

Sociological Innovations and Improvisations for Learning Motivation in Nigeria Basic Education

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Abstract

The paper examines sociological innovations and improvisations for learning motivation in Nigeria Basic Education. Human and material resources for instructional delivery at this level of education have been always limited for effective teaching and quality learning among pupils and students in both public and private schools. Teacher service at this Basic Education is poorly remunerated. Mother tongue policy as a medium of instruction has been noted to be abused and decelerates quality learning among primary school pupils and junior secondary school students. Few teachers have been with strong-will for commitment to effective teaching in English Language and to motivate learners in their mother tongue and indigenous languages of the school immediate environment. Supervision of classroom instructions and inspection of school activities are less observed and as such, teacher attitude to work is much retarded. Proportion of teachers who are equipped with conceptual illustrations of abstract ideas and happenings in the society are not encouraging. Specialist teachers in English Language, Mathematics and Basic Science recruited for teaching service are always inadequate. The majority of teachers being recruited are therefore tasked upholding consistency in explanation and interpretation of terms in child's friendly local language of the school environment and consistency in reading comprehension with the pupils or students alongside several class activities, corrections and repeated teaching. The school management should intensify supervision of classroom instructions as well as school inspection on general activities of the learning environment.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, Conceptual Illustrations, Reading Comprehension, Class Activities, Supervision and Inspection

Introduction

Basic Education in Nigeria is borne out of alignment with the Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2) – Universal Primary Education – and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) – Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All - (Kabiru & Godwin, 2025; Ogolo et al., 2024). It is adapted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in 1999 and has been strengthened by the Act of Parliament assented in May 2004 as Universal Basic Education Commission Act (UBEC Act). The law makes Basic Education to be in ten (10) years, comprising one year of Pre-Primary Education, six years of Primary Education and three years of Junior Secondary Education (1-6-3). This Basic Education has been clearly stated in the law (FRN, 2004:2) and the Policy (FRN, 2013:4) to be ‘compulsory, free, universal and qualitative’ for every child in Nigeria to have access to public primary education and junior secondary education across the 774 Local Government Authorities, the 36 States of Nigerian federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Privatization policy in Nigeria has enabled private school operators to open and majority

of them adopt enterprise approach to managing operations of school activities at a profit. Many parents opt enrolment at categories of private schools than sending their children to public schools mostly believed to be inadequate of quality teaching and learning facilities. Politics of teachers supply, poor training, and poor remuneration of public-school teachers in inflation ridden economy have not been enhancing quality teaching and learning motivation among pupils and students of Basic Education (Adeleke et al., 2025, Chiemeka-Unogu, 2018). Low grades of private schools are also having hard times of managing bad debts of meagre school fees, poor teachers’ remuneration, teachers’ attrition and substandard teaching and learning in Basic Education in Nigeria. The incident of out-of-school children continues unabated largely due to economic hardship and wellbeing of people (Garba et al., 2024; Oyekan et al., 2023). English language has been the official language of Nigerian government and schools, borrowed from British colonial government and so, it becomes a second language to Nigerian children coming from various mother tongues which are over 500

tribes and dialects (FRN, 2022:2; Omoniyi, 2012).

Innovations and improvisations in Basic Education have been adduced to principally involve individualistic approach to teaching learners at their individual strides in class activities through questioning, explaining, discussion, group assignments, involving them in practical and other activities for their learning development (Garba & Akpen, 2022). Amos et al. (2015) present innovations in teaching to involve use of instructional materials, field trips and questioning technique with a viewing to promoting in pupils and students constructive learning through critical thinking and service learning in classroom and outside classroom experiences. Lyons and Bender-Salazar (2024) express social innovation education in three elements: empathy; locus of control; and speculative thinking. Empathy deals with moving learners away from their current personal learning capacity to enviable and practicable higher level of other learners. Locus of control refers to committed efforts of students in charting a career path by engaging in ethical behaviour and entrepreneurial skills. Speculative thinking has to do with problem solving skills on

emerging learning difficulties and challenges by collaboration with peers.

Friendly pedagogy with local contents and equipment improvised is acceptable to promote learning motivation and readiness among pupils and students with consequent view of laying solid foundations for Post-Basic Education and Tertiary Education. Therefore, this paper aims at addressing sociological innovations towards multidisciplinary approaches to education, innovation and sustainable futures of Basic Education in Nigeria. Some of the innovations and improvisations include use of mother tongue, locally conceptual illustrations, instructional materials and specimens, consistency in reading comprehension, syllable-focused phonics, consistency in class work and home work activities and continuous emphasis on parts of speech.

Use of Mother Tongue for Interpretation of Instruction

Mother tongue has been recognized as a medium of instruction across various localities of Nigeria as a federation. The policies have also recognized three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) to represent Nigerian languages taught in

schools and colleges (FRN, 2013; FRN, 2022). Basic Education learners between ages 4 and 15 are presumed to feel sense of belonging in delivering curriculum content when ideas passed to them in English are immediately followed with translation, interpretation and explanation in the languages the children are naturally conversant and socialized with. This goes a long way in having positive impact on affective domain of behavioural objectives of teaching, as the learners are inclined to developing interest, readiness and love for subject-matter being taught. Muruwei (2025) posits that mother tongue has been a veritable tool for cultural connection between learners and topics being taught in the classroom.

However, Nigerian Minister of Education, Dr. M. T. Alausa, on Wednesday, 12th November, 2025, declared cancellation of mother tongue as medium of instruction from National Language Policy (2022). He stated this at British International Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria, citing that certain regions of the country abuse the privilege of using indigenous languages as medium of instruction to Basic Education pupils and students. According to him, research evidences are abundantly congruent that

indigenous languages spoken during instructional delivery have reduced significantly premium which English Language should carry in teaching and learning process. Thus, failure in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) has been attributable to foundation weakness of English Language proficiency in Basic Education. Henceforth, English Language is approved as the sole medium of instruction to pupils and students, from primary education up to tertiary education in Nigeria (Balogun, 2025).

The Minister has not been able to give considerations to Vygotsky's Theory of Environment and Social Learning, cultural heritage for learning motivation, Nigerian languages development, national unity in diversity and clamour for decolonizing education system in Nigeria (Dawap & Vmamse, 2025; Banjo, 2020). In empirical findings, Ozoemana et al. (2021) uphold factors (in 4-point Likert scale) which do not affect successful use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Gwagwalada Area Council primary schools, Abuja. They are inter-tribal marriage (2.27), language of child's immediate environment (2.21) and occupational mobility of parents (2.21). As

for the factors affecting the use of mother tongue, multilingual nature of Nigeria (3.25, as in the three major ethnic groups overwhelming other tribes considered minorities in the society), prestige attached to English Language (3.21), first language of the teacher (3.19), pupils from different ethnic groups (3.24) and dominance of English textbooks as instructional materials (3.16), are agreed to be hindering teaching and learning in indigenous languages.

Yusuf et al. (2016) establish teachers' perception of mother tongue influence in the items 7 and 9 responded on four-point Likert as follows: 'the use of mother tongue stimulates pupils to be active in teaching-learning situation'; and 'mother tongue fosters teacher-pupils' relations'. The responses pooled 3.38 and 3.58 respectively to indicate strong relationship between mother tongue and quality learning development in English Language. Ethe et al. (2014) find that significant difference exists in favour of using Urhobo language to teach and give test to primary pupils in Basic Science both in urban and rural areas of Delta State, Nigeria.

However, one of the hindrances to successful implementation of the indigenous languages

policy as a medium of explanation and interpretation of English Language to basic learners has been indifferent attitude of teachers in committing to use of both local and official languages in the teaching process (Ewa, 2023). Rather, the local languages in public schools are over-spoken to them and so, the children attach less value and interest to speaking English. Many parents, in view of this happening, prefer sending their wards to private schools where they would speak more of English, regardless of the quality of grammar in the expressions in both spoken and written English there (Adamu, 2023). Another impediment against effective use of indigenous languages as a medium of explaining topics delivered in English language, in the various localities of Nigerian federation, has been poor supervision and inspection of teaching and learning activities during the working hours. Heads of schools with their assistants and education inspectors who are externally field staff are not adequately discharging their functions connected to classroom observations as lessons delivery is ongoing (Gazali, 2022; Ogunode et al., 2021). The teachers are then prone to less commitment to teaching in a way that does not motivates learning

readiness in pupils and asking the meaning of words that would necessitate explaining in local languages (Nwosu, 2021).

Locally Conceptual Illustrations

Teaching topics across various subjects at Basic Education requires using local examples that quickly appeal to children reasoning within their immediate environment for their better cognitive development and adequate responses to psycho motor expectations from them in terms of classroom activities, quiz, spelling competitions and love for prompt and regular attendance of class lessons. These examples cut across all subjects such as English language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Basic Science & Technology, Physical and Health Education (PHE), Agricultural Science, Home Economics, Creative Arts, Christian Religion Knowledge (CRK), Islamic Religion Knowledge (IRK) Nigerian Languages, among others. To make these conceptual illustrations feasible with local contents, many Nigerian authors have published textbooks with examples of objects, pictures and things which learners can see, reflect and respond without taking much time, as the teacher guides them with clear and simple expressions in the course of

explanations in English language as official language and necessarily interact with pupils or students in local languages of the ideas being passed (Yusuf, 2016; Ajibade & Elemi, 2012).

Specifically, things happening in our day-to-day existence are captured in the topics and subjects being taught as Social Studies, Civic Education and Religion (CRK & IRK). A lot of examples can be used in the classroom to explain certain concepts and terms of the topics (Raphael & Nwanekezi, 2018). Children must have been conversant with certain stories in scriptures in their local languages through places of worship and watching them in movie representations of those earlier generations. They also watch films through home videos and computer gadgets, conveying prior information about things which are contemporary issues in the country as a whole and how the people have been reacting as a culture (Odishika et al. 2020). It is however of serious concern that conceptual illustrations are not adequately and regularly observed in the nature of many teachers being produced and supplied to teachers' service in recent times. The many teachers on-the-job are no more patient to be enriched abundantly with logic of much

illustrations needed in demonstrating concepts and theories in topics being taught to pupils and students (Ewa, 2023). The bane of this situation is not far-fetched from government and societal low value placed on admission requirements for teacher education, poor remuneration, mediocrity in recruitment and supervising teachers on-the-job (Nwosu, 2021; Ogunode et al., 2021).

Local Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are teaching aids which teachers use in demonstrating concepts being taught in given topics in the classroom. They involve use of items within learners' environment by physically presenting them in explaining the topics being taught. These teaching aids have been referred to as visual aids, audio-visual aids, auditory aids and printed materials (Amos et al., 2015). Printed materials are textbooks are written by Nigerians in simple and clear pattern of Nigerian English while both the teachers and the pupils use the textbooks and workbooks (Ajibade & Elemi, 2012). The teacher reads out loudly in English comprehension while the pupils repeats after him. He writes on the white board or black board while the learners copy the notes in their exercise books. At certain times, he reads loud the note on the

board and points at each and every word, with a long ruler, by pronouncing correctly while the pupils and students listen attentively as they sit and watch on. Adeyemo (2024) has a survey of 29 head teachers and 348 teachers in Edo-South Senatorial District, Edo State. 65.52% of head teachers (19) and 65.52% of teachers (228) also affirmed availability of English textbooks and 100% of the teachers agreed further that there is availability of English workbooks for readership promotion and exercises among pupils.

Locally available items such as bottle crowns or cherry seeds are being gathered in counting for additions, subtraction, divisions and multiplications in lower primary Arithmetic. Cutting of oranges is useful in demonstrating fractions (Adefunke et al., 2023; Festus & Seraphina, 2013). Charts and drawings in cardboards are being displayed in flannel boards, within the classrooms and corridors, for psycho-physical internalization of specimens and their features in learners subsequently. These concrete operations with local items have a long way of building sense of belonging to learners' environment and solidifying their cognitive abilities up to abstract explanations and appreciation. Specimens are obtainable within localities of

learners and so, they are definitely going to be showing keen interest in topics to be taught in Agricultural Science, Basic Science and Technology, Creative Arts and Home Economics, with real objects they are naturally used to seeing and known in local names (Komo & Muhammad, 2025). Teaching these art and science subjects with concrete objects has potentiality of shaping and nursing minds of these young learners of what becomes their various ambitions because of love and value they must have attached to certain topics and subjects over others in the course of quality teaching and clear understanding gained (Udosen & Ekuinam, 2019).

Consistency in Reading Comprehension with Phonics

Reading begins with taking appropriate pronunciations and sounds of words in learners along with automatic reflection on their meanings. Further efforts enable reader to utter the words loudly to the hearing of listeners while correction of the sounds is offered where necessary. Reading in lower primary starts with two and three letter words being demonstrated like singing and drama. These words are then developed in short compositions and passages, relating stories of

happenings within learners' environment (Aramide & Adigun, 2024). Constant reading sharpens phonetic reading, understanding and fluency of responses from learners. Furthermore, it promotes their reasoning, accumulation of knowledge and intelligent development in social interaction. This task is repeatedly needed to be led by teachers for the whole ten-year period of Basic Education with efforts to instilling value of reading and strong cognitive development in pupils and students. The consistent efforts of teachers in readership promotion produce value in learners at their private times to pick books and attempt to read the content (Joan, 2020). Nevertheless, several teachers have not been adequately practising skills of repeated reading of compositions and passages to these learners. They hardly want to use full energy and be audible to the extent that passersby and audience at the corridor of the classroom can appreciate. They lack the patience of engaging many of the pupils competitively to read the passage while other pupils repeat after the one that is leading and being corrected by the teacher (Adamu, 2023). Sound reading, especially when the teachers and the pupils are standing, arouses interest and deactivates any form of

distractions from pupils, as the teacher navigates the pavement within the rows of the seat arrangement in the classroom. Only few teachers in the classroom have been upholding true reading practice and rehearsal towards literacy skills development and understanding in basic learners (Oyetunde et al., 2016). In regular reading of passages in the day-to-day teaching in English comprehension, coming across certain words which are non-familiar to pupils and students becomes an uphill task on how they are pronounced sounded. The teacher then comes in to lead the pupils or students by syllable pronunciation while the learners repeat after him. He repeats these words in syllable pronunciation to all pupils until many of them are able to grasp the technique of pronouncing and how the words are sounded correctly (Yusuf, 2016).

Consistency in Class Activities

Class activities begin with operating several examples in establishing practical understanding of the learners. This understanding of the learners is then tested in class exercises and home works, marking them and making corrections by involving bright pupils and students who get most of the questions attempted right, to lead the rest

members of the class. The two subjects which require constant practices in their various topics are English Language and Mathematics. Each of the topics in them has rules and steps to follow. So, adequate illustrations are expected to be led by the teacher. For professionalism and learning motivation among pupils and students, specialist teachers with capacity building and training, in each of English Language and Mathematics, are to deliver lessons in their respective periods allocated (Roseline et al., 2018). This specialization of teachers particularly in the two main subjects is not usually observed in schools. A teacher assigned as a classroom teacher is usually expected to teach both English Language and Mathematics, give classwork, mark the pupils' attempts of classwork, offer corrections and give assignments for further practice at home. Ejesi (2018), in quasi-experimental research, establishes significant difference in pupil achievement between those ones taught by specialist teachers and those ones taught by generalist teachers in English Language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Social Studies in Nnamdi Azikiwe Universal Primary School (both Awka and Nnewi campuses).

Specialization of teacher in English Language and Mathematics promotes better quality instructional delivery, better assessment of learners' achievement in classwork and assignments and better understanding of learners' weak areas to improve by corrections and repeated teaching, when necessary. As for English grammar, an aspect of English Language, adequate periods are required for constant teaching and drilling in topics and sub-topics in parts of speech by specialist teacher. Each of the parts of speech is to be thoroughly taught with a lot of exercises and assignments marked. The corrections should then be demonstrated in the class for the learners to take note and adjust for quality internalization of learning development and solid foundations in written and spoken English for Basic Education, Post-Basic Education and Tertiary Education.

Conversely, shoddiness and low quality of teachers' content in grammar and pedagogy do not allow most teachers recruited to thoroughly develop pupils' learning process in grammar and good command of expression in English Language being used to teach all other subjects. Ehiemere (2021), in a survey of 120 respondents, establishes

certain factors which justifies poor teacher practices in public primary schools in Aba North Local Government of Abia State, using 5-point Likert scale: irregular supervision of teachers in classrooms (3.64); poor teacher preparation and qualification (3.04); lack of seminar and workshop (4.28); delay in salary payment (4.04); lack of promotion as and when due (3.36). There has been low supply of single specialist teachers particularly in Basic Science and Technology (Chima, 2021; Okolo & Okafor, n. d.). Ekuri and Odey (2018) find proportion of public primary school teachers in Cross River State with specialization in: English Language as 11.27% (240 out of 2130); Mathematics as 2.49 % (53 out of 2130); Primary Science as 23.33% (497 out of 2130); Agricultural Science as 12.11% (258 out of 2130); Physical and Health Education as 6.95% (148 out of 2130); and Social Studies as 43.85% (934 out of 2130).

Conclusion

Locally sourced instructional materials and citing instances of happenings within Nigerian localities are veritable tools for prolonging quality teaching and learning motivation among pupils and students of Basic Education. Consistency in reading

comprehension and drilling in class exercises and assignments under the guide of specialist teachers have a long-term assurance in quality learning foundations among pupils and students being prepared for Post-Basic Education and Tertiary Education in Nigeria and worldwide. To motivate this learning process, the specialist teachers in English Language, Mathematics and Basic Science employed should be equipped with better abilities of translating terms and concepts in the indigenous languages of the school environment. By implication, specialist teachers with competence and who are native speakers of the school immediate environment are to be first line priority in teacher recruitment and teacher service. Teachers and learners are then to be strengthened in curricular activities by regular supervision and inspection of the monitoring teams for sustainable quality in Nigeria Basic Education.

Recommendations

i. Use of mother tongue as a medium of explanation and interpretation of terminologies in English Language should be vigorously sustained in Nigeria Basic Education. This becomes necessary for children to gain sense of belonging and

interaction in their foreign language learning environment, with a view to blending the general language of the locality with English Language. The head of school with his assistants is duty-bound in intensifying supervision of teachers in their classrooms and ensuring that they speak both English and local language of the immediate environment. To make this effort more practicable, the inspectorate teams from state ministry, its agencies and local government authority, should regularly visit schools without prior notice to them. This system has more potentiality of reawakening positive attitude in teachers for work and doing the right things at the right time of instructional delivery. These external inspectors should refrain from accepting gratifications in the name of fueling their vehicles, as this certainly compromises true inspectorate findings and necessary corrections to offer. They should be contented with the budget allocated and disbursed on inspectorate logistics.

ii. Basic Education management in Nigeria should emphasize use of specialist teachers in teaching English Language, Mathematics and Basic Science instead of traditional assigning one classroom teacher to

teach almost every subject offered. Specialization of teachers would enable better concentration on the topics to teach at certain periods allocated, better teacher's focus to mark pupils' or students' classwork and assignments with direction for corrections and repeated teaching, as the case may be, for clear understanding by the learners. Emphasis should be more laid on specialization of Basic Education teachers with larger proportions to each of English Language, Mathematics and Basic Science at recruitment and deployment to schools.

iii. Reading culture in English Comprehension should be relentlessly promoted in the classroom during teaching hours. The specialist teacher in English Language should be audibly leading while the pupils or students repeat after him. This exercise should be consistent if love for lessons and English as a second language are to be internalized and to promote quality learning development in them. The love for the English and class lessons in turn enables many learners' readiness to read out the passages while teacher should be ready to strengthen their correct pronunciation of technical words newly exposed to.

iv. Use of local instructional materials and specimens in teaching English Studies and Sciences should be sustained as those items are in the environment naturally with the learners. The items have a long way of appealing and arousing their interest towards quality learning development and understanding between indigenous belief and scientific proof of reality. More foundation understanding from these local instructional materials and specimens has propensity of deepening future scholars among them into scientific researches and advance more discoveries for quality learning and human development.

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