the Northern Part of the Country. Yoruba language possesses the quality of expression to the core and even beyond through wider communication for it has attained both national and international recognition. It is a long established language. It is estimated that over 18million people speak Yoruba in Nigeria. It is spoken throughout the South West of Nigeria like Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Kwara, Ekiti and part of Edo and Kogi. Literature has been published in the language for over 9 hundred year (Akinlabi, 2011).

The first Yoruba words were in print in about 1891. Today it possess one of the largest bodies of Literature in Africa Bamgbose (1991). Hannah Kilham was the first known scholar of the Yoruba language and the first to prepare the orthography on which she wrote her book. The first ever newspaper in Nigeria “Iwe Iroyin” was published in Yoruba on October 1859. Textbooks and other reading materials are published in Yoruba. A more recent definition of Yoruba language by (Akinlabi 2011) describes it as the mother tongue or language of the environment of the people that are living under River Niger (South-West) in Nigeria.

Yoruba language as a subject is not new in the Nigerian School Curriculum. It is a discipline that falls mostly within the humanity and Art. The initial attempts of developing Yoruba language curriculum in Nigeria according to Oyeniyi (2003) where by scholars in the Yoruba disciplines.

Those initial attempts did not reflect any clear conception of what Yoruba language entailed and the scholars in their pioneering efforts tended to promote the identity of their respective humanity and Arts discipline. Consequently, what emerged as Yoruba language curriculum was nothing more than an amalgamation of history, literature, Grammar, culture and moral for many years, Nigerian language was taught in Nigerian schools as one week of History, one week of Religion studies, and one week of civics (Okam, 2002). However with the emergence of scholars who have greater understanding of the nature and purpose of Yoruba language or Yoruba studies, curriculum development in this subject began to reflect clear conceptions of Yoruba studies. The 2004 edition of the National Policy on Education NPE (2004) made Yoruba language a compulsory subject for the primary, junior and senior secondary level of Education, and as a medium of instruction for junior primary pupils.

The objectives of language curriculum as stated in the 9 year Basic Education curriculum (2007) produced by NERDC are to enable pupils and students to speak and write their mother tongue, and develop a sense of comprehension towards other people, their diverse cultures, history and those fundamental things that make them human. The fact that language has far reaching implications for national cohesion, cultural identity and the economics advancement of countries makes it imperative of government to take cogent decision on how to manage language resources within their territories to achieve maximum positive utilization in language Education. This was led to the formulation of language policies in the education of a nation.

The National Policy on Education (2004); as it applies to the three levels of education has stated thus: At the Pre-primary level, government will ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community (section 2:11 (13)). At the Primary level, government will see to it that the medium of instruction is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English (section 3:15 (14)). For the adult education, "The National Commission will work out the overall strategy for the inclusion of Nigeria arts, culture and language in adult education programme (section 7:52 (6)). The Government considers it to be in the interest of national interest that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major Nigerian languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (section 1:8).

Going by this, the place of Yoruba language to development of Nigeria education system cannot be over emphasized because of its relevance. In 2007, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) undertook the review of the National primary and junior secondary school curricula and harmonized it into a 9-year Basic Education Structure. Consequently there is a need for the renewal/production of textbooks to bring them in line with the new Basic Education Curriculum.

Books are indispensable factors in the teaching and learning process. The books are crucial to the educational development of a country as well as a potent agent in the overall development of its citizenry. Books are necessary instruments for the preservation, transmission of cultural heritage, development of scientific knowledge and technological skills as well as tool for socio-political and economic awareness. They serve as channels through which message, information ideas and

knowledge are disseminated. The role of textbooks for promoting teaching and learning in Yoruba language cannot be overemphasized according to Ikwumelu (1997). Functional and productive uses of textbooks imply that they must be considered as “teaching assistants which can help students achieve certain objectives including: helping them find answers to problems, giving them guidance in choosing one or more alternative courses of action, and assisting them in building new insights and appreciation (p.75)

Esu and Inyang – Abia (2004) identified some advantages of textbooks over other instructional materials these include: Self – instructional: Textbooks allow users free access individual pacing, referencing and choice of what to study in greater details. They provide students the opportunity for learning how to learn or to read better. Economical: They serve users extra reference time. They can be used and re-used by many learners without losing quality or content. Knowledge can be stored and re-used at no extra cost. Systematic: well written texts are sequentially arranged to have a step to step order. Accessibility: Textbooks are usually easily accessible (p.57). Obebe (1992), posited:

It is said that textbooks are still the most widely used curriculum materials in schools. Both teachers and students rely heavily on the available textbooks for information in their subject areas (64).

Over the years, there has been lots of complaints about the quality of textbooks published in Nigeria including Yoruba language textbooks. Writing on the quality of Nigerian languages textbooks. Obebe (1992) observed:

If we are to look at the Nigerian language textbooks that are in the market today against the background of who the authors are or what goes into the Nigerian language textbooks, it is obvious that the majority of the books will not obtain a pass mark. This is because many of the authors of Nigerian languages textbooks in Nigeria today are specialist in disciplines other than Nigerian language. The general tendency sews our dresses and the road-side mechanics who are builders of homes in the name of “contractors” (p.65)

The problems are not limited to Yoruba language textbooks. A study on the book situation in Nigeria reported by Adesanoye (1995) observed as follows about many of the books produced in Nigeria:

1. The quality of book production is low
2. Many of the illustrations are not appropriate and cannot bring about the deserved effect.
3. They are not culturally relevant i.e their illustrations and examples do not reflect our environment.
4. Their contents do not conform with the requirement of the National curriculum.
5. The language used is not consistent with the level of the readers (p.76)
6. The federal Government of Nigeria as part of the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) supplies textbooks to schools for the use of pupils and students throughout the

federation. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), has the responsibility of selecting textbooks to be supplied to schools under this programme.

Writing on the quality of textbooks assessed by (UBEC) for supply schools Halliru (2006) observed:

Poor quality books in terms of content and quality of production are a serious disservice to young impressionable minds and to the general reading public. The Universal Basic Education Commission observed in its PEP II supplementary Readers Project that about 50% of the books produced in Nigeria and submitted for Evaluation failed to meet the required criteria set for Evaluation (p.8)

Some of the factors that are responsible for this situation include the proliferation of publishers, more people are taking advantage of advances in Information and Communication Technology to undertake publishing without following the basic quality control process for book publishing. Many authors now take advantage of the dearth of essential and appropriate textbooks in our schools by producing sub-standard textbooks

QUALITY CONTROL AND TEXTBOOK PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA

Quality Control refers to setting of minimum standards and monitoring compliance of all stakeholders in the implementation of these standards. Encarta (2007) describes quality Control as a set of minimum standards to which goods must conform to make them suitable for purchase. The benefits of quality control is that it encourages producers to maintain high product standard as well as protect the consumers from poor quality merchandise.

Writers such as Romiszowski (1981), Pearce (1982) and Shedon (1988) have identified six major factors that should guide the writing and production of good quality books. These are technical, pedagogic, psychological, sociological, linguistics and economic factors. Technical factors include page layout, print size, type size and frequency and colour of illustrations. Corder (1966) and Aiyedun (1991) suggest that good illustration should have the following qualities clarity, boldness, focus, vividness, relevance and economy. Frequency of illustrations is also very important especially at the lower basic level. The younger the reader the greater the number of pictures a book should contain. Young readers are usually attracted by colours and they require lots of illustrations to aid their understanding of the concepts and words contained in the book. Pedagogic factors include relevance of the content of the book to the school curriculum. Continuity within the chapters, the coverage of the items and the examination of each item. Psychological elements include such considerations like interest, motivation, age of the reader and attitude of the reader. Basically, a writer should ensure that his text is suitable for the age of the reader and that it can arouse and sustain the interest of the reader both by its content difficulty and tasks. In addition, where there is no interest the book is unlikely to be useful to the reader. A good book should reflect the culture, history, geography, music, art and sports (National Book Policy, 2007). Sociological issues deal with the degree to which the content of the book is in conformity with the cultural norm and practices of the readers. A writer must ensure that the images he or she presents of people are fair, balanced, accurate and positive. According to Ihebuzor (1995) passages which are racist, parochial, vulgar, immoral, and obscure or which appear to condone positions

that are antithetical to accepted norms of decency should be avoided in writing books. Linguistics factors include related to the authors use of language and readability level of the book. Some of the basic requirements for books for lower basic are those sentences that must be short, complete and of correct grammatical structure. The language must also be consistent with the language level of the readers (Littlewood, 1981). Economic factors have to do with cost. It includes considerations of the size of the book the quality and texture of the paper, the binding, the cover, the typesetting and print size. The cost of a book can be brought down through the use of cheaper paper such as newsprint. However this may not be applicable for books used at lower basic level as National Book Policy (2007) insists that books for this level should be printed on quality paper of at least 70gramme with cover pages of at least 220 gramme.

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING QUALITY CONTROL IN YORUBA LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

The following are some basic guidelines for promoting quality control in Yoruba language textbooks for primary schools in Nigeria:

1. Writers and publishers should ensure that the content of Yoruba language textbooks are designed to achieve the objectives of the curriculum quoted earlier in this paper.
2. All Yoruba language textbooks should recognize the demands the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary underpinning of the content of the subject area as in the current curriculum by not treating in separate chapters topics related to history, economics, civics, etc.
3. The professional teacher of Yoruba language has to accept and propagate the view that modern curriculum trends in the context of his subject area have been developed to solve the problem created by the traditional subject approach which has bedeviled curriculum programmes in our schools. In this dispensation, Yoruba language is aimed at incorporating integrative, knowledge and inspiration from many realms of learning. Indeed, any prospects for serious improvements in the pedagogy of modern Yoruba language must be dictated by an understanding that knowledge from any one discipline is too limited to enable an individual to understand the immense complexity of human behaviour and to make reflective decisions on public issues. Thus related subjects such as history, geography, economics, sociology, political science etc need to feature in the Yoruba language content and programmes because concepts from these disciplines constitute the curriculum bedrock of the subject area Okam (2002).

According to Akinwale (1997), textbooks should specify specific instructional objectives

1. Set learning tasks or activities to attain the set objectives
2. Inform pupils of what exercises to perform
3. Providing guidance in how to perform exercises
4. Provide practice in performing exercises
5. Provide feedback on performance
6. Enhance retention of skills the learners acquired through performing the task. (p.17)

Other guidelines are:

7. The language must be consistent with the language level of learners in terms of readability. The readability level of the book must be appropriate to the child's age. This means the readability level of the book must be determined before writing the book. Sentences must be short, complete and of correct grammatical structure. For example books for lower primary level (primary 1 and 2) should contain simple and few words, while books for middle primary (primary 3 and 4) should contain short sentences and books for upper primary level (primaries 5 and 6) should contain fairly long sentences.
8. The book must take into consideration the child's cultural experiences. They must be appropriate to the learner's need and background. They must be acceptable to readers from all parts of Nigeria irrespective of their cultural and religious beliefs. The books should also be able to arouse and maintain the interest of readers.
9. They must cover all topics contained in the primary school Yoruba language curriculum.
10. The cover pages of books targeted at the primary level of education must be attractive and durable as pupils at this level have not had any experience in how to handle books.
11. They should be gender balanced. For example illustrations should not always show males models as Doctors and Engineers while females models are shown as Nurses and Teachers.
12. Promote positive and diverse cultural values. They should not encourage negative attitudes or depict people of other beliefs and traditions in bad light. Yoruba language textbooks should be made acceptable to all Nigerians. They should also reflect our rich cultural diversity and identities.
13. In terms of prices, Yoruba language textbooks should be affordable to buyers. Materials should be designed to be within affordable prices. Good Yoruba language textbooks for primary level should contain copious of illustrations and pictures as this will enhance understanding of the concepts taught by pupils and make the books appear interesting and attractive. Illustrations support the text, and delight to the eyes and heart. The use of colours offers exiting advantages in printed material especially for children. Appearance of material must be pleasing enough to encourage a person to want read it and colour photographs are far more attractive and natural to the eye than black and white photographs.
14. They should be printed with good quality paper of at least 70grammes with cover page of at least 220grammes. Various paper quality exist for publishing purposes, one of which is newsprint, the paper used for most newspapers, though cheap in quality and price. It is neither durable nor attractive nor can it guarantee durability. Newsprint can create

difficulty in reading because of the porous nature of its surface. As a result of these deficiencies, it fails to qualify as quality paper for books meant for elementary stages of an educational programme. Good quality paper could be expensive but has its advantage in motivating readers to read and because only quality papers can guarantee good photographs, diagrams and illustrations that are pleasing and colourful.

15. Binding simply refers to the process of gathering or collating papers and fastening them together into books. Binding can be simply or complex and may be in the form of stapling, sewing or gluing. Definitely stapling as a form of binding will be out of place for books meant for this category of audience. Binding should be durable i.e. books below 200 pages should be stitched, while books above 200 pages should be sewn.
16. The print quality should be of high standard. The print quality should not be faded but evenly clear throughout the book. Publishers should note that books for infants should be in clear large prints. Bold and legible font size of 16 points and above should be used for textbooks designed for Primary level.
17. Textbooks should be field tested in classrooms and subjected to critical reviews and assessment by NERDC before it is accepted for class use.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Studies have shown that textbooks are still the most widely used curriculum materials in schools. Both the teacher and the students rely heavily on the available textbooks as the main sources of information in their subject areas. Thus the quality of Yoruba language textbooks used in Nigeria cannot be compromised as good materials provide a stimulus to learning. This paper discussed the book situation in Nigeria, textbook production and quality control and book production in Nigeria, the paper goes on to suggested guidelines for promoting quality control in Yoruba language textbooks under the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE). In conclusion, the paper recommends that because of the numerous problems associated with available textbooks, there is a need for collaboration between curriculum planners, policy-makers, authors, researchers and practicing teachers to work together in producing adequate and up-to-date texts in various subject areas. This will go a long way towards solving the problem of inadequate textbooks for our learners.

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