

# Implications of Multilingual Education on Teaching and Learning in Culturally Diverse High Schools in Africa

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## Abstract

The need for the use of two or more languages as media of instruction in high schools in Africa cannot be over-emphasised in the education sector. This is because the present knowledge society demands the use of different teaching and learning methods in achieving the educational potentials of students. Based on this therefore, multilingual education is the key for cultural reasoning, which enables students to decipher concepts easily and meet their goals in life. This study focused on multilingual education as a pedagogical approach in improving learners' learning outcomes. It had two main objectives: to explore the benefits of multilingual education, and to examine the challenges inherent in multilingual education in culturally diverse high schools in two Cities of Kenya and Nigeria. The study adopted mixed methods research paradigm, specifically, the convergent parallel triangulation design. It targeted teachers and students. The sample size of the study consisted of 40 teachers and 100 students. The study employed simple random and purposeful sampling techniques in selecting the schools and participants of the study. The researchers used interview guide and questionnaire for data collection. For data analysis, the researchers transcribed the interviews, coded the data, categorised the data, derived themes from the categories, interrelated the themes, and interpreted the meaning of the themes; then related them to the quantitative data. For the quantitative data, they focused on the descriptive statistics. The Findings of the study showed that multilingual education, which is the use of multiple languages in the process of teaching and learning for easy comprehension of concepts is beneficial to the education sector. Therefore, it should be encouraged and promoted. However, that teacher factor is the main challenge that the phenomenon is faced with. The study then recommended that in-service training of teachers and proper monitoring of the education policy on the application of multilingual education should be strictly adhered to.

**Keywords:** Multilingual education, pedagogy, diverse culture, learning outcome, Africa.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is part of culture, the people's way of life. As Musa [1] emphasised, language is related to other components of culture such as values, beliefs, and norms. Many African nations are multilingual by nature. Kenya and Nigeria are not exceptions: they are officially recognised as multilingual nations [2, 3]. Okal [4] defined multilingualism as speaking more than one language competently. Suleh and Osuji [5] have defined multilingualism as the act of using or promoting the use of multiple languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers.

However, the researchers of this current study operationally define multilingualism as the use of two or more languages as media of instructions in High Schools in Africa. They also define it as, the use of different communicative teaching and learning methods

in achieving the educational potentials of students. Drawing from these definitions, we can emphatically state that Kenya and Nigeria are multilingual nations because many of their citizens can speak more than two languages.

In Kenya for example, the citizens embrace multilingualism. English is spoken as an official language and Kiswahili as both national and official language. Additionally, indigenous languages constitute over forty tribes [4]. The government of Kenya's language in education policy indicates that local languages are to be used as languages of instruction for the first three years of primary education and English is to be taught as a subject from primary one and then used as a language of instruction from primary four [6].

In Nigeria also, the promotion of multilingualism in the education sector is enshrined in

the National Policy on Education. In this policy, FRN [7] stated that the medium of instruction in the primary school should be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. Then 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. Furthermore, at secondary level, English should be the language of instruction, while the language of the immediate environment, one of the three major Nigerian languages; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, other than that of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as school subjects.

Arguing from this assertion, it is worth noting that a student's capacity to use language in a wide variety of ways influences his or her ability to think, reason, and the entire learning experiences [8]. It is imperative to state that many students speak a home language; that is, mother tongue or vernacular that differs from the language of instruction in schools. According to Ball [9], students learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education.

This is where cultural reasoning plays a major role. In this scenario, the teacher helps a learner to grasp a concept based on his or her environment. This cultural reasoning through multilingual education provides learners with a tool for better understanding and transfer of knowledge [10]. Africa, because of her nature as a multilingual continent, indigenous African languages in conjunction with other European languages need to be used to facilitate the development of academic achievement of students. Learning or speaking another language can open up new worlds, people's horizons and bring one in contact with many new cultures. Furthermore, apart from ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, multilingualism helps in attaining quality education and building an inclusive knowledge society hence the need for multilingual education in the process of teaching and learning.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Africa is known for her linguistic plurality. Language as a spontaneous social activity expresses thoughts, moods and ideas of people [1]. This is the reason it is the hallmark of any society. Multilingualism is a global reality. It helps in attaining quality education and building an inclusive knowledge society. When you offer a student an opportunity to learn in a language he or she is at home with, he or she is likely to succeed in school and his or her parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning [10].

That notwithstanding, the studies of Alexander [11], Bamgbose [12], Prah [13] and Heugh [14] have shown that English, French, and Portuguese are the languages of instruction in most African high schools. This is really a social concern among the stakeholders in the education sector. This is because these African scholars believed that this is among the main reasons for the high failure and dropout rate of many students in Africa. Hence, in multilingual educational contexts, the development of academic language can be effectively facilitated through the use of more than one language [15]. It is against this backdrop that this study focused on the use of multilingual education in enhancing students' academic performance in culturally diverse high schools in Enugu and Nairobi: cities in Nigeria and Kenya.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the benefits of multilingual education in culturally diverse high schools in Africa?
2. What are some challenges inherent in multilingual education in culturally diverse high schools in Africa?

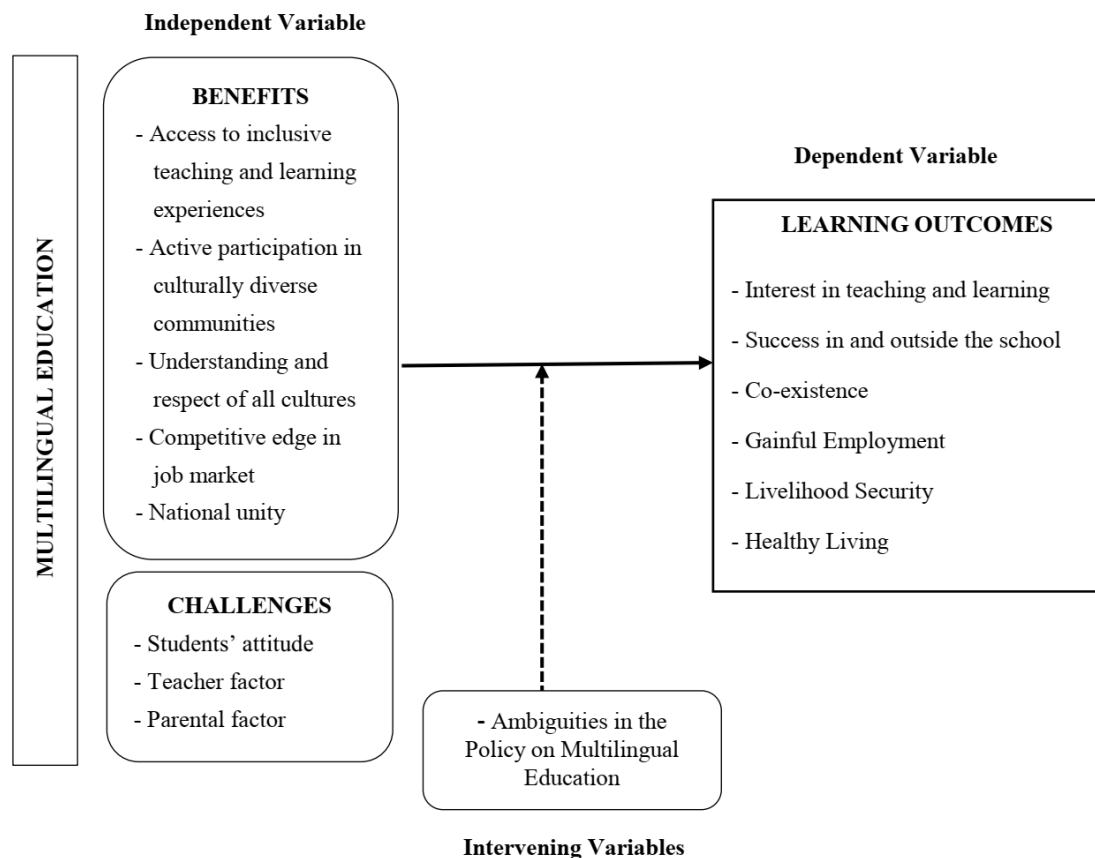
### **Significance of the Study**

This study is beneficial to the ministry of education, school administration, teachers, pupils, parents, and other researchers. It will create awareness to the ministry of education on the need to effectively implement and supervise the implementation of the national policies on multilingual education in schools. For the school administration and the teachers, it will offer them the opportunity to tap from the potentials of the students and build their career. For students, it will open the door for cultural reasoning, hence, improvement in their learning outcomes. Lastly, for parents, they will benefit from the positive pursuit of their wards. Other researchers will see in this study the need to educate learners using varieties of teaching and learning strategies especially language. Furthermore, the study shall contribute to knowledge and existing literature on multilingual education.

### **Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

This study covered the benefits and challenges of using multilingual education to enhance learners' academic performance. The researchers delimited the study to four high schools in Enugu (Nigeria) and Nairobi (Kenya). The study was specifically delimited to students and teachers in Forms one and two (Kenyan scenario), and junior secondary two and three (Nigerian scenario). The justification for delimiting this study to this group of participants was because they are not too old or new in the process of teaching and learning in schools using varied languages. Therefore, the study examined the benefits and challenges of multilingual education to the participants.

## Conceptual Framework



**Fig-1: Multilingual Education for Students' Improved Learning Outcomes**

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Language plays an important role in the education sector. The use of varied languages in the process of teaching and learning is of immense help to the learners and the teachers. It enables the learners to understand the concepts easily and in their own pace due to the role the environment plays in their learning. Therefore, multilingual education is a key to students' academic success.

In ascertaining the benefits of multilingual education, Okal [4] did a literature search and analysis. He surveyed multilingualism practices in Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. He used purposive sampling technique to identify the countries that tend to practice multilingualism education in Africa and other parts of the world. The study disclosed that these countries are officially declared multilingual countries.

Among the benefits of multilingualism education that the study revealed were synthesis and expression of knowledge, quicker and easy communication, intellectual flexibility and creativity, understanding of different cultures and experiences, and competitive edge in the labour market. The study concludes that it is beneficial to have many languages

entrenched in an education system in order to get a solid and an all-round human capital.

In the same vein, Obiegbu [16] studied mother tongue education as a panacea to effective teaching and learning of English in Nigeria primary schools. She adopted a quantitative paradigm and studied 50 teachers in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. She used questionnaire and interview schedule to collect data. The study revealed that mother tongue medium of instruction in the lower primary school enhances English language teaching and learning at the upper level class. Despite the fact this study focused on mother tongue and primary school, it is important to note here that as Ball [9] opined, students learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education.

To support education in a language familiar to a learner, Gacheche [17] refers to Cummin's interdependence theory which explains the positive transfer of literacy skills from the L1 (First Language) to the L2 (Second Language). He states that the level of a child's literacy competence in the L2 is partially a function of a child's level of competence in the L1 at the time intensive teaching of the L2 begins. The terms 'submersion' and 'immersion' are used and both involve a home-school language switch.

When teaching is conducted in a foreign language, it results in memorisation or rote learning and teaching with no understanding of meaning. Gacheche [17] notes that the education system should first develop the skills already possessed by learners in their L1. Memorisation is equated with submersion, a term compared to 'submerge', meaning to hold a child forcibly under water. This has a negative impact on the way children learn, as it interferes with their cognitive development and patterns of processing information. In submersion programmes, children are placed in classes with pupils whose L1 is that of the school, for example, English and the learners' lack of proficiency in the school language is often treated as a sign of limited intellectual and academic ability. Children are made to feel aware of their failure. They may become frustrated due to difficulties in communicating with the teacher. This arises because the teacher is unlikely to understand the child's L1 and because of different culturally determined expectations of appropriate behaviour.

Submersion is contrasted with immersion, an educational model that encourages mutual learning. Immersion is viewed as an asset to the acquisition of a new language and a method, which validates a child's knowledge, culture and home language. Students start the immersion programme with little or no competence in the school language and are praised for any use they make of that language. What is communicated to children is their success. The teacher is familiar with the child's language and cultural background and can appropriately respond to their needs without unfairly criticising the L1.

Application of multilingual education in teaching and learning for students' improved learning outcomes cannot be without some challenges. Musa [1] in her document analysis on language education in primary schools in Nigeria showed that in a multilingual situation as is the case with Nigeria, the challenge is therefore the identification, development and adoption of over 500 languages for teaching and learning in schools. According to her study, there would be need for a thorough linguistic analysis of these languages in terms of their phonology and grammatical structures. Musa has failed to convince her readers that language develops in structure with time. The study was pessimistic with regard to some Nigerian languages because of the influence of English language. Her fears can be catered for with time. It calls for more research on those languages.

Another challenge in the Nigerian scenario that Olagbaju [8] discovered was the attitude of parents. Olagbaju's study adopted a quantitative paradigm. He used questionnaire to collect data from 120 teachers from lower primary to the junior secondary school in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study disclosed that parents prefer the use of English language to multilingual education in the school. They argued that

the system of education in Nigeria places much emphasis on success at credit pass level in the English language in standardised examinations. The effect of this is poor motivation to use Nigerian languages in education. The same scenario happens in Kenya where stakeholders in education relegate Kenyan languages to the background and hold the English language to a greater esteem in the process of teaching and learning.

Many Kenyan parents, for example, may not understand the importance of mother tongue and its effects on children's performance. The implementation of Kenya's mother tongue policy is a challenge as it does not assure the child that they will learn in mother tongue especially in multi-lingual urban areas where Kiswahili, an indigenous language which is both a national and official language in Kenya, should be the language of instruction because it is more effective. Kiswahili is also neglected as a language of instruction at the expense of English, an official language in Kenya. The policy is randomly applied in many schools, except for a few rural schools. It is not practiced and in some schools, speaking in mother tongue is forbidden, and may lead to punishment [18]. Most policies are only on paper [19].

In some schools in Kenya, the use of indigenous languages is discouraged despite them being the first languages of many students and teachers. Bunyi's [20] findings indicate a problem that instead of mastering the intended result, English, learners who study in a language that they do not understand, English in this case, end up failing to master their mother tongues, English and the subject content. Linked to the problem of learning in a language in which learners lack proficiency, language and learning scholars; KNEC [21], Uwezo Kenya [22, 23] research reports point out that minimal progression to successive levels is caused by insufficient mastery of literacy skills in the medium of instruction, English, among children transiting to upper primary. In the Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education, eight years in primary school, four years in secondary school, and four at university, the percentage of pupils who transit to secondary school and students to universities yearly has been criticized by various stakeholders because less than 50 % of candidates score an average of 50% in both terminal primary and secondary school examinations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted mixed methods paradigm. It specifically adopted parallel convergent triangulation design. The justification for this design was to triangulate findings from both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigm in order that they might be mutually corroborated [24]. That is, the need to enhance the study using different sources of data. The design also made it easier for the findings to be compared: contrasted, related, and then interpreted.

The researchers selected four high schools for the study: two in Enugu, Nigeria and two in Nairobi, Kenya. They used purposeful simple random sampling technique to select them. The reason for this is that the schools enrol learners from different cultural backgrounds. The teachers too come from different cultural backgrounds. The target population of the study comprised all the teachers and learners in the selected high schools. These individuals were relevant to the study because of the diverse cultural background they come from. The study through simple random sampling technique sampled 40 teachers and 100 students as participants of the research.

The instruments for data collection comprised a 30-item questionnaire for students and a 9-item interview guide for teachers. The researchers established the reliability of the questionnaire by pilot testing, and a test-retest coefficient of 0.76 using Pearson r correlation method was realised. For the interview guide, the researchers sought the assistance of experts in measurement and evaluation, curriculum studies, and linguistics. They made constructive comments about items on the instrument and the researchers effected the changes. The instruments helped to get a vivid picture of the participants' perspectives on multilingual education and enhancement of students' learning outcomes. The researchers had a face-face interview with the teacher participants and distributed the questionnaires to the students.

For data analysis, especially the qualitative data, the researchers transcribed the interviews and coded them manually. They developed the codes into categories, and identified themes from the categories based on the research questions of the study. They analysed the quantitative data descriptively with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20). The researchers then presented the data in tables, percentages and in narrative forms. The researchers collected the quantitative and qualitative data, compared them and interpreted the results. This enhanced greater validity of the findings.

The researchers ascertained trustworthiness in the entire research. That is, from the problem identification to the final report. The researchers had an

in-depth observation of the phenomenon under study and had a rigorous literature search on the same. They adhered to academic honesty in the literature review and identified the gaps that the current study filled.

During data collection, the researchers established a rapport with the participants. They told them that they needed to be frank and open in their contributions. They also told them that anyone was free to refuse to participate in the study. After the data transcriptions, the researchers did inter coder reliability and this enabled the study to come up with significant and robust themes during the analysis. The researchers later sent the themes back to the participants for member checking; that is, to determine their accuracy.

The study was ethically considerate. The researchers got permission from the administration of the schools in order to conduct the research. The researchers prepared informed consent forms, which the participants signed in order to freely and voluntarily accept to be part of the study. They also fully explained to the participants the nature of the research and assured them confidentiality. They used pseudonyms in the report and maintained maximum confidentiality of the participants.

## FINDINGS

The researchers presented the findings of the study based on the research questions. The study had two main research questions. The study focused on the benefits and challenges of the application of multilingual education for students improved learning outcomes. It also suggested how the African governments could encourage multilingual education for the enhancement of students' academic achievement.

### Demographic Information of Participants

It was of great value to determine the gender of the participants. Teaching and learning process demands consistency and dedication. The study ascertained how the gender of the participants mediated the application of multilingual education for students' improved learning outcomes. Table-1 presents the gender of the participants of the study.

**Table-1: Gender of the Participants**

| Category     | Teachers (Nigeria) |            | Teachers (Kenya) |            | Students (Nigeria) |            | Students (Kenya) |            |
|--------------|--------------------|------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
|              | <i>f</i>           | %          | <i>f</i>         | %          | <i>f</i>           | %          | <i>f</i>         | %          |
| Male         | 11                 | 55         | 7                | 35         | 25                 | 50         | 25               | 50         |
| Female       | 9                  | 45         | 13               | 65         | 25                 | 50         | 25               | 50         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>20</b>          | <b>100</b> | <b>20</b>        | <b>100</b> | <b>50</b>          | <b>100</b> | <b>50</b>        | <b>100</b> |

Table-1 reveals that there was gender balance among the student participants: 50 (100%) male, and 50 (100%) female. Therefore, their contributions to the study was robust and balanced. Among the teacher

participants, Nigeria had 11 (55%) males and 9 (45%) females, while Kenya had 7 (35%) males and 13 (65%) females. We can generally conclude from this that females are very free to contribute to the studies of this

kind in Kenya than in Nigeria. In addition, Nigerian male teachers are always available to participate in such studies than Kenyan male teachers. The reason behind this conclusion is that the administrations of the schools were given the opportunity to select the participants of the study themselves. The participants freely volunteered to be part of the study. That notwithstanding, their contributions to the study were commendable.

### Meaning of Multilingual Education

The study firstly determined the views of the participants on the meaning of multilingual education before establishing its benefits for learners' improved learning outcome. The following were the responses of the participants on the meaning of multilingual education. The data from the students were quantitative in nature, while those of the teachers were qualitative in nature. Data from the students were presented in frequencies and percentages, while the ones from the teachers were presented in themes. Table 2 & 3 show the responses of the student participants on the meaning of multilingual education.

**Table-2: Meaning of Multilingual Education (Responses from Nigerian Student Participants)**

| Statements  | True     |    | False    |    | Not Sure |    |
|---|----------|----|----------|----|----------|----|
|   | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  |
| Multilingual Education means the use of only the English Language for teaching and learning | 1        | 2  | 48       | 96 | 1        | 2  |
| It means the use of only mother tongue or vernacular for teaching and learning              | 1        | 2  | 48       | 96 | 1        | 2  |
| It is defined as the use of two or more languages as media of instruction in the classroom  | 40       | 80 | 6        | 12 | 4        | 8  |
| It means mixing languages in teaching and learning for easy understanding of concepts       | 36       | 72 | 9        | 18 | 5        | 10 |
| It means switching from one language to another in the process of teaching and learning     | 27       | 54 | 11       | 22 | 12       | 24 |

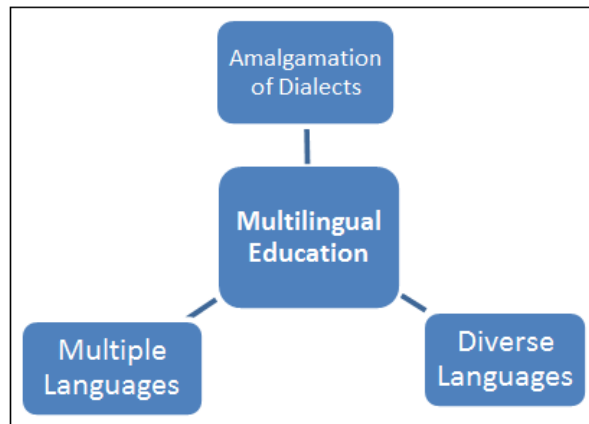
**Table-3: Meaning of Multilingual Education (Responses from Kenyan Student Participants)**

| Statements  | True     |    | False    |    | Not Sure |    |
|---|----------|----|----------|----|----------|----|
|   | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  |
| Multilingual Education means the use of only the English Language for teaching and learning | 3        | 6  | 42       | 84 | 5        | 10 |
| It means the use of only mother tongue or vernacular for teaching and learning              | 4        | 8  | 42       | 84 | 4        | 8  |
| It is defined as the use of two or more languages as media of instruction in the classroom  | 39       | 78 | 6        | 12 | 5        | 10 |
| It means mixing languages in teaching and learning for easy understanding of concepts       | 38       | 76 | 4        | 8  | 8        | 16 |
| It means switching from one language to another in the process of teaching and learning     | 22       | 44 | 16       | 32 | 12       | 24 |

From Table 2 & 3, it is clear that the student participants were aware of the meaning of multilingual education. The use of two or more languages as media of instruction had the highest occurrence in both cases. This study observed that 40 (80%) of the student participants from Nigeria agreed that multilingual education means the use of two or more languages as media of instruction, while 39 (78%) of the student participants from Kenya had the same opinion. This really implies that the student participants from both

countries are aware of the meaning of multilingual education.

Exploring the qualitative data on the same phenomenon, Figure-2 shows the themes that emerged from the teacher participants on the meaning of multilingual education. These are the major themes from the Nigerian and Kenyan teacher participants. The meaning is contextualised in the process of teaching and learning in culturally diverse African high schools.



**Fig-2: Meaning of Multilingual Education**

Drawing from Figure-2 on the meaning of multilingual education, a participant opined:

*Multilingual education is the education that involves the use of more than one type of language to impact knowledge from one person to another usually, from a teacher to a student. For instance, a teacher can use French, Igbo, English, Hausa or Yoruba to make sure that his or her students understand the proper message he or she wants to pass on to them. (Teacher 5, Nigerian School A, Interview, June 4, 2018)*

Another participant expressed that: “Multilingual education is the use of diverse or multiple languages when teaching the students in order to bring the lesson home” (Teacher 2, Kenyan School B, Interview, June 15, 2018).

Is there any convergence with regard to the responses of the student participants and those of the teachers? The students’ data were quantitative in nature

and the teachers’ data were qualitative in nature. From the statements of the teachers, it is certain that the teacher participants were knowledgeable on the concept of multilingual education. Their responses agreed with those of the students. The use of multiple languages in the process of teaching and learning for easy comprehension of concepts is the point of convergence for both groups of participants.

That notwithstanding, there was a question on how the concept of multilingual education is applied in the process of teaching and learning. A participant stated that: “When a teacher is teaching for instance and it seems that the students are not following, the teacher can use their local language for them to comprehend” (Teacher 10, Nigerian School A, Interview, June 5, 2018). Her Kenyan colleague emphasised the same as she expressed: “When students do not understand in English, we explain in Kiswahili” (Teacher 1, Kenyan School A, Interview, June 11, 2018).

**Table-4: Benefits of Multilingual Education (Responses from Nigerian Student Participants)**

| Statements  | SA |    | A  |    | N  |    | D |    | SD |   |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|---|
|   | f  | %  | f  | %  | f  | %  | f | %  | f  | % |
| Multilingual Education enables me to have interest in teaching and learning | 29 | 58 | 16 | 32 | 3  | 6  | 2 | 4  |    |   |
| It gives me access to inclusive teaching and learning experiences           | 23 | 46 | 17 | 34 | 7  | 14 |   |    | 3  | 6 |
| It makes me to participate actively in culturally diverse communities       | 27 | 54 | 14 | 28 | 3  | 6  | 6 | 12 |    |   |
| It makes me to understand and respect all cultures                          | 33 | 66 | 10 | 20 | 4  | 8  | 1 | 2  | 2  | 4 |
| It helps me to co-exist with people of different ethnic, and racial groups  | 39 | 78 | 6  | 12 | 3  | 6  | 1 | 2  | 1  | 2 |
| It gives me an edge to the competitive job market                           | 15 | 30 | 17 | 34 | 11 | 22 | 6 | 12 | 1  | 2 |
| It helps me to be successful in life  | 24 | 48 | 12 | 24 | 11 | 22 | 3 | 6  |    |   |
| It enables me to have gainful employment after school                       | 23 | 46 | 20 | 40 | 5  | 10 | 1 | 2  | 1  | 2 |
| It is a tool for national unity   | 38 | 76 | 9  | 18 | 3  | 6  |   |    |    |   |
| It opens doors for quicker and easy communication                           | 38 | 76 | 11 | 22 | 1  | 2  |   |    |    |   |
| It enhances my intellectual flexibility and creativity                      | 23 | 46 | 19 | 38 | 3  | 6  | 3 | 6  | 2  | 4 |
| It helps me to synthesize knowledge and express it accordingly              | 23 | 46 | 21 | 42 | 5  | 10 | 1 | 2  |    |   |
| It helps me to have a better thinking and reasoning skills                  | 22 | 44 | 14 | 28 | 11 | 22 | 2 | 4  | 1  | 2 |
| It motivates me to learn and understand easily in class                     | 26 | 52 | 16 | 32 | 5  | 10 | 3 | 6  |    |   |
| It enables me to have a greater social adaptability                         | 29 | 58 | 16 | 32 | 3  | 6  | 1 | 2  | 1  | 2 |

Key: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

**Benefits of Multilingual Education**

The usefulness of multilingual education in the process of teaching and learning cannot be downplayed. The responses from the participants are factored in this section. Table-4 presents the responses from Nigerian student participants, while Table-5 shows the responses

of Kenyan student participants. Furthermore, Table-6 displays the themes that emerged from the responses of the teacher participants from the two countries. The major themes from Table-6 were later interrelated and presented in Figure-3.

**Table-5: Benefits of Multilingual Education (Responses from Kenyan Student Participants)**

| Statements  | SA |    | A  |    | N  |    | D  |    | SD |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|   | f  | %  | f  | %  | f  | %  | f  | %  | f  | %  |
| Multilingual Education enables me to have interest in teaching and learning | 29 | 58 | 16 | 32 | 4  | 8  | 1  | 2  |    |    |
| It gives me access to inclusive teaching and learning experiences           | 20 | 40 | 18 | 36 | 10 | 20 | 2  | 4  |    |    |
| It makes me to participate actively in culturally diverse communities       | 24 | 48 | 14 | 28 | 9  | 18 | 3  | 6  |    |    |
| It makes me to understand and respect all cultures                          | 34 | 68 | 9  | 18 | 5  | 10 | 2  | 4  |    |    |
| It helps me to co-exist with people of different ethnic, and racial groups  | 27 | 54 | 11 | 22 | 9  | 18 | 3  | 6  |    |    |
| It gives me an edge to the competitive job market                           | 9  | 18 | 8  | 16 | 17 | 34 | 10 | 20 | 6  | 12 |
| It helps me to be successful in life  | 19 | 38 | 8  | 16 | 12 | 24 | 8  | 16 | 3  | 6  |
| It enables me to have gainful employment after school                       | 10 | 20 | 17 | 34 | 9  | 18 | 9  | 18 | 5  | 10 |
| It is a tool for national unity   | 28 | 56 | 14 | 28 | 2  | 4  | 5  | 10 | 1  | 2  |
| It opens doors for quicker and easy communication                           | 19 | 38 | 17 | 34 | 9  | 18 | 2  | 4  | 3  | 6  |
| It enhances my intellectual flexibility and creativity                      | 17 | 34 | 20 | 40 | 11 | 22 | 1  | 2  | 1  | 2  |
| It helps me to synthesize knowledge and express it accordingly              | 14 | 28 | 24 | 48 | 5  | 10 | 5  | 10 | 2  | 4  |
| It helps me to have a better thinking and reasoning skills                  | 27 | 54 | 7  | 14 | 10 | 20 | 2  | 4  | 4  | 8  |
| It motivates me to learn and understand easily in class                     | 28 | 56 | 11 | 22 | 4  | 8  | 2  | 4  | 5  | 10 |
| It enables me to have a greater social adaptability                         | 28 | 56 | 10 | 20 | 8  | 16 | 2  | 4  | 2  | 4  |

Key: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

Tables 4 & 5 display the responses of the student participants on the benefits of multilingual education for learners' improved learning outcomes. It is worthy to note that 45 (90%) of Nigerian student participants, and 45 (90%) of Kenyan student participants accepted clearly that multilingual education enables them to have interest in teaching and learning. Furthermore, 43 (86%) of Nigerian student participants, and 43 (86%) of Kenyan student participants also were of a strong opinion that multilingual education makes them to understand and respect all cultures.

In comparison, 45 (90%) of Nigerian student participants were of strong belief that multilingual education helps them to co-exist with people of different ethnic, and racial groups. Only 38 (76%) of Kenyan student participants attested to this fact. In addition, 47 (94%) of Nigerian student participants

affirmed that multilingual education is a tool for national unity. Their colleagues, the Kenyan student participants 42 (84%) also agreed to this fact. In the same vein, 49 (98%) of Nigerian student participants emphasized that multilingual education opens doors for quicker and easy communication for them, while 36 (72%) of the Kenyan student participants had the same view. Worthy also to mention is that 45 (90%) of the Nigerian student participants affirmed that multilingual education enables them to have a greater social adaptability, whereas, 38 (76%) of the Kenyan student participants accepted this notion. Generally, the student participants were of the opinion that the role of multilingual education in their academic achievement cannot be over-emphasized. Table 6 presents the qualitative data from the teacher participants on the benefits of multilingual education.

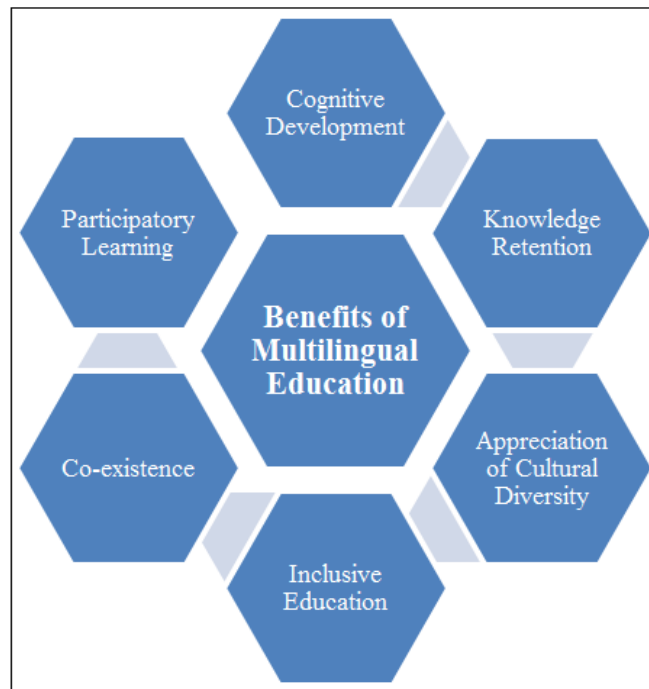
**Table-6: Benefits of Multilingual Education (Responses from Teachers)**

| Teachers          | Themes   |
|-------------------|--|
| Nigerian School A | Communication potential, societal exposure, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, increased understanding, academic interest, job opportunities, cordial relationship |
| Nigerian School B | Thought process, understanding, preservation of culture, critical thinking, academic excellence  |
| Kenyan School A   | Easy comprehension, improved expression, inclusive education, wider understanding  |
| Kenyan School B   | Retention of knowledge, understanding, participatory learning, promotion of cooperation, appreciation of diversity, maximum concentration.                               |

Table-6 presents the themes from the teachers on the benefits of multilingual education for the enhancement of students' learning in the class. The

researchers interrelated the themes and came up with major themes. Figure-3 illustrates the major themes that emerged across the countries.





**Fig-3: Benefits of Multilingual Education**

The researchers drew verbatim from the responses of the teacher participants in order to support their opinion about the benefits of multilingual education. Exploring the benefits of this phenomenon, a teacher participant stated:

*Since the science subjects for example are perceived to be difficult, multilingual education has helped the learners to understand difficult concepts in their own language, which has improved on the performance of the learners, hence the institution at large. (Teacher 2, Kenyan School A, Interview, June 11, 2018)*

Apart from cognitive excellence of the students, the area of respect for culture is also very significant for cohesiveness in the society. This is one of the reasons another teacher participant stressed that: “Multilingual education fosters respect for cultural

diversity and also helps to alleviate poverty” (Teacher 6, Nigerian School B, Interview, June 7, 2018).

There is convergence in the responses of the student participants and those of the teacher participants on the benefits of multilingual education for learners’ improved learning outcomes. Drawing from the major themes of the responses of the teacher participants, it is worth to recall that they are represented in the quantitative data of the student participants. They had a frequency of 40 (80%) and above from the Nigerian case and 35 (70%) and above from the Kenyan case when you combine those that strongly agreed to the statements and those that agreed. What this implies is that both the student participants and the teacher participants have a very clear and strong opinion that multilingual education is beneficial to the education sector and it should be encouraged and promoted.

**Table-7: Challenges of Multilingual Education (Responses from Nigerian Student Participants)**

| Statements   | Yes |    | No |    | Not Sure |    |
|--|-----|----|----|----|----------|----|
|  | f   | %  | f  | %  | f        | %  |
| Students feel making use of African languages in the class makes them local  | 32  | 64 | 10 | 20 | 8        | 16 |
| Teachers prefer the use of English language to other African languages in class  | 33  | 66 | 5  | 10 | 12       | 24 |
| Parents believe that the use of African languages to teach their children is a total waste of time and resources                             | 11  | 22 | 25 | 50 | 14       | 28 |
| The society feels using the African languages as media of instruction is exposing learners to illiteracy                                     | 16  | 32 | 18 | 36 | 16       | 32 |
| Many students, teachers, and parents are not aware of the provisions of multilingual education enshrined in the National Policy on Education | 29  | 58 | 6  | 12 | 15       | 30 |

**Challenges of Multilingual Education**

The application of multilingual education for the improvement of students’ learning outcomes cannot be without challenges. Table 7 & 8 present the quantitative data from the students while, Table-9

shows the qualitative data; themes that emerged from the responses of the teachers. Then, Figure-4 displays the major themes the researchers interrelated from Table-9.

**Table-8: Challenges of Multilingual Education (Responses from Kenyan Student Participants)**

| Statements   | Yes      |    | No       |    | Not Sure |    |
|--|----------|----|----------|----|----------|----|
|  | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  | <i>f</i> | %  |
| Students feel making use of African languages in the class makes them local  | 22       | 44 | 18       | 36 | 10       | 20 |
| Teachers prefer the use of English language to other African languages in class  | 36       | 72 | 9        | 18 | 5        | 10 |
| Parents believe that the use of African languages to teach their children is a total waste of time and resources                             | 18       | 36 | 24       | 48 | 8        | 16 |
| The society feels using the African languages as media of instruction is exposing learners to illiteracy                                     | 22       | 44 | 15       | 30 | 13       | 26 |
| Many students, teachers, and parents are not aware of the provisions of multilingual education enshrined in the National Policy on Education | 27       | 54 | 12       | 24 | 11       | 22 |

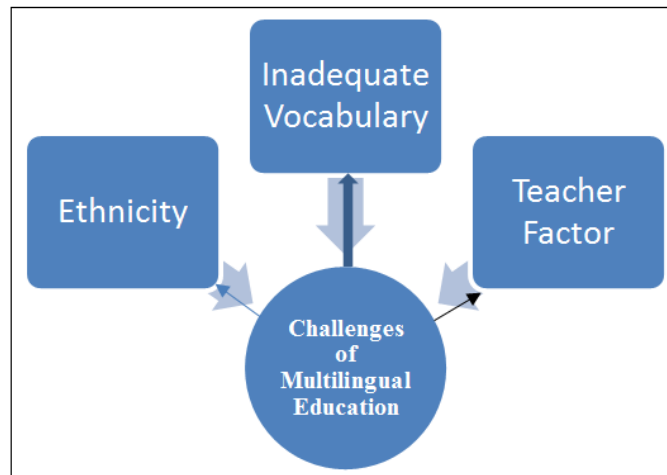
The student participants’ responses from the two countries as displayed on Table 7 & 8 had three main points in common. The first is that the participants were of the view that teachers prefer the use of English language to other African languages in class. The record shows that 33 (66%) of Nigerian participants, and 36 (72%) of Kenyan participants attested to this fact. The second relationship in the responses of the participants is the issue of national policy on education. For them, the key stakeholders in the education sector were not aware of the provisions of multilingual education enshrined in the national policy on education. The participants; 29 (58%) Nigeria, and 27 (54%) Kenya revealed this. The third is that 25 (50%) of Nigerian participants, and 24 (48%) of Kenyan participants concluded that it is unfair to suggest that parents believe that the use of African languages to teach their children is a total waste of time and resources. The study exonerated parents as being part of

the challenges of the application of multilingual education for students’ improved learning outcomes.

In contrast, while 32 (64%) of the Nigerian participants felt making use of African languages in the class makes them local, only 22 (44%) of the Kenyan participants supported this view. Majority of the Kenyan participants 28 (56%) did not subscribe to this opinion. Furthermore, 22 (44%) of the Kenyan participants agreed that the society feels using the African languages as media of instruction is exposing learners to illiteracy. However, 18 (36%) of Nigerian participants did not accept that assertion. Only 16 (32%) supported the statement, and 16 (32%) were not sure of the feelings of the society with regard to the relationship between the use of African languages and exposure to illiteracy. Table 9 presents the qualitative data from the teacher participants on the challenges of multilingual education.

**Table-9: Challenges of Multilingual Education (Responses from Teachers)**

| Teachers          | Themes  |
|-------------------|---|
| Nigerian School A | Ethnicity, language policy, training of teachers  |
| Nigerian School B | Training of teachers, diverse cultural background, time constraint, educational background                      |
| Kenyan School A   | Diverse cultural background, Non-Conservant with vernacular, impediment in the learning of English, code-mixing |
| Kenyan School B   | Inadequate vocabularies, diverse cultural background, lack of guidelines, teacher factor                        |



**Fig-4: Challenges of Multilingual Education**

On the issue of inadequate vocabulary for example, a participant expressed: “The aspect of making direct translation of words from one language to another may lose the original meaning” (Teacher 9, Kenyan School B, Interview, June 15, 2018). Another teacher participant from Nigeria looked at the areas of ethnicity and teacher factor as challenges to multilingual education. She opined that:

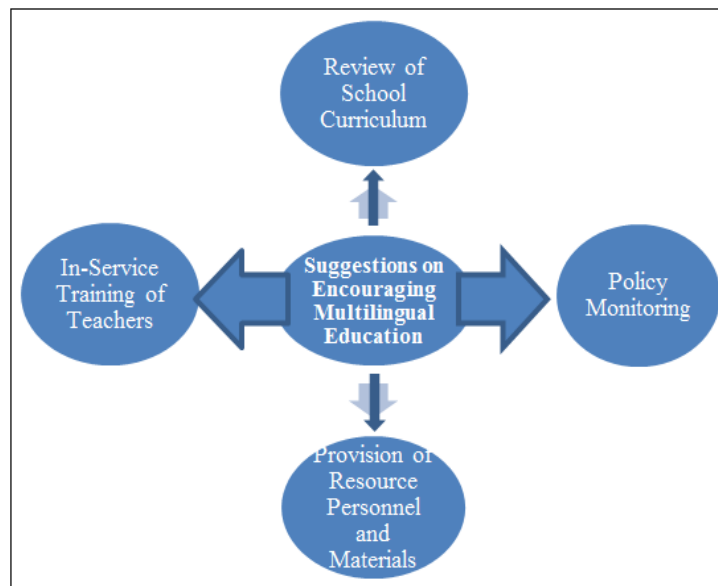
*The multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria is a barrier to the successful implementation of the multilingual education. For instance, there are about 500 different languages in Nigeria and these languages are of unequal status. Therefore, this inequality makes it clear that linguistic hierarchy is a serious concern in Nigeria. Furthermore, low turnout of teachers in various indigenous languages to handle school subjects is a challenge. More so, there is non-availability of teaching materials especially, relevant textbooks in indigenous languages. (Teacher 1, Nigerian School B, Interview, June 7, 2018)*

Drawing from the quantitative and qualitative data, they have only one point of convergence. This common denominator from the two categories of participants with regard to the challenges of

multilingual education for learners’ improved learning outcomes is the teacher factor. Among the student participants, 33 (66%) Nigerians, and 36 (72%) Kenyans affirmed that teachers prefer the use of English language to other African languages in class. The teacher participants from the two countries also believed that the teacher is also a challenge to the application of multilingual education for learners’ improved learning outcomes. They considered some variables such as training, and resource materials as causative factors. That notwithstanding, their only point of divergence is ethnicity. The teacher participants subscribed to this as one of the challenges of the application of multilingual education for learners’ improved learning outcomes, but the student participants did not see ethnicity as an issue.

#### **Plausible Solutions**

Based on the challenges, the researchers asked the participants to give suggestions on how the government can encourage multilingual education for the enhancement of students’ learning outcomes. The following major themes that are presented in figure-5 emerged from their responses across the categories of the participants from the two countries.



**Fig-5: Encouragement of Multilingual Education for Students' Improved Learning Outcomes**

Examining the themes from the responses of the participants on how the governments can encourage multilingual education for the good of the students, it is obvious that much needs to be done on the part of the language policy and the teacher. This is because according to the majority of the participants, the government of each country needs to employ teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds. More so, these teachers need to apply multilingual education in class using different resource materials. The government should also create opportunity for in-service training for these teachers on the area of multilingual education and enforce the laws relating to multilingual education in the national policy on education.

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Just as breathing is necessary for human survival, language is an essential part of human's existence in the society. Languages are constantly evolving and interacting in a dynamic process. This is the reason it is very important to utilise the potentials of language fully in helping learners achieve their academic endeavours. The power of language cannot be over-emphasised. It has the ability to bring into limelight the culture, identity, desired attitudes, and aspirations of learners. Therefore, encouraging multilingualism in the education sector goes a long way to help learners live a fulfilled lifestyle.

The study found that the participants were aware of the meaning of multilingual education. They looked at multilingual education as the use of diverse or multiple languages when teaching the students in order to drive home the lesson. This finding agrees with the study of Olagbaju [8] who viewed multilingual education as the use of three or more languages in the education system. In the same vein, Madiba [15] opined that in multilingual educational contexts, the

development of academic language could be effectively facilitated through the use of more than one language. The two studies support the finding of the current study on the meaning of multilingual education.

Is multilingual education beneficial to the learners? From the study, majority of the participants believed that multilingual education is a panacea to learners' academic achievement. The study disclosed that multilingual education enables students to have interest in teaching and learning. It also makes them to understand and respect all cultures. Most importantly, it helps them to co-exist with people of different ethnic and racial groups. The study also affirmed that multilingual education is a tool for national unity since it opens doors for quicker and easy communication for the students and helps them to have a greater social adaptability. These findings concur with Trent [25] who expressed that multilingual education would prepare students for future professions, enrich their connection with their cultural heritage, and enhance their social experiences. The findings also agree with Ruben [26] who emphasized that there is no greater gift you can give to your child's future career than a multilingual education. He continued that by educating your child in multiple languages, you are effectively setting him or her up for a long and successful career no matter what he or she chooses to be when he or she grows up.

The study also revealed that the application of multilingual education for students' improved learning outcomes has some challenges. The challenges were mostly vested in the teacher. Therefore, the teacher factor remains the sole challenge of using multiple languages to help learners achieve their academic goal. These challenges were in the areas of preference of the English language in class to any other African languages, and lack of relevant resource materials in teaching and learning. The current findings are in line

with Ibrahim and Gwandu [3] who found that teachers are proud of their skills in the English language and prefer to teach using it. There is also lack of adequate textbooks and other relevant materials in multilingual education.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Africa is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual continent. Hence, the African child comes from an environment of diverse cultural background. In order to help this child attain his or her educational goal, there is need for multilingual education in teaching and learning experiences. Multilingual education promotes cultural reasoning. Here, the learner is helped to grasp a concept based on his or her environment [10]. This is to emphasise that multilingual education has a positive correlation with students' achievement, divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility, and social adaptability [27].

Therefore, from the findings, the study concludes that: the participants were aware of the meaning of multilingual education and how it is applied in the process of teaching and learning in order to enhance students' academic achievement. They considered multilingual education as the use of more than one language in order to help students have positive learning outcomes. The study also concluded that multilingual education is so important in class because it motivates learners and helps them to fit in well in the society. Teacher factor was so pronounced as the key challenge in the application of multilingual education in the classroom. This is because the teacher plays a key role in facilitating learning in the students. His or her ability to use multiple languages to drive home his or her lessons in class is very important to the learners.

Based on these findings, the researchers make the following recommendations:

- Since the study observed that multilingual education is a key to students' improved learning outcomes in high schools, the Government is charged to put in place policies that promote the application of multilingual education.
- The ministry of Education should endeavour that the teacher-trainees are equipped with multilingual education skills in order to prepare them for the task ahead in the field.
- The ministry of education should set up monitoring team that goes round the schools to encourage teachers to apply always multilingual education for learners' improved learning outcomes.
- The Kenya institute for curriculum development (KICD) and the national educational and research development council (NERDC) who are in-charge of curriculum development and review should provide appropriate and relevant educational resources to aid effective use of multilingual education in class.
- The teacher is the chief agent of facilitating students' learning. His or her ability to use more than one language in the process of teaching and learning is of paramount importance. Since these skills and ability are lacking in some of the teachers, the school administration should organise in-service training for teachers on the application of multilingual education in class.
- Since every action is geared towards helping students achieve their academic goal, they are encouraged to collaborate with their teachers in class and positively avail themselves for multilingual education.

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