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**ASSESSING THE EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY IN PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the extent of Implementation of the Language Policy in Public and Private Primary Schools in Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 236, 121 public and private primary school teachers in Rivers State. The sample was 400 primary school teachers in Rivers State selected using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Implementation of the Language Policy Questionnaire" (ILPQ). The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Language Education. A test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, and reliability coefficient index of 0.83 was obtained. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the corresponding null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the implementation of the language policy is low in both private and public schools in Rivers State although, there is no significant difference in the extent to which the policy is implemented in both public and private schools. Also, the extent to which the policy is implemented in both rural and urban primary schools is low but schools in rural areas pay more attention to the implementation of the language policy than those in urban areas. It was equally revealed that teachers in both public and private primary schools demonstrated poor and lukewarm attitude towards the implementation of the language policy. It was recommended among others that government and educational authorities should establish standardised monitoring and evaluation frameworks; in urban areas children should be exposed to the language of the immediate environment they live; sensitisation programmes should be regularly organised to awaken in the teachers the consciousness of implementing the language policy.

Keywords: *Language, Language as Medium of Instruction, Language Policy, Implementation of the Language Policy.*

Introduction

The education system in Rivers State, like most states in Nigeria, has been influenced greatly by colonial legacies that prioritised English over indigenous languages. Post-independence efforts to integrate indigenous languages into the educational curriculum have met with varying degrees of success (Igudia & Jimoh, 2023). Currently, the teaching of indigenous languages in Rivers State is marked by several challenges amongst which are: scarcity of qualified teachers proficient in both the language and pedagogical skills required for effective instruction; limited educational resources such as textbooks and multimedia materials; societal preference for English due to its perceived socio-economic benefits; etc.

The multilingual complexity of Rivers State further complicates language education efforts. The numerous indigenous languages with their unique linguistic features, pose challenge. It makes it difficult to develop standardised curricula and teaching materials that cater to the linguistic needs of all communities effectively. Moreover, urbanisation and globalisation worsen the situation by promoting a shift towards dominant languages, notably English (Emenanjo, 2016; Simpson, 2008). This linguistic shift marginalises indigenous languages, as younger generations increasingly adopt English as their primary mode of communication.

The gap between policy intentions and practical implementation are evident in the continued predominance of English as the language of instruction in many schools, contrary to policy mandates (Bamgbose, 2011). Implementation often reflects differing objectives, resources, and socio-political pressures. Implementation of the Language Policy in public schools for instance, largely adheres to the guidelines set by the Nigerian government, which emphasize the use of indigenous languages in early education, alongside English, the country's official language. However, the commitment to indigenous language instruction in public schools is limited by a lack of resources, qualified language teachers, and standardised curricula, leading to inconsistent application across various regions. In private schools however, English-language instruction is prioritised due to the perceived global and economic advantages it confers on learners. Parents, particularly in urban areas, often prefer private schools because they emphasise English, which is seen as essential for academic and career success. Many parents who send their children to private nursery and primary schools expect them to be taught in English even at the pre-primary level (Ogbonyomi, 2003; Adegbija, 2004; Bamgbose, 2019; Igboanusi, 2021).

The differing approaches to the Language Policy in public and private schools illustrate broader societal dynamics in Nigeria where economic, cultural, and political factors shape education. Public schools align more closely with national cultural policies, though not without limitations due to resource constraints. In contrast, private schools cater to the demand for English, reflecting parental priorities and the globalised economy's influence. These differences underscore the complex interplay between government policy, socioeconomic factors and educational practices in Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape (Bamgbose, 2019; Igboanusi, 2021).

The implementation of language policy in Nigeria varies significantly between rural and urban schools, primarily due to socio-cultural, infrastructural, and administrative factors. Rural schools are more inclined to implement language policies that promote the use of indigenous languages in teaching and learning. This inclination stems from the fact that rural communities are often homogenous, with a dominant local language spoken by both teachers and students. Rural

schools align with this directive more effectively, as the shared linguistic environment simplifies the integration of indigenous languages into educational activities.

Conversely, urban schools face greater challenges in implementing language policies centred on indigenous languages. Urban areas are typically more linguistically diverse, with a mix of ethnic groups and languages represented in classrooms. This diversity makes it difficult to adopt a single local language for instruction. Instead, English, as the official language and lingua franca, becomes the default medium of instruction in urban schools (Ochoma, 2015; Bamgbose, 2011). The preference for English in urban schools reflects societal perceptions of English as a language of prestige and upward mobility, which further limits the practical implementation of indigenous language policies in these settings.

Moreover, the proximity of rural schools to the cultural and linguistic roots of their communities enhances their ability to integrate local languages into the curriculum. In many rural areas, local languages are not only spoken at home but also serve as the medium of communication in social and community activities. Teachers in rural schools, who are often members of the same community, are fluent in the local language and can effectively use it for teaching (Igboanusi, 2021). This creates a seamless connection between students' home and school environments, fostering better comprehension and engagement in the learning process. Urban schools, however, lack this advantage due to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students and teachers.

The attitude of teachers towards the implementation of the language policy in Nigeria is a crucial factor that influences the effectiveness of the policy. Teachers play a central role in the educational system, and their perception of the language policy significantly impacts its success. Some studies suggest that many teachers in Nigeria exhibit a mixed attitude towards the language policy, with some being supportive and others indifferent or resistant. This variance is often attributed to the perceived relevance of indigenous languages in the modern educational context, where English is seen as the dominant language of instruction and global communication (Aina & Ajiboye, 2021). One of the important factors shaping teachers' attitudes is the adequacy of training and resources provided for the implementation of the language policy. In many cases, teachers lack the necessary training to effectively use the indigenous languages, leading to a lack of confidence and enthusiasm in implementing the policy.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) emphasises the importance of mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in early childhood education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). 'Mother tongue' and 'language of immediate environment' are embedded in indigenous language. The perceived status and value of indigenous languages within the broader societal and educational framework is crucial to the successful implementation of the language policy. English, up till date, is regarded as the language of upward mobility and success, while indigenous languages are sometimes viewed as less prestigious or relevant. This study focuses on the extent of implementation of the language policy in Rivers State.

Language

Language is an indispensable instrument in human communication and interaction. It is an important symbol of social identity, and people tend to attribute more solidarity to members of their own linguistic community, especially when that community is characterised by high or increasing vitality (i.e., status, demographics, institutional support). Language plays a crucial role for people and for the planet, in which diversity: cultural, linguistic, biodiversity and otherwise is a

human condition and feature that is manifested in different ways and across different economic, political, environmental, social, and cultural domains and historical contexts, regardless of affiliation or residence. Indigenous Peoples sustain vast majority of the world's languages in use.

Language is social phenomenon and as such it is closely tied up with the social structural and value systems of the society. It is the only avenue through which human beings communicate their thoughts and feeling to their fellow human beings (Anyanwu & Yusuf, 2017; Opoola, 2010 in Afe & Olusa, 2012). Language is the basic factor for effective communication in any setting, be it school or other social settings. Language is a particular phenomenon that is common to all mankind. The fundamental function of a language in any society is its use as a tool in interaction. It enables humans to use their linguistics abilities to communicate knowledge, ideas, desire, skills and information in spoken or written forms. It is a tool for development. It is used as the medium of communication, learning and transmission of culture from one generation to another. Language is generally defined as a system with which social groups co-operate and interact which helps in the formation thoughts and feelings.

Language as a Medium of Instruction

Language is the most powerful tool of learning. It serves a crucial role in the teaching/learning process as all the educational messages the teacher has to pass on to the learner are encoded in language. How far a learner is able to learn depends very much on his ability to grasp and understand a spoken utterance in the language in which the instruction is passed on to him, that is, the medium of instruction academia (Ochoma, 2015). The impact of language on overall learning and academic performance is a critical aspect that cannot be overlooked as emphasized. Language serves as the fundamental medium through which information is shared, playing a pivotal role in shaping learning experiences.

Language, as a medium of instruction, has for long been a controversial issue in Nigeria. Being a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation with over 500 indigenous languages spoken within its borders, Nigeria is bedevilled with language problem. This has attracted the attention of many stakeholders in education and triggered interesting debates in the (Blench, 2002 in Ibrahim, 2021). To this end, the English language has ever occupied the official domains and the lives of the colonised Nigerian populace. Therefore, as schools were built to teach western education, the language became a prestigious language in the land. In 1882, the colonial government intervened in the system by promulgating a law that made English the language of instruction at schools and as a subject that must be taught at all stages of educational growth. However, there is a language policy that is expected to be effective in all the states in Nigeria.

The Language Policy

Language policy in Nigeria has been shaped by the country's diverse linguistic landscape, with over 500 indigenous languages spoken across its regions (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). The Nigerian government has recognised the importance of promoting indigenous languages alongside English, the official language, to preserve cultural heritage and foster national unity. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) it emphasises the use of indigenous languages in the early years of schooling, advocating for mother tongue instruction in pre-primary and primary education. The provision is excerpted below:

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects (p.16).

Haven passed through many stages, language policy on education is a pressing contemporary concern in the highly multi-ethnic and multilingual Nigerian nation, with about 500 indigenous languages spoken within its borders. Despite the policy statement, its implementation faces numerous challenges, ranging from lack of material and human resources, to negligence and limited support from local communities, etc.

Implementation of the Languages Policy in Rivers State

The experience in Rivers State as regards the implementation of the policy is peculiar. Being located in the Niger Delta region, Rivers State is home to several indigenous languages such as Ikwerre, Kalabari, Ogoni, Ekpeye, etc. These languages are integral to the cultural identity and heritage of the people. A typical classroom in Rivers State particularly in an urban setting is linguistically mixed. The learners may not be conversant with the language of the immediate environment. This poses a great problem in implementing the policy.

Even though the policy aims at promoting indigenous languages alongside English, various issues persist, resulting in a notable gap between policy intentions and practical outcomes. Amidst inadequate funding and resource allocation, policy inconsistencies across different regions and schools, and the like as issues that impede the successful implementation of the policy ((Ogunnaike, Dunham, & Durojaiye, 2015; Bamgbose, 2011; Adegbija, 2004), school type (public, private), school location (urban, rural), and teacher's attitude significantly influence the implementation of language policy in Nigeria generally and in River State in particular.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were posed:

1. To what extent is the language policy implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent is the language policy implemented in Urban and Rural primary schools in Rivers State?
3. What is the attitude of teachers in public and those in private primary schools towards the implementation of the language policy in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in urban and rural primary schools in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers in public and those in private primary schools in the implementation of the language policy in Rivers State.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 236, 121 public and private primary school teachers in Rivers State, with a total of 78,707 male and 157, 414 female teachers in public and private primary schools (Rivers State Universal Basic Education, 2023).

The sample size for the study consisted of 400 primary school teachers in Rivers State comprising of 214 male teachers and 186 female teachers with 251 from urban schools while 149 were from rural schools. The sample for the study was selected using the stratified random and systematic sampling techniques. The stratified random sampling technique was adopted in the study to ensure a comprehensive and representative selection of participants across different subgroups within the population. Given the diverse linguistic, educational, and demographic composition of Rivers State, stratification allowed the researcher to categorise the population into relevant strata, such as rural and urban schools, public and private institutions, and different educational levels, thereafter, the systematic sampling technique was used to select the sample for each category. This approach ensured that each subgroup was adequately represented, reducing sampling bias and enhancing the generalisability of the findings.

A researcher-designed questionnaire titled “Assessing the Extent of Implementation of the Language Policy Questionnaire (AEILPQ) was used to gather data for the study. The test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument and the reliability index value of 0.83 was attained. All the items were responded to on a 4-point modified Likert Scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE), weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively.

Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents personally by the researcher with the help of two research assistants who were instructed on the modalities for the task of distribution of the instrument. The researcher and the assistants retrieved the copies of the instruments after the teachers have responded to the items on the spot and some were retrieved on later date. However, on collection and collation, 392 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and retrieved, which gave rise to 98% retrieval rate.

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent sample t-test was used to test the corresponding null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In answering the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 was used in taking decision. Thus, $1+2+3+4/4 = 2.50$; any mean value up to and above 2.50 were considered as High Extent/ Agreed while any mean value below 2.50 were considered as Low Extent/ Disagreed.

Result

Research Question One: To what extent is the language policy implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Extent to which language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools							
Public= 156 Private = 236 (n=392)							
S/N	Items	\bar{X}_1	$S.D_1$	\bar{X}_2	$S.D_2$	Mean set	Remark
1	The language policy is fully implemented in private schools.	1.70	0.91	1.61	0.78	1.65	Low Extent
2	Public schools adhere strictly to the provisions of the language policy.	2.18	0.38	2.21	0.41	2.20	Low Extent
3	Adequate resources are provided for implementing the language policy in private schools.	1.16	0.68	1.00	0.00	1.07	Low Extent
4	The language policy is better monitored in public schools.	2.55	1.40	2.60	1.33	2.58	High Extent
5	The language policy ensures that students are taught effectively.	2.02	0.71	1.91	0.69	1.96	Low Extent
6	Teachers in private schools are trained to implement the language policy effectively.	2.38	0.57	2.26	0.57	2.31	Low Extent
Grand mean		1.99	0.77	1.93	0.63	1.96	Low Extent

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Legends:

\bar{X} : Mean

$S.D$: Standard Deviation

n : Number (sample size)

Scales:

1.00 - 2.49: Low Extent

2.50 - 4.00: High Extent

Data on Table 1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State. The result shows that the implementation of the language policy is low in both private and public schools, despite better monitoring in public. The overall mean score of 1.96 shows that to a low extent the language policy is implemented in both public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent is the language policy implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State.

Extent to which language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools							
Rural= 149 Urban = 243 (n=392)							
S/N	Items	\bar{X}_1	$S.D_1$	\bar{X}_2	$S.D_2$	Mean set	Remark
7	Rural schools pay more attention in the implementation of the language policy than urban schools.	2.19	0.57	2.05	0.50	2.11	Low Extent

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8	Urban schools face more challenges in implementing the language policy due to language diversity	1.85	0.74	1.87	0.65	1.87	Low Extent
9	Teacher in rural areas can effectively use local languages for teaching than their urban counterparts.	1.62	0.93	3.52	0.75	2.57	High Extent
10	Teacher in rural areas are fluent in the local language than their urban counterparts.	2.11	0.60	2.21	0.55	2.17	Low Extent
11	The implementation of language policy is more in rural public schools.	2.19	0.53	2.05	0.52	2.11	Low Extent
12	Rural schools prioritise the use of indigenous languages as prescribed by the language policy than urban schools	2.29	0.45	2.26	0.44	2.28	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.04	0.63	2.32	0.56	2.18	Low Extent

Legends 1 Apply.

Data on Table 2 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation on the extent the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State. The result shows that schools in rural areas pay more attention to the implementation of the language policy than those in urban areas. Also, teachers in rural areas can effectively use local languages for teaching than their urban counterparts. Schools in urban areas schools face more challenges in implementing the language policy due to language diversity. Schools in rural areas schools prioritise the use of indigenous languages as prescribed by the language policy than urban schools as indicated in the result on item 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 with the mean set scores of 2.11, 1.87, 2.17, 2.11 and 2.28 respectively. The overall grand mean set score of 2.18 shows that the extent to which the policy is implemented in both rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State is low.

Research Question Three: What is the attitude of teachers in public and private primary schools towards the implementation of the language policy in primary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation on the attitude of teachers in public and private primary schools towards the implementation of the language policy in primary schools in Rivers State.

Attitude of teachers in public and private primary schools towards the implementation of the language policy Public = 156 Private = 236 (n=392)							
S/N	Items	\bar{X}_1	$S.D_1$	\bar{X}_2	$S.D_2$	Mean set	Remark
13	Teachers in private schools are less enthusiastic about implementing the language policy.	2.28	1.30	2.93	1.10	2.93	High Extent
14	Public school teachers do not believe the language policy is beneficial to students.	2.26	1.09	2.9	1.09	2.90	High Extent
15	Teachers view the language policy as a burden rather than an opportunity.	2.63	1.16	3.01	1.09	3.01	High Extent
16	Teachers are not motivated by incentives to implement the language policy.	2.57	1.19	2.63	1.12	2.63	High Extent
17	Teachers in public schools are more zealous in implementing language policy than those in private schools.	3.06	1.07	2.82	1.00z	2.82	High Extent
18	Training on the language policy do not positively influences teachers' attitudes	2.94	1.12	2.99	0.92	2.99	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.62	1.15	2.88	1.05	2.75	High Extent

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Data on Table 3 shows the mean ratings and standard deviation on the attitude of teachers in public and private primary schools towards the implementation of the language policy in primary schools in Rivers State. The result shows that teachers in private schools are less enthusiastic about implementing the language policy. Teachers in both public school teachers do not believe the language policy is beneficial to students, and they view the language policy as a burden rather than an opportunity. The grand mean set value of 2.75 shows that to a high extent, the attitude of teachers in both public and private schools does not enhance the implementation of the policy.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

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Table 4: T-test analysis of mean difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Groups	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Sig	Df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)/ P-value	L. of Sig.	Decision
Public	156	1.99	0.77	.278	390	.086	.931	0.05	Accepted
Private	236	1.93	0.63						Not Significant

n= 392

Level of significance = 0.05

Legends:

n : Number of respondents
 \bar{X} : Mean
 S.D : Standard Deviation
 0.05 : Cut-off Level of significance
 df : Degrees of freedom

Data on Table 4 shows summary of subjects mean, standard deviation and t-test of difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State. From the data above, since the Sig. value. = .278 > 0.05, the t-value and 2-tailed value of Equal variances assumed is chosen. t = .086, P-value = .931, df = 390, P > 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted because the p-value of .931 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, hence there is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: T-test analysis of the mean difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State.

Groups	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Sig	Df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)/ P-value	L. of Sig.	Decision
Public	156	2.04	0.63	.406	390	1.067	.287	0.05	Accepted
Private	236	2.32	0.56						Not Significant

n= 392

Level of significance = 0.05

Data on Table 5 shows summary of subjects mean, standard deviation and t-test of difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State. From the data above, since the Sig. value. = .406 > 0.05, the t-value and 2-tailed value of Equal variances assumed is chosen. t = 1.067, P-value = .287, df = 390, P > 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted because the p-value of .287 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, hence there is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers in the implementation of the language policy in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: T-test analysis of the mean difference in the attitude of teachers in the implementation of the language policy in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Groups	n	\bar{X}	S.D	Sig	Df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)/ P-value	L. of Sig.	Decision
Public	156	2.62	1.15	.505	390	.857	.392	0.05	Accepted
Private	236	2.88	1.05						No Significance
n= 392									

Level of significance = 0.05

Data on Table 6 shows summary of subjects mean, standard deviation and t-test of difference in the attitude of teachers in the implementation of the language policy in public and private primary schools in Rivers State. From the data above, since the Sig. value. = .505 > 0.05, the t-value and 2-tailed value of Equal variances assumed is chosen. t = .505, P-value = .392, df = 390, P > 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted because the p-value of .392 is greater than 0.05 level of significant, hence there is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers in the implementation of the language policy in public and private primary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Implementation of Language Policy in Public and Private Primary Schools

The result of this study shows that the implementation of the language policy is low in both private and public schools in Rivers State. This is in contradiction with the findings of Adegbite (2019) that public schools in Nigeria are more likely to implement government language policies due to direct supervision and funding by the government, while private schools prioritise flexibility and market demands. In the same vein, the findings disconfirm the findings of Eze and Nnamdi (2021) who reported a significant difference in the adherence to language policies between public and private schools in South-South Nigeria, attributing this to varying administrative structures and oversight mechanisms.

Implementation of Language Policy in Rural and Urban Primary Schools

Findings from the study show that the extent to which the policy is implemented in both rural and urban primary schools in Rivers State is low. However, schools in rural areas pay more attention to the implementation of the language policy than those in urban areas. This result is in agreement with Adegbija and Emenanjo (2020), who found out that schools in rural areas in Nigeria are more committed to implementing indigenous language policies due to the homogeneity of their populations and limited exposure to alternative languages. The result also aligns with the findings of Okonkwo (2021) who observed that urban schools face challenges such as diverse linguistic demographics and administrative emphasis on English as a medium of instruction, which hinder effective policy implementation. This may not be far from the fact that teachers in rural areas can effectively use local languages for teaching than their urban counterparts and thus prioritise the use of indigenous languages as prescribed by the language

policy than urban schools. Moreover, schools in rural areas as a result of their proximity to indigenous linguistic and cultural settings, may implement the language policy more effectively than their urban counterparts. Urban schools face challenges such as linguistic diversity and societal pressures that limit their ability to integrate indigenous languages into teaching and learning processes. The test of hypothesis two however, indicates that there is no significant difference in the extent to which the language policy is implemented in schools in urban and rural areas.

Attitude of Teachers in Public and Private Primary Schools towards the Implementation of the Language Policy

The findings of this study reveal that teachers in both public and private primary schools in Rivers State demonstrated poor and lukewarm attitude towards the implementation of the language policy. This is in agreement with the findings Adebayo and Oyetade (2019) who found no significant difference in teachers' attitudes across school types towards the use of indigenous languages in primary education in south western Nigeria. This suggests a shared understanding and approach among teachers across these school types regarding the importance and application of the policy in their teaching practices. This is however, contrary to the findings of Okonkwo and Nnadi (2021) who found out that teachers in both public and private schools in Enugu State exhibited a high level of commitment to implementing the national language policy, driven by a common recognition of its importance in promoting cultural preservation and educational development.

The test of hypothesis three confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference in the attitude of teachers in public and private schools towards the implementation of the language policy. This finding implies that irrespective of the school type, teachers' perspectives on the policy's relevance and execution are largely uniform, which may be influenced by their shared professional training and exposure to similar educational standards.

Conclusion

A country's educational system is greatly influenced by its language policy. This is especially true in a multilingual country like Nigeria. Implementing the Nigerian's language policy in Rivers State is a herculean task, considering the multilingual nature of its classrooms. English language remains an alternative and a dominant language of instruction at virtually all the levels of education, the policy statement notwithstanding. To ensure full compliance, the effort of all stakeholders is a necessity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government and educational authorities should establish standardised monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure uniform implementation of the language policy across both public and private schools.
2. In urban areas where it may be difficult to have learners from a uniform linguistic background, as much as possible, children should be exposed to the language of the immediate environment they live. Moreover, teachers should be deployed to areas that they are proficient in the use of the language of the immediate environment.

3. Sensitisation programmes should be regularly organised to awaken in teachers the consciousness of implementing the language policy. This will go a long way in changing the attitude of teachers towards the implementation of the language policy.

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