

**THE IMPACT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) ON
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN FCE STAFF
DEMONSTRATION PRIMARY SCHOOL, KANO**

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Abstract

In a multiethnic society like Nigeria, the role of English language cannot be over stretched. As the major medium of instruction at all levels of education, competency and proficiency is highly required. As such, the primary school English language teacher is saddled with the responsibility of laying a solid, firm and effective foundation of the language (which is the basis for the teaching and learning of other subjects) in the learners. This paper focuses on the impact of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on the teaching and learning of English language in Federal College of Education Demonstration Primary School in Kano with emphasis on the notable hindrances to the achievement of the stated goals of the administered questionnaire and interviewed. It was revealed that the MDGs is no doubt a laudable project since it has recorded some notable achievements especially with regard to re-training of teacher and provision of manuals in teaching methodology and instructional materials. Recommendations are also proffered.

Since the formal launching of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) project in 2006 by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the National Teachers' Institutes whose job it is since 1978 to organize programmes for upgrading and updating practicing teachers at all levels of education has direct her attention to the task of realizing the goals of the programme.

The Nigerian government at all levels has since then, been mapping out plans and making efforts for the successful

execution of the project. One of which is the annual workshop/seminar organized by NTI Nigeria. The retraining workshop often focus on:

1. Improvisation of instructional materials;
2. Innovative techniques of teaching the four core subjects (English, Mathematics, Basic Science and technology and social studies);
3. School based assessment.

Primary education is referred to, in the National Policy on Education (2004),

as the foundation upon which the rest of the educational system is built. Hence, a shaky foundation is obviously doom setting for other educational activities.

Here, we will review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its impact in the teaching of English language - a language considered to be one of the unifying factors in a multiethnic society as Nigeria and the major medium of instruction in all formal systems of education in Nigeria.

The Goals of Primary Education

The primary education system is a tuition free, universal and compulsory education. As contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) it is any education given in institution for children aged 6-11plus. It is the foundation on which other education system is built, hence, the key to the success or failure of other education system in our beloved country Nigeria. The duration according to NPE is six years during which the following goals are expected to be achieved (NPE, 2004).

- a) Inculcate pertinent literacy and numeracy, ability to communicate effectively.
- b) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- c) Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- d) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;

- e) Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that the society within the limits of the child's capacity;
- f) Provide the child with basic tools for further education advancement, including preparation trades and crafts of the locality.

The goals are the composite basis of primary education in all the states of the nation.

Brief History of FCE Demonstration Primary School

FCE Demonstration Primary School was established in the late 1970s when the college was Advanced Teachers' College/Ahmadu Bello University – ATC/ABU. Like every other primary school, FCE demonstration primary is aimed at achieving the stated goals as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004). It is a primary school with well equipped school library; specialist teachers of particular subjects such as mathematics, English language, physical and health education and science. Teaching methodology is in conformity with the prescription as spelt out in NPE.

In recognition of the pertinent role of communication and information technology in advancing knowledge and skill as prerequisite for effective functioning in the contemporary world, the school has integrated information and communication technology into their curriculum as emphasized by the federal government.

There are over thirty staff in the school with approximately twenty five classrooms.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a laudable project embarked upon by the Federal Government which is not unconnected with building the capacity of teachers and improving the quality of education activities in schools. According to the brief on MDG (2007) retraining programme for primary school teachers, the Federal Ministry of Education through the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) embarked on a nationwide retraining programme in 2006. The training is being funded from Debt Relief Grant.

According to the brief (2007) the overall goal of the MDG programme is to retrain all primary school teachers in Nigeria. About 148 centres across the nation hosted the maiden edition of the retraining workshops that was held in September 2006. Since the inception of the retraining programme in 2006, it has become an annual event.

The workshops which was organized by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) was in three segments; each covering six days as shown below:

1. North-West and South-East zones
4th – 9th September, 2006
2. North-Central and South – South zones: 11th – 16th September, 2006
3. North-East and South-West Zones:
18th – 23rd September, 2006

According to the brief on 2007 retraining programme, the objectives of the workshops were to:

- a) Enable teachers to make pupils to perceive learning as an interesting and pleasant activity that promotes the development of self-understanding, inquiry and critical thinking skills.
- b) Disseminate innovative practical skills that would enhance the teachers' effectiveness and promote greater mastery of the subject matter by pupils;
- c) Update the teachers' knowledge of subject matter; and
- d) Contribute to the development of positive self concept and attitude towards the teaching profession.

Achievement of MDGs

Over these few years, the MDGs project has recorded notable success amidst some challenges. The consistent annual organization of the workshops and the retraining of primary school teachers since the inception of the project is yet another notable achievement. The provision of the instructional manuals and the quality as well as the support services in aid of effective tutorial delivery is pertinent to highlight.

In addition to the above, reports from monitoring officials/agencies, consultants/resource persons and centre managers vividly attest to the high-level satisfaction of the participants. Media reports during and after the workshops expressed their appreciation and satisfaction and spelt out the immense

contributions of the project to positive changes in educational system in the country.

Furthermore, the brief from the 2006 workshop also revealed that many newspapers captured some of the comments passed by the participants applauding the retraining programme. The Guardian newspaper of Thursday, September 28, 2006 is an instant. It contains comments of different participants and how the project has made remarkable difference in their approaches and methods of teaching using various techniques.

The Impact of MDGs on the Teaching of English Language in FCE Demonstration Primary School

The National language policy on education refers to the language provisions or statements espoused in the National Policy on Education. The Policy statement is taken as the ideology of the government concerning the language situation in the area of education. In the worlds of Fasehun (2008)

Two major roles are assigned to language in the National Policy on Education. The first to be identified is the recognition of language as a curriculum, course or subject of study of which indigenous languages play vital role. The second function to be identified is the utilization of language as the medium of instruction especially at the pre-primary education level and early stage of the primary education section.

The implantation of English language has alleviated the problem of choice of lingual franca. However, we

should note that as a language that has developed and risen to the level of an official or second language in Nigeria, its functions cannot be over flogged. It is the major medium of instruction all educational system, a language of commerce, law, government and social interaction among Nigerians from various ethnic groups who could not interact and communicate among themselves because of the multiplicity of the indigenous languages.

English having been accorded with such responsibilities becomes one of the most important languages in the country. No wonder then, that it is made compulsory at all levels of education. A credit in it is one of the prerequisite for getting admission into institutions of higher learning. This then saddles the primary school English teacher with the responsibility of laying a firm, solid English foundation in the learners. The success of the above is often marred by the non conformity or wrong implementation of the national language policy as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) which states that:

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.

Non compliance to the above has posed a serious problem in primary school.

More often than not teachers do not switch over to English after the first year. The few that do so, do it wrongly. This account is evident in all states of the federation. Federal college of education staff demonstration school is not an exception.

With this prevailing situation, the teachers of the above named school consider the MDGs project as timely and saviour of English language teaching process.

The table below is a summary of the questionnaire administered to teachers after the 2010 MDGs workshops and retraining programme held in Kano State

From the summary of the questionnaire as represented and shown in the above table; it is obvious that the MDGs project over the last five years has achieved remarkable success and has made great impact on the lives of primary school teachers in the country.

Items contained in the questionnaire	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Attendance	24	26	12	15	18
Organization of the workshop	Well organized	Much improvement	Better than the previous	Well organized	Good organization
Provision of materials and manuals	Materials arrived late but were adequate	More than enough	Enough materials	Adequate though they came late	Surplus materials
Tutorial/instruction	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	Interesting and very practiced	Not as good as the previous year	Better than the previous year
Quality of manual	Rich content	Very rich and comprehensive	Comprehensive and very relevant	More better than the previous	Very good broad with varieties
Competency of resource persons	Qualified and innovative	Competent and efficient	Vased and very competent	Hardworking and efficient	Some good others not have no teaching skills
Overall assessment of the retraining/workshop	Very good start an eye opener	Better than the previous year	More practical it is worthwhile	Very meaningful and educative	Life changing in the educational system in primary school

Journal of Teacher Perspective

The table also shows that improvement is made every year. That is to show that the workshops and retraining of teachers is not static. It is dynamic – it operates a system where after the evaluation of each retraining and workshop activity, challenges encountered are used as stepping stones for improvement.

It might interest us to know that out of the eighteen (18) participants that attended the 2010 workshop and retraining programme from FCE demonstration primary school in Kano sixteen advocated for an in house training programme for other teachers of the school. Their request was granted and the in-house workshop and retraining of all the teachers was organized by the school. The manual provided by MDGs to those participants were used. Below is the response of some of the twenty teachers interviewed with regard to the teaching of English language in the school.

Question	Corollary
No. of teachers that took part in the in-house workshop/retraining programme	32 teachers out of 35 teachers
No of teachers using the manual as instructional guide material	28 teachers
No of English teachers using the English language manual	26 teachers
Effectiveness of the manual	The above twenty six (26) teachers attested to the fact that the manuals have helped to improve their methods of teaching English and

resulted to a lively and more practical teaching/learning process. "it has made teaching and learning of English than we could ever imagine.
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In addition to the above, the following are responses for other teachers during the interview to determine the impact of MDGs on the teaching of English as earlier mentioned.

"How would you rate the in-house retraining exercise using the MDGs English studies manual?"

Response:

"I consider myself lucky to have participated in the in-house retraining exercise we are being exposed to new ways and techniques of teaching, and we are being encouraged to always use instructional materials. It was a worthwhile venture. I can imagine how interesting and beneficial the real workshop/retraining organized by NTI is ... I hope and pray that all the teachers in our school are given opportunity to participate in the next workshop and retraining by NTI"

The above is an account of a teacher that did not benefit directly but indirectly from the MDGs, yet he yielded positive result.

Some other teachers that participated in the programme have this to say:

The programme was very well organized. We are using the manual as guide to teach our pupils English; the corollary is excellent. Nevertheless, there were minor problems, which we

believe could be curbed in future. Some of the problem include” nomination of non teachers to participate, some of the trainers are not competent instructors are not competent instructors, feeding and accommodation just to mention but a few.

From the data above, it suffice to say that the teaching of English language at FCE Demonstration primary school has positively taken a new shape. The improvement is not unconnected to the MDGs programme; which has exposed the teachers to better ways of handling English language in the school. The activity based approach, the teachers agreed is of the best.

Conclusion

When a language comes in contact with a new environment for the language to survive it has to adapt to the new environment. Such adaptation, in the words of Aloba (2005) may develop to what is called variant rather than deviant. This is the rationale behind the varieties of English in Nigeria. In order to retain the originality or the standard form of English and encourage pupils to use the same, the MDGs manual has immensely played and is still playing a vital role in the effective teaching and learning of English language.

On a final note, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the project so far has been successful thus: resource persons, participants head teachers, non teaching staff of primary schools and other stakeholders broadly applauded and appreciated the MDGs retaining programme.

Recommendations

To achieve the goals of the programme for a successful continuation, the lessons learnt from the challenges of the 2006 maiden edition, the sequence years as well as those cited in this paper should be taken in cognizance to avert all impediments.

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