



THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN THE MORAL EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The quality of education means much to the development of many nations. The quality of education is a reflection of the teachers and parents since teachers and parents are part of those who implement educational policies and bring about educational change. The concept of the role of the mother tongue in the moral education of the youth is delved into in this study. Studies revealed that one of the instrument used in imparting knowledge most especially to the youth is through the use of the mother tongue. Good teaching, socio physiological factors, the various ways by which children can be helped to retain and develop their mother tongue will be discussed in this paper. It is suggested that the use of mother tongue in developing moral education of the youth in the society should be enhanced for the effectiveness of the whole educational system.

Keywords: Mother tongue, Moral, Education, Moral Education, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Recent researches in education focused on the use of mother tongue for the moral educational development of the youth. This is trying to cut a new path which is totally different from the past whereby much emphasis was placed on classroom activities and procedures which have been over flogged.

It is suggested that the language used at home may affect students' level of interest and their ability to learn.

Hawa 21. Daipi (2005) declares that the importance of oral competencies is reflected in the Yoruba Language Syllabus, instructional materials, teaching methods and assessment. Our teachers engage students in interaction using an array of language activities which include storytelling, debate, singing and poetry recitation. Schools also organize Yoruba Language activities such as cultural events to encourage oral communication.



According to Wicksteed (2004), for children whose mother tongue is not English, formal learning of their first language helps them to access the wider curriculum and raises their self esteem and aspirations. Therefore, this paper delved into the concept of mother tongue, its significance in the school as well as shaping a dynamic identity for the future.

Who are the Youths?

The Webster Dictionary defines “Youth” as the time of life when one is young, the period between childhood and maturity, the early period of existence, growth or development. It is also being regarded as a time when one is full of life, energetic, operating with vigour and vibrant. It is at this stage of transformation that will make them to be able to decide what they can do by themselves, without so much dependence on others for help. They want people to know their strengths and their weaknesses in order to achieve their goals in life.

What is Moral?

Moral according to Webster Dictionary (1981) is defined as relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior. It further explains that moral means expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior and conforming to as standard of right behaviour. Moral, therefore, are the principles about what is right and wrong or the ideas about what is important in life as an established standard of conduct to guide individuals in their interaction and relationship with one another in the society.

Moral is the doctrine ethics or principles of living. For each society has its own guiding principles and goal in life be it moral, philosophy or general behavior. Adeyanju (1996) maintains that moral education will assist the child or individual to attain the fullest life one is capable of living. It therefore becomes pertinent that most educators whether parents, teachers or the clergy should live exemplary life in the society for the child to model after.



The Role of Mother Tongue in the Moral Education of the Youth

In using the Mother tongue, we have (1) learnt to think, (2) learn to communicate and (3) acquire an initiative understanding of grammar.

Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also the children's abilities in the majority school language.

By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and consequently, its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined. Spending instructional time through a minority language in the school does not hurt children's academic development in the majority language.

Some educators and parents are suspicious of mother tongue teaching programs because they worry that these programs take time away from the majority school language. When children are learning through a minority language (e.g. their home language), they are only learning this language in a narrow sense. They are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the majority language. Pupils who know how to tell the time in their mother tongue understand the concept of telling time. In order to tell time in the second language (e.g. the majority language) they do not need to re-learn the concept of telling time, they simply need to acquire new labels or surface structures for an intellectual skill they have already learnt. Similarly, at a more advanced stage, there is transfer across languages in academic and literacy skills such as knowing how to distinguish the main idea from the supporting details of a written passage or story, identifying cause and effect. Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also the children's abilities in the majority school language. By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and consequently its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined. Spending instructional time through a minority language in the school does not hurt children's academic development in the majority language.

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Teachers can also help children retain and develop their mother tongues by communicating to them strong affirmative messages about the value of knowing additional languages. For example, they can initiate classroom projects focused on (a) developing children’s language awareness and (b) the sharing of languages in the class e.g. everyday a child brings one significant word from the home language into class and the entire class, including the teacher learning and discussing this word.

To reject a child’s mother tongue in the school is to reject the child

When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is “Leave your language and culture at the school gate”, children also leave a central part of who they are – their identities in the school gate. When they feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction. It is not enough for teachers to passively accept children’s linguistic and cultural diversity in the school. They must be proactive and take the initiative to affirm children’s linguistic and cultural diversity in the school. They must be proactive and take the initiative to affirm children’s linguistic identity by having posters in the various languages of the community around the school, encouraging children to write in their mother tongues in addition to the majority school language, and generally create an instructional climate where the linguistic and cultural experience of the whole child is actively accepted and validated.



Shaping a Dynamic Identity for the Future

When educators within a school develop language policies and organize their curriculum and instruction in such a way that the linguistic and cultural capital of children and communities is strongly affirmed in all the interactions of the school, then the school is rejecting the negative attitudes and ignorance about diversity that exist in the wider society. We as educators must put into practice what we believe is true for all children.

Children's cultural and linguistic experience in the home is the foundation of their future learning and we must build on that foundation rather than undermining it. Every child has the right to have his talents recognized and promoted within the school.

In short, the cultural and intellectual capital of our societies will increase dramatically when we stop seeing culturally and linguistically diverse children as "a problem to be solved" and instead open our eyes to the linguistic, cultural and intellectual resources they bring from their homes to our schools and societies.

Reading of Literature

Reading of various texts in Literature (Prose, Drama, and Poetry) helps in the moral education of the youth in that the youth will learn from the experiences of the different heroes and characters they have studied.

CONCLUSION

It can be inferred from the above that the use of mother tongue means much to the moral educational development of the youth of a nation. However, moral development of the youth is not an easy endeavour to achieve.

The language that is used for study is one of the most important aspects of education. This studying in one's mother tongue is particularly important for younger children; helping them to understand the material they are trying to learn and to retain the use of the language. It also makes them to perform better and achieve better academically.

Recommendations

Based on the above observations, the following recommendations are made:



Just as schools have historically been the sites where indigenous languages have been stripped and taken away, schools can become essential public centers for language and cultural renewal. They can do this by placing an overt moral and academic value on the heritage language. In short, schools can act as catalysts in establishing new institutional contexts and genres for native language use, and expand on the resources available in the home by promoting indigenous language literacy. While schools and school-based literacy will not “save” a language, they can accomplish a great deal toward the end. When a language remains safe in its home – community environment, it can be passed on to children. Schools and their participants can support and safeguard the integrity of that socio-cultural environment. In this respect, mother tongue literacy, by fostering the sharing of language experiences between young and old, is needed a powerful tool.

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