

UTILIZING MOTHER TONGUE POLICY FOR EFFECTIVE BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME: FOCUS ON LOWER BASIC IN YORRO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF TARABA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning in Nigeria is guided by National Policy on Education, which stipulates that lower arms of basic education should be taught in mother tongue of the learners so as to attain its objectives. However, the level of compliance with this stipulation calls for urgent examination of mother tongue policy in basic education schools in Yorro local government area of Taraba State. As a quantitative research, descriptive survey method was adopted and the population stood at eight hundred and ninety-nine (899) comprising parents and teachers in lower arms of Basic Education Schools in the study area. Whereas two hundred and seventy-seven (277) constituted the sample size derived through Taro Yainene Formula and self-developed questionnaire titled 'Mother Tongue Policy in relation to Basic Education Programme Questionnaire (MTPBEPQ)' was used as the instrument for this study. The instrument was pilot-tested on 20 respondents in Jalingo town and yielded 68% coefficient via Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Introduction:

There is a growing notion about mother tongue's involvement in teaching and learning of basic education across the globe. In fact, it is believed that children whose primary language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out of school or fail in lower basic education programme. According to UNESCO (2008a), children's mother tongue is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout elementary or lower basic education programme. That is, it is advantageous for children whose mother tongue's is the language of instruction as they are linguistically competent members of their families and communities and more connected with their cultural heritage. This explains why UNESCO encouraged mother tongue instruction in elementary education since

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Analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance (with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences-SPSS. The findings revealed positive and significant impact of mother tongue on children's communicative and cognitive skills in the lower arms of basic education in the study area. Among others, it was recommended that basic education programme should appreciate the language of its local communities so as to achieve its core mandate of effective communication among children in lower arms of basic education; and that there is every need to seek the services of qualified and experienced teachers in order to achieve core values of basic education. Based on the research findings, it could be inferred that as far as Yorro local government area of Taraba State is concerned, to a very large extent, mother tongue policy positively and significantly impact on basic education programme.

Keywords: *Mother tongue, basic education, communication, cognition, learners.*

1 953 (UNESCO, 1953) and UNESCO highlights the advantages of mother tongue education right from the start: children are more likely to enroll and succeed in school (Kosonen, 2015); parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning (Benson, 2012); girls and rural children with less exposure to a dominant language stay in school longer and repeat grades less often (Hovens, 2012; UNESCO Bangkok, 2015): and children in multilingual education tend to develop better thinking skills compared to their monolingual peers (Cummins, 2010). Simply put, mother tongue is essential to successful completion of basic education in all countries of the world.

In support of this, researchers in the field of education, linguists and educational psychologists have argued that only those countries where the children's first language is the language of instruction are likely to achieve the goals of Education for All (Benson & Kosonen, 2012); and likely to engage marginalized children in school through mother-tongue based (Yiakoumetti, 2012). In other words, mother tongue based education has a positive impact on educational and learning outcomes in most of the developing countries. Little wonder, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) expressed confidence in the use of first language in lower arm of basic education so as to promote local communicative skills and cognitive development of children. For Alikali and Lukman (2019), the language of community is an approved language of instruction at lower level of basic

education in Nigeria. To Benson (2012), mother tongue classroom encourages children to express themselves, contribute to discussions and develop their intellects as conversations are carried out in a familiar language. In this wise, children feel more satisfaction from the education system thereby reducing dropouts; and because learners are able to keep up with what is going on or at least feel they can ask questions where they do not understand, rates of failure and repetition decrease, preserve local or cultural heritage.

Evidently, adoption of a familiar language in class improves learning outcomes. For instance, where learners are instructed in a language that is familiar, learning outcomes are higher with increased efficiency and learners' participation in class. Perhaps, this justifies the position of (UNESCO) that the best medium for teaching at elementary or lower basic class is the mother tongue through which children understand and express themselves freely (UNESCO, 1953). This is because when the language of instruction is familiar, the teacher is able to use more active and effective teaching methods as well as instructional materials. Therefore, the use of mother tongue enables learners identify instruments which can be used to produce instructional materials in their immediate environment. For Baker (2011) and Cummins (2010), the use of familiar language to teach children facilitates an understanding of sound symbols or meaning symbols correspondence among young children. In this sense, the learner's psychological stress is reduced through the use of a language related to the learner's home language. However, Kioko (2008) observed that learners instructed in a new language from the start of schooling experience delayed or ineffective fluency especially in reading and spelling in the new language. Thus, teaching in any languages apart from first or mother tongue of the children at the lower arm of basic education makes education scary and school unfriendly to the children.

Of course, mother tongue or first language or native language or L1 is the language human beings acquire from birth, which is highly significant to the child's mental, moral, and emotional development. In fact, much of a child's future social and intellectual development hinges on the milestone of mother tongue (Plessis, 2008). Mother tongue, therefore, has a central role in education that demands cognitive development. Schick, de Villiers, and Hoffmeister (2012) in their study explain that language delays typically observed in deaf children are causally related to delays in major aspects of cognitive development. That is, children who cannot understand complex syntactic forms like complements have difficulty understanding how their own thoughts and beliefs may differ from

those around them. Consuelo (2012) further points out that with the preceding contentions about the importance of the first language is a critical that a teacher must play to fill in this gap, to give meaningful lessons and to create materials to intervene in order to develop a particular skills within the learners' context. The first paragraph of DepEd Order 74, series 2009 states that lessons and findings of various local initiatives and international studies in basic education have validated the superiority of the use of the learner's mother tongue or first language in improving the learning outcomes and promoting Education for All (EFA, 2010).

In the same vein, Jordan (2009) opined that a child will never learn a new language by scoring, ridiculing and forcibly erasing his first language. At the beginning of education, mother tongue instruction is very important not only to develop a strong educational foundation, but also to strengthen the cognitive development of learners. Unless the mother tongue is used in education, there is a big gap between the learner's home and the school. By developing literacy skills in the first language, mother tongue based education helps strengthen the first language and provides a smooth transition from L1 (first language) to L2 (national language) and or L3 (international language) to be used as a medium of instruction. In other words, the use of mother tongue enhances cognitive development of a child. Thus when mother tongue is used in lower basic class, such a way that is adequately structured and implemented as enshrined in National Policy on Education, cognitive development is improved.

Little wonder, Benson (2012) contends that mother tongue is essential for learning as part of intellectual ability. Plessis (2008) posits that much of a child's future social and intellectual development hinges on the milestone of mother tongue. In support of this position, a study by Njogu (2015), though done among pre-school children, revealed that mother tongue contributes positively towards the learning of the English language and both languages, that is, mother tongue (L1) and English (L2) nurture each other. Studies have also shown that literacy is important for long lasting lexical development and fluency (Baker, 2016). Therefore, the use of mother tongue language, which Kosonen (2009) compares to a safe bridge to be used to cross a river (education) enables the learners to move from home to school and get familiar with activities in the teaching and learning process. In view of this, according to the imagery by Kosonen, learners taught using English as a Second Language, lack the bridge, therefore, they either

swim or sink. However, the ones who swim successfully to the other side of the river are a minority.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that basic education remains a potential instrument for encouraging independent thinking among the learners. The curriculum for basic education at lower basic level emphasizes the importance of the individual's personal and intellectual development through mother tongue language as a medium of instruction. In fact, studies have shown that children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities. For instance, UNESCO (2008) revealed that learning in the mother tongue has cognitive and emotional value. Krishnaji (2010) revealed several psychological, social and educational experiments which proved that learning through mother tongue is deeper, faster and more effective. Also, Dumatog and Dekker (2013) contend that by using the learners' mother tongue in the classroom to teach subject content, the students' cognitive skills would be developed.

However, the level of compliance of teachers in basic education schools especially those at lower basic class in Taraba State in general and Yorro local government area in particular is yet unascertained. This is based on the feelings that there are numerous community languages and by extension variations of first languages in Taraba State. In fact, Yorro local government is the home of Mumuye folkloric whose community language is 'Mumuye' whereas their children are being compelled to learn in non-native language (either Hausa or English). It is therefore imperative for linguistics and educational researchers to unravel proficiency of children in their mother tongue in the face of second language adoption as language of instruction. It is against this background that this study investigates the impact of mother tongue policy on effectiveness of basic education programme for lower basic children in Yorro local government area of Taraba State.

Literature Review

There is no doubt that learning to speak in the mother tongue is very important for a child's overall development. Being fluent in the mother tongue, builds better communicative skills for the child. It also connects him to his culture, ensures better cognitive development, and aids in the learning of other languages. In other words, one of the core values of basic education is to facilitate effective communication among children especially in their native language (mother

tongue). Perhaps this explain why May and Kundert (2017) affirmed that school readiness requires skills in many areas, local vocabulary development inclusive. For Loeb, Fuller, Kagan and Carrol (2014), high-quality basic education has shown significant positive effects on native language and cognitive development of children.

Needless to say lower arms of basic education programme ensure mastery of many aspects of indigenous language such as speaking skills, pronunciation vis-à-vis diction through coordination of lips and tongue. According to Hughes (2018), the use of native language as a mode of instruction exposes children to indigenous language grammar acquisition via rules and regulation being imbibed on how language works and functions. Simply put, native language grammar emerges in lower arms of basic education programme.

In fact, a longitudinal study conducted by Alloway, Jones, Williams and Cochrane (2014) on the relationship between basic education and vocabulary skills using surveys and one-on-one testing with children between the ages of 5 and 8 at a British Elementary School. The findings revealed other factors that positively impacted on the development of native vocabulary skills such as educational books written in community language, home environment and parental interaction. The study underscored the fact that local educational books had a positive correlation with higher scores on native vocabulary assessments whereas non-educational book was associated with low vocabulary scores. It also indicated that children who had poor academic performance at age 8 sought out more non-native based activities, which had fewer learning opportunities in their context compared to educational progarmmmes designed and tailored towards their communities. Simply put, basic education programme specifically designed for children through the use of community language is capable of impacting positively on local language skills development. This is supported by Kirkorian (2016) who averred that young children are more successful in learning new words if they are involved in specific contextual interactions rather than children passively events unfold. Definitely, lower arms of basic education are amazing programmes for introducing young children to native language skills acquisition. Again, there is no doubt that children in lower arms of basic education are at developmental stage whereby every experience acquired influence on their cognitive skills. Little wonder, Olds (2009) argued that conducive learning environment given in a functional basic education programme helps development of unique and special abilities and talents in children. That is, basic

education programme is designed to build sense of individuality, uniqueness, and diversity of ideas and thoughts at early stage child development. For Daniel (2016), cognition involves a creativeness that is flexible with the ability to adapt and apply thoughts and ideas resulting in a successful outcome. Thus, the immediate and long-term benefits which basic education offers to children's cognitive skills cannot be over-emphasized.

For instance, Barr (2010) compared the relationship among the amount of child-directed versus adult-directed exposure at ages 5 and 7 and the cognitive outcomes at age 7. The study used Bracken Basic Concept Scale and showed that 7-year-old children who had higher levels of adult-directed activities exposure were rated to have lower executive functioning skills compared to those children who had low to moderate amounts of adult-directed activities exposure. It also indicated poorer cognitive skills for children who had high amounts of exposure to adult-directed activities compared to children who had less exposure to adult-directed activities at a younger age. This is because children are not given free hand to express themselves in the company of adults (out-side-school) but when they are in school, they mingle with their peers accordingly. Simply put, lower basic education programmes are meant for children and guided by education-related activities so as to positively impact on cognitive skills of children in their locality.

In the same vein, Myoungsoon (2010) conducted a research on Parent's Perceptions and Behaviours regarding children's cognitive development in Korea. The population of the study was 415 mothers with five to seven year-old children in Seoul, Korea. Out of which 128 mothers had children of five years old (mean age = 62.7 months, 75 boys and 53 girls), 138 had children at age of seven (means age =84.4 months, 70 girls and 68 boys). The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, which contained a total of 42-item developed by the researcher. The researcher sent as many as 600 questionnaires to 12 basic education schools in Seoul and 421 questionnaires were retrieved. The data collected were statistically analyzed by means, frequencies, t-test, Pearson correlation r and two-way ANOVA. Findings of the research showed that the mothers considered sending their children to basic education programme for viable cognitive formation. About 90% of the mother chose skill-related schools based on the child's sex. Surprisingly enough, 20% of the mothers responded that they considered their child's sex before enrolling them in basic education programme. The findings pointed that most of the mothers tended to support their children with educational books and relevant learning materials that were required for proper cognitive development.

Statement of the Problem

At this juncture, elementary or basic education is designed for all-round skills development of the children at younger age. Children through interactions with their parents, siblings, and adults acquire language and cognitive skills especially by way of imitation through folklore, tongue twisters, riddles and jokes, proverbs among others. These experiences in their locality no doubt help them to learn their language and develop appropriate cognitive skills. The above-mentioned values are easily imbibed by children through basic education programmes sited in every nook and cranny of Taraba State.

However, the language of instruction in most of the schools has become a source of concern to all and sundry. The National Policy on Education is emphatic on the language of instruction in lower arms of basic education across the nation so as to consolidate on communicative skills of the children in their immediate environment and build strong cognitive skills in them. In Yorro local government area of Taraba State, for example, most teachers in lower arms of basic school prefer the use of English or Hausa to Mumuye, which is the language of the community thereby divorcing the children from their immediate community. In fact, inability of teachers to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction may be responsible for low comprehension and outright poor attitude towards schooling among the children. Therefore, this study investigates the essential role of mother tongue policy in ensuring effective basic education programme in Yorro local government area of Taraba State.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims at examining the impact of mother tongue policy on effective basic education among children in lower basic education programme in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State. Succinctly, the study aims to ascertain:

- i. The extent at which mother tongue impact on communicative skills of children
- ii. The extent at which mother tongue impact on cognitive skills of children

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

- i. To what extent does mother tongue impact on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State?
- ii. To what extent does mother tongue impact on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of mother tongue on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of mother tongue on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Methodology:

Design

The study adopts descriptive survey research method. This is because descriptive survey research design is a research method which enables the researcher to obtain the opinions (i.e. mother tongue policy with respect to effectiveness of lower basic education programme) of a representative sample of a target population (parents and basic education teachers in Yorro L.G.A) so as to infer the perception or view of the entire population.

Population

This study comprises parents and teachers from all basic education schools in Yorro local government area of Taraba state. The Taraba State Teaching Service bulletin (2015) revealed eighty-four (84) teachers with one thousand four hundred and ten students (1,410) whereas it was gathered on the field that only eight hundred and fifteen (815) parents participate in parent-teacher-association (PTA) in Yorro local government area. On the whole eight hundred and ninety-nine (899) constituted the total population for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposeful sampling technique was employed to select only schools that offer basic education programme with their PTA members in Yorro local government area of Taraba State. Also, in response to good representativeness of the research participants, Taro Yainene Formula was used to determine the sample size for the study.

The Yaro Yainene Formula is $(n) = \frac{N}{1 + \frac{N(e)^2}{}}$

Where n = sample size

N = Population

e = level of significance

Therefore, the sample size stands at,

$$\frac{899}{1+899(0.0025)} = \frac{899}{1+2.2475}$$

$$\frac{899}{3.2475} = 276.6 \text{ or } 277$$

Hence, two hundred and seventy-seven (277) respondents formed sample size for this study.

Instrumentation

A self-developed questionnaire was administered to sample of two hundred and seventy-seven (277) respondents from six (6) basic schools in Yorro L.G.A,

Taraba State. The questionnaire is titled as “Mother Tongue Policy in relation to Basic Education Programme Questionnaire (MTPBEPQ)” was used as the instrument for this study. The likert scale type response pattern was provided to aid the respondents in ticking the appropriate box [√] that most describe their opinions. The MTPBEPQ consisted of 16 items and are rated in this order Very High Extent (VHE=4); High Extent (HE=3); Low Extent (LE=2), and Very Low Extent (VLE=1).

Validity and Reliability

The research questionnaire was given to two experts in the field of measurement and evaluation for face and content validity of the instrument. The Supervisor ascertained the items in this instrument in terms of structure and language accuracy to measure the variables of interest in the study, thereby ensuring the content validity of the research instruments. Also, a pilot study was conducted on 20 respondents in Jalingo town. Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Analysis was employed (*with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences-SPSS*) to determine the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire, which stood at 68% coefficient.

Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions with acceptance value of 2.50 and the null hypotheses were tested using PPMC at 0.05 level of significance (computation was done with SPSS package).

Data presentation

Table 1: Bio data of respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage %
Teachers	62	22.4
Parents	215	77.6
Total	277	100

The table above shows sixty-two (62) indicating twenty-two point four percent (22.4%) respondents who are teachers in basic education schools while the remaining two hundred and fifteen (215) representing seventy-seven point six percent (77.6%) respondents are parents of the children in basic education programmes. This means that majority of the respondents are parents who are familiar with their children level of mother’s tongue expression as well as their cognitive display outside the school.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	105	37.9
Female	172	62.1
Total	277	100

The above table indicates one hundred and five (105) respondents with thirty-seven point nine percent (37.9%) who are males and one hundred and seventy-two (172) respondents with sixty-two point one percent (62.1%) who are females. Thus, females are the majority of the respondents in this study.

Research Question 1: To what extent does mother tongue impact on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State?

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents with regard to extent at which mother tongue impact on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

N/S	Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Decision
1	Lower arms of basic education facilitate school readiness in children.	90	102	55	30	2.70	1.03	Accepted
2	It helps in boosting children's language acquisition.	89	112	45	31	2.81	0.88	Accepted
3	Children in lower arms are better developed in local vocabulary.	64	86	55	72	3.08	0.90	Accepted
4	It preserves indigenous language in its locality.	111	107	36	23	2.91	0.91	Accepted
5	Children develop sound local grammar through mother-tongue based education.	101	98	35	43	2.86	1.18	Accepted
6	Books written in native language are good source of information for children.	95	106	47	29	2.65	1.01	Accepted
7	Sound native grammar help in learning other languages.	99	84	49	45	2.80	0.89	Accepted
8	It helps in realizing core value of elementary education.	104	90	40	43	3.02	0.94	Accepted
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					2.85	0.96	Accepted

Table 3 showed that the respondents rating of items 1-8 were 2.70, 2.81, 3.08, 2.91, 2.86, 2.65, 2.80 and 3.02 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.88, 0.90, 0.91, 1.18, 1.01, 0.89 and 0.94. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50, the respondents rated all the items to a high extent indicating that, lower arms of basic education facilitate school readiness in children, it helps in boosting children's language acquisition, children are better developed in local

vocabulary, it preserves indigenous language, children develop sound local grammar, books written in native language are good source of information, native grammar helps in learning other languages as well as it helps in realizing core value of elementary education. The cluster mean of 2.85 and standard deviation of 0.96 were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that to a high extent mother tongue impact on communicative skills of children in Yorro local government area of Taraba State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does mother tongue impact on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State?

Table 4: Mean ratings of respondents with regard to extent at which mother tongue impact on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Item Description	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Decision
9 Basic education develops unique talents of children.	102	68	47	60	2.87	1.03	Accepted
10 Conducive learning environment brings children's special abilities to the fore.	80	87	60	50	2.94	0.93	Accepted
11 It instills sense of individuality in learners.	98	104	56	19	2.70	1.29	Accepted
12 It helps in building clear thought of mind.	90	95	60	32	2.67	0.97	Accepted
13 It offers immediate benefits towards children's cognitive development.	96	98	52	31	2.75	0.79	Accepted
14 It is normally guided by experts in order to develop cognitive skills in children.	104	86	36	51	3.15	0.91	Accepted
15 Children provided with relevant learning materials develop sound cognitive skills.	110	96	41	30	2.95	0.95	Accepted
16 Children express themselves in the midst of their peers better.	83	85	55	59	2.86	1.18	Accepted
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					2.86	1.00	Accepted

Table 4 indicated that the respondents rating of items 9-16 were 2.78, 2.94, 2.70, 2.67, 2.75, 3.15, 2.95 and 2.86 respectively with corresponding standard deviations of 1.03, 0.93, 1.29, 0.97, 0.79, 0.91, 0.95 and 1.18. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50, the respondents rated all the items to a high extent indicating that, basic education develops unique talents of children, it brings children's special abilities to the fore, it instills sense of individuality, it builds clear thought of mind, it offers benefits towards cognitive development, it is guided by experts,

relevant learning materials develop cognitive skills as well as children express themselves in the midst of their peers better. The cluster mean of 2.86 and standard deviation of 1.00 were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that to a high extent mother tongue impact on cognitive skills of children in Yorro local government area of Taraba State.

Research Hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of mother tongue on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Table 5: An “r” statistical table showing the relationship (a measure of impact) between Mother Tongue and Communicative Skills of Children

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>r-cal.</i>	<i>Sig. Value (p)</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Mother Tongue	277	17.32	3.52	239	0.352*	0.000	Reject H ₀
	277	17.53	3.12				

$$p = 0.000 > 0.05$$

Table 5 showed positive and direct relationship between mother tongue and children’s communicative skills in the study area. This was evidenced with a yield of the calculated “r” ($r\text{-cal.} = 0.0352$) at 239 degrees of freedom given that the obtained level of significance $p\text{-value } 0.000 > 0.05$ (*statistical benchmark*). Evidently, the positive relationship value yielded a statistically significance; by implication, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, hence, mother tongue based-education significantly impact on the communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A of Taraba State.

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of mother tongue on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Table 6: An “r” statistical table showing the relationship (a measure of impact) between Mother Tongue and Cognitive Skills of Children

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>r-cal.</i>	<i>Sig. Value (p)</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Mother Tongue	277	17.39	3.65				

Cognitive Skills	277	17.53	3.12	239	0.338*	0.000	Reject H_0
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$p = 0.000 > 0.05$

Also, from the table 6, a positive as well as direct relationship was observed between mother tongue and cognitive skills of children in the study area. This was evidenced with a yield of the calculated “r” ($r\text{-cal.} = 0.338^*$) at 239 degrees of freedom given that the obtained level of significance (p-value) is $0.000 < 0.05$ (*statistical benchmark*). The positive relationship value yielded a statistically significance; by implication, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, hence, mother tongue based-education significantly impact on the cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A of Taraba State.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one states there is no significant impact of mother tongue on communicative skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Evidences from table 5 revealed that r-cal values 0.0352^* and a p-value $>$ statistical benchmark of 0.05 obtained level of significance. Hence, there is a positive and significant impact of mother tongue on children’s communicative skills in the study area. In agreement with the current findings, researchers like Leob et al (2014), Kirkorian (2016), May et al (2017) as well as Hughes (2018) agreed that mother tongue based education aimed at attaining effective communication among children in their community language. In fact, Leob et al (2014) concluded that high quality basic education is a sine qua non for effective native language and cognitive development of children. Kirkorian (2016) argued fervently that children succeed in learning new words when they are actively involved in linguistic-contextual interactions/activities. For May et al (2017), school activities required skills in many areas, most especially in local vocabulary mastery. Hughes (2018) concluded that the use of native language as mode of instruction exposes children to indigenous language grammar acquisition via rules and regulation being imbibed on how language works and functions. Simply put, native language grammar emerges in lower arms of basic education programme.

Hypothesis two states there is no significant impact of mother tongue on cognitive skills of children in Yorro L.G.A, Taraba State.

Evidences from table 6 revealed that r-cal values 0.0338^* and a p-value $>$ statistical benchmark of 0.05 obtained level of significance. Hence, there is a

positive and significant impact of mother tongue on children's cognitive skills in the study area. In rendering support to the present study, researchers like Olds (2009), Barr (2010), Myoungsoon (2010) and Daniel (2016) affirmed that basic education is designed and tailored towards sense of individuality, diversity of ideas and thoughts at early stage of child development. For example, argued that conducive learning environment given in a functional basic education programme helps development of unique and special abilities and talents in children. For Barr (2010), lower basic education programmes are specially organized for children and guided by education-related activities in order to positively impact on cognitive skills of children in neighbourhood. In fact, Myoungsoon (2010) averred that parents enroll their children in basic education school for viable cognitive formation at early stage of life. In his submission, Daniel (2016) contends that cognitive skills enable children to have flexible mind with the ability to adapt and apply thoughts and ideas resulting in successful outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion in this study, it is appropriate to recommend that:

- ✓ Basic education programme should appreciate the language local communities so as to achieve its core mandate of effective communication among children in lower arms of basic education.
- ✓ Again, at lower arms of basic education, there is every need to seek the services of qualified and experienced teachers. This is based on the feeling that lower basic education programme is a special kind of education programme with specified objectives in order not to truncate the good intention behind the programme then qualified and adequate teachers must be provided.
- ✓ Also, teaching and learning at basic education especially at lower arms of the programme where books written in local languages are most germane to native grammar acquisition and promotion of cultural heritage. Thus, government and other stakeholders should encourage proliferation of book writing in local languages.
- ✓ Finally, government should create more awareness about basic education and its importance future leaders of Nigeria. Most importantly, it should

be made free and compulsory in order to encourage massive enrollment and diminish high dropout rates among school age children.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it could be inferred that as far as Yorro local government area of Taraba State is concerned, to a very large extent, mother tongue policy positively and significantly impact on basic education programme. In the course of this study, specifically, mother tongue policy helps in building native language and cognitive development of children in lower arms of basic education programme, which specifically assist in realizing the main objectives of basic education programme.

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