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## Value Re-orientation and Language Development among Primary School Pupils for Sustainable Development in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The paper was focused on value reorientation and language development among Primary School Pupils for sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State, Nigeria. The background was hinged on the historical development of language and value re-orientation. Owerri Municipal Council is one of the 27 Local Government Areas in Imo State. It is housing the capital of Imo State, Owerri. The population of the study was 2,566 Primary School teachers in the Local Government under study. The researchers adopted simple random sampling to select 150 teachers for the study. The researchers also used "value re-orientation, language development and sustainable development questionnaire(VRLDSDQ)"as instrument for data collection. Four research questions were used for the study. The result of question one, revealed that value system has degenerated to a great extent even at the primary school level. Also, the result of 2.06 in table 2 shows that Primary School teachers did not assist in the development of Igbo Language as part of value re-orientation. Indeed, 2.8 result shows that value re-orientation and language development have greatly enhanced sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council. It was also found out that western culture has to a very great extent influenced value re-orientation and language. The recommendations among others include:(i)Cultural and creative arts, citizenship education and Igbo language should be made compulsory in Primary Schools. (ii) Primary school teachers should encourage the teaching of Igbo language at the Primary school. (iii) Western culture should not be allowed to kill African culture even at the Primary school level.

Keywords: Value Re-orientation, Language Development, Primary School, Sustainable Development

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### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a nation which is presently at the crossroads of value re-orientation is in a state of moral crisis and language obsolesce even among primary school pupils in Imo State in particular. Everywhere and in all walks of life some Nigerians exhibit unhealthy attitudes

which are the reflections of an even deeper malaise such as the lack of commitment to a viable moral base and consequent lack of integrity. The lack of value integrity is reflected in such forms as neglect in the teaching and learning of Igbo language, fraud, stealing and

robbery, forgery, nepotism, examination malpractices and in the prevalence of bribery and corruption which is fast becoming entrenched in Nigeria public life, child abuse, kidnapping, cultism, militancy, etc.

Value reorientation in the modern Nigeria particularly in Imo State should start from the earliest levels of the children's education hence [1] had since observed that there is lack of discipline in virtually every sphere of life exemplified for instance, by the tendencies of recklessness and general lack of courtesy on our highways, scrambling or even riotous behaviour at the airports, at the National and State Assemblies, in the schools and other public places, lack of respect for law and order and so on. The rampant avarice is a reflection of the pervasiveness of excessive materialism. Everywhere there is the tendency to get rich quickly by unscrupulous means including fraud, cheating and the exploitation of fellow citizens. Connected with all these is unhealthy attitude to work and lack of seriousness in the teaching and learning of Igbo language especially at the primary education level. Few people are willing to exert themselves in reorientating our values and the teaching of Igbo to primary school pupils promptly and efficiently. Worse still, most teachers often assume a haughty and insolent manner in the performance of

their statutory duties and even expect ex-gratia for doing their duties.

[2] have observed that the whole history of education in Africa, generally and in Nigeria in particular, from the days of the early missionaries until the present, the question of what language should be used in education of the child has remained unresolved. During the colonial period, however, there were a number of initiatives and statements of intent to evolve language policies for the schools. Unfortunately, none was implemented. At the dawn of political independence, the educational environment was punctuated with a reservoir of options based on literature and on researches by linguists, social anthropologists, language educators, reports of learned conferences and education commissions. These were to guide policy makers in the articulation of meaningful language policies but unfortunately, no such policies were evolved. Thus, the education of the Nigerian child has gone on till today without a well articulated and meaningful implementation of language policy even at the primary school level. If any development at all, how can it be sustained for development.

According to [2], throughout the whole history of Western education in Africa, from the day of the early missionaries until the present, the problem of language in education recurs. In fact, as early as 1808, the problem of the medium of

instruction was apparent soon after the founding of Christian Missionary Society (CMS) School at Basia in the North of Sierra-Leone. However, [3] states that the nineteenth century mission did not lay down a well defined policy for the schools. It was assumed, almost without question, that African schools including Nigeria should follow the metropolitan model as closely as possible but [4], Assistant Secretary of the C.M.S, in his 1816 special report on the West African Mission, did try to introduce the teaching of vernaculars when he sent a memorandum to all Head teachers under his administration stating that:

The advantage and indeed, the necessity of teaching the children to read their own language is in order to be useful to their parents and other country-men, by reading the scriptures and religious tracks will be obvious. I give express instruction that this should be attended to in future [4].

Unfortunately, this instruction was not carried out for three major reasons: first, few missionaries know the local languages and they rarely survived long enough to master them. Secondly, the only textbook available were written in English language. Thirdly, the pupils were often of mixed tribal origins and their parents demanded that their children should learn English language [2]. Thus, in spite of efforts by some individuals

among the missionaries, the British did not achieve a cohesive language policy for its colonial dependants until the turn of the presents century. As this went on, the value system began to erode. In the early twentieth century, a number of conferences and commissions of enquiries into the educational situation in Africa were sponsored by both the British Government and American Philanthropic organizations.

In 1911 and 1923, British government convened two imperial education conferences in London, African participants in both conferences expressed general dissatisfaction with the traditional English teaching in the African colonies. As a result of the complaints, both conferences adopted the resolution to the effect that “a child should not be allowed to learn English as a language until he has made some progress in the primary stages of instruction and has received a thorough grounding in his mother tongue”.

Given the above background, we can more fully appreciate [5] insistence that the unity of thinking, language, culture and education exists from childhood and accounts for the specific nature of human existence. He believes that the thinking of a child who knows how to speak is linguistic and always intellectual. His studies led him to the conclusion that there can be no thinking without speech and that, like language and education,

thinking which is culturally ordered is a social product.

[5] in [2] went further to say:

Lack of language and speech dooms a child to mental level of an imbecile and limited sustainable development. Paucity of language and speech limits the developmental possibilities of thinking. The growth of conceptual thinking in the child is doubtless associated with the sustainable development.

The implication of this is that sustainable development which comes through the use of language is one of the responsibilities of both the society and the school. In fact, each adult in his daily activities with children is constantly supporting and encouraging children's effort to talk, read and listen. Parents are concerned about the effectiveness with which their children can use language as learning, as well as a social tool. Every child's personal-social and educational adequacy is tied to his growing competence in using language to meet his needs [2].

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The deplorable value system of our state and Owerri Municipal Council in particular is in fact a common knowledge. However, a few of our leaders have shown concern and indignation over the situation with the aim of improving the quality of the nation's value system. It is in order to generate public awareness of

the dangers of value laxity to honesty, truthfulness, fair play, tolerance, courtesy, justice, sportsmanship, fairness, self-control, moderation, modesty, punctuality and regularity, devotion to duty, service, co-operation, dignity of labour, physical courage, moral and spiritual courage, patriotism, service to nation, loyalty, unity, communication, communalism, etc that we embark on this study.

Western interferences have negatively influenced our value system hence president Nyerere in [6] observed that "of all the crimes of colonialism, there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe that we had no indigenous culture of our own or that what we have was worthless or something of which we should be ashamed of instead of being a source of pride". It is based on the above challenges that we shall try to identify those cardinal values and principles behind them which can serve as the ideal at which to aim at.

#### **Area of the Study**

The study was carried out in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. It is one of the twenty seven (27) Local Governments Areas (LGAs) in Imo State. It is housing the seat of power in Imo State. Owerri Municipal Council has boundaries with Owerri West, OwerriNorth, Mbaitoli LGAs respectively. It is made up of the following communities; Umuororonjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche, Umuodu and

Umuonyima. It is generally made up of civil servants, politicians and academic institutions. It is the centre of Eastern heartland.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study is made up of all the 2,566 primary school teachers in 35 public schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

**Source:** Imo State Basic Education Board (2017)

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The researchers used simple random sampling technique to select one hundred and fifty (150) teachers for the study. This technique was used to give

everybody the opportunity of being selected [7], [8].

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The researchers used a nineteen item researchers made questionnaire title "Value Re-orientation, Language Development and Sustainable Development Questionnaire (VRLDSDQ)" to collect data for the study.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

The instrument which was made by the researchers was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation and another expert in psychology before it was administered on the respondents.

## **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected were analysed with standard deviation and mean statistics. Any result with the mean result of 2.5 and above was accepted while those with mean scores below 2.5 were rejected.

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of this study, the researchers raised the following research questions:

1. To what extent has value system degenerated at the primary school level in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State?

2. To what extent have primary school teachers assisted in the development of Igbo language as part of value reorientation?
3. To what extent have value re-orientation and language development among primary school pupils enhanced sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council?
4. To what extent has Western culture influenced value re-orientation for sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council?

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS****Table 1:** Mean rating on value degeneration at primary school level

S/N		VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
1	Teachers emphasize greetings to the elders on primary school pupils	40 (160)	23 (69)	35 (70)	52 (52)	150 (351)	2.34	Rejected
2	Lack of respect of parents by children start from primary school level	62 (248)	30 (90)	28 (56)	30 (30)	150 (424)	2.8	Accepted
3	There is a lot of examination malpractices even at the primary school level	68 (272)	47 (41)	31 (62)	14 (14)	150 (489)	3.26	Accepted
4	Parents start at the primary school level to aid indiscipline	98 (392)	42 (126)	3 (6)	7 (7)	150 (531)	3.54	Accepted
5	Parents and teachers do not start early to expose the children to already existing culture	100 (400)	30 (90)	8 (16)	12 (12)	150 (518)	3.4	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.0</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

In the table above, only item one of 2.34 means was rejected while items two to five with means of 2.8, 3.26, 3.54 and 3.4 respectively were accepted hence the grand mean of 3.0. The result therefore

shows that value system has degenerated to a great extent even at the primary school level in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, Nigeria

**Table 2:** Mean rating on language development as part of value reorientation

S/N		VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
6	Vernacular is emphasized at the primary school level	6 (24)	14 (42)	28 (56)	102 (102)	150 (224)	1.4	Rejected
7	National policy on education is encouraging language development at primary school level	58 (232)	38 (114)	21 (42)	33 (33)	150 (421)	2.8	Accepted
8	Parents allow children to speak Igbo both at home and at school for sustainable development	10 (40)	2 (6)	50 (100)	8 (8)	150 (154)	1.0	Rejected
9	The teachers penalize pupils who speak Igbo at primary school level	108 (432)	27 (81)	10 (20)	5 (5)	150 (538)	3.5	Accepted
10	Imo State is developing fast because of de-emphasise on vernacular at primary school level	18 (72)	9 (27)	25 (50)	98 (98)	150 (247)	1.6	Rejected
<b>Grand mean</b>							<b>2.06</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

Items 6, 8 and 10 with means of 1.4, 1.0 and 1.6 respectively were rejected while items 7 and 9 with means of 2.8 and 3.5 were accepted. The grand mean of 2.06

was got which implies that primary school teachers did not assist nor made efforts in the development of Igbo language as part of value re-orientation

**Table 3:** Mean rating on sustainable development with value re-orientation and language development at primary school level

S/N		VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
11	Honesty is sustained at the primary school level	80 (320)	40 (120)	11 (22)	19 (19)	150 (481)	3.2	Accepted
12	Primary school pupils do not tolerate themselves for a long time	69 (276)	53 (159)	15 (30)	13 (13)	150 (478)	3.1	Accepted
13	There is long standing patriotic attitude among primary school pupils	30 (120)	37 (111)	66 (132)	17 (17)	150 (380)	2.5	Accepted
14	Primary school pupils are consistently punctual and regular to school	51 (204)	38 (114)	31 (62)	30 (30)	150 (410)	2.7	Accepted
15	National consciousness is sustained among primary school pupils	48 (192)	51 (153)	33 (66)	18 (18)	150 (429)	2.86	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>2.8</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Items eleven to fifteen with mean results of 3.2, 3.1, 2.5, 2.7 and 2.86 respectively were accepted with the grand mean of 2.8. By this result, value re-orientation

and language development have improved sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, Nigeria.

**Table 4:** Mean rating on influence of Western culture on value re-orientation and sustainable development

S/N		VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
16	Western culture has eroded the value system at primary education level	101 (404)	25 (75)	13 (26)	11 (11)	150 (516)	3.44	
17	The use of English language in the teaching of many subjects at the primary school has negative impacts on sustainable development in Imo State	125 (500)	5 (15)	14 (28)	6 (6)	150 (549)	3.66	
18	The writing of most primary school subjects in English language has negative impacts on value re-orientation and sustainable development	96 (384)	35 (105)	12 (24)	7 (7)	150 (520)	3.4	
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.5</b>	

Western culture has to a very great extent influenced value re-orientation and language development among primary

school pupils in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, hence the means of 3.44, 3.66, 3.4 and grand mean of 3.5.

### DISCUSSION

**Research Question 1:** To what extent has value system degenerated at the primary school level in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State?

The result above revealed that value system has degenerated to a great extent even at the primary school level. This is in line with the opinions of [9] when they said that there is lack of discipline in virtually every sphere of life exemplified by the tendencies of recklessness and general lack of courtesy. There is lack of respect for law and order. The rampant avarice is a reflection of pervasiveness of

excessive materialism. Everywhere, even at the primary school level, there is the tendency of the children attempting to get rich quick even at the expense of the value system and neglect of the value re-orientation

**Research Question 2:** To what extent have primary school teachers assisted in the development of Igbo language as part of value re-orientation?

The grand mean of 2.06 above shows that primary school teachers did not assist in the development of Igbo language as part of value reorientation. This means that



the teaching of Igbo language at the primary school was not given the correct attention it deserves. This finding, agrees with the opinions of [2], [9] who stated that ..... from the days of the early missionaries until the present days, the question of what language should be used in the education of the child has remained unresolved. They further said that the education of the Nigerian child has gone on till today without a well articulated and meaningful implementation of language policy even at the primary school level.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent have value re-orientation and language development enhanced sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council?

The findings with grand mean of 2.8 shows that value re-orientation and language development have greatly enhanced sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council. This result is in consonance with the directive of [10] to all Head teachers that “the advantage and

indeed, the necessity of teaching the children to read their own language is in order to be useful to their parents and other country-men by reading the scriptures and religious tracks will be obvious. I give express instruction that this should be attended to in future”.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent has Western culture influenced value re-orientation in primary school for sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council?

From the result, it shows that western culture has to a very great extent influenced the value re-orientation and language development among primary school pupils in Owerri Municipal Council. This result is in line with the statement of Julius Nyerere in [6] when he said “of all the crimes of colonialism, there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe that we had no indigenous culture of our own or that what we had was worthless or something of which we should be ashamed of instead of being a source of pride”.

## CONCLUSION

Many parents and teachers under estimate what the children could do that might debase the culture and frustrate their progress in the development of language. By this study it has been concluded that value system has degenerated even at the primary school. This is evidenced by lack of respect to the elders, lack of respect to

law and order, excessive materialism, examination malpractice, etc.

Primary school teachers have not assisted in the development of Igbo language as part of value re-orientation. Igbo language has not been given the positive attention it deserves. Even at this 21<sup>st</sup> century, many primary school teachers do not

allow the pupils to speak Igbo language in the classroom and some parents have transferred their children from their schools to another for doing better in Igbo language examination than in English language.

Value re-orientation and language development have greatly enhanced sustainable development in Owerri Municipal Council. Western culture has to a great extent influenced value re-

orientation, language development and sustainable development in the primary school. Those western worlds still believe that our culture is worthless and something we should be ashamed of. Unfortunately, the primary school pupils, teachers and parents have not liberated themselves from this shackles of colonialism.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made;

1. Cultural and creative arts, citizenship education and Igbo language should be made compulsory in the primary school.
2. Primary school teachers should encourage the teaching of Igbo language in primary school. They should also re-orientate the pupils on the culture of Igbo people. Pupils should no longer be

punished for speaking Igbo in the classroom.

3. While we accept that Western culture has influenced our tradition, culture and values, it should not kill our culture to the extent that both the teachers, parents and pupils abhorre speaking Igbo language in the classroom. Our culture should not be regarded as inferior even in our own country, state and local government.

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