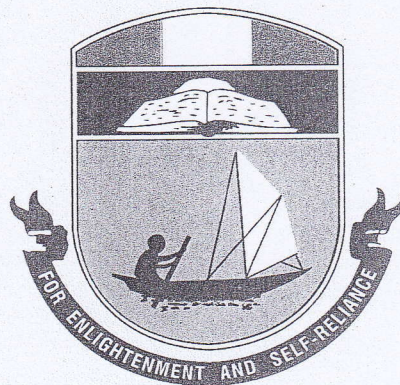


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**APPRAISING NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTIONS' ROLES IN
INCREASING ACCESS TO THE STUDY OF SELECTED INTERNATIONAL
LANGUAGES AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN NIGERIA**

By

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Abstract

The most popularly adduced reason for the advent, establishment and licensing of non-governmental universities in Nigeria is the need to increase access to tertiary education for the teeming population of university admission seekers that possess the pre-requisites but are unable to secure admission just because of inadequate space. Taking cognizance of the fact that non-governmental university proprietors are entrepreneurs that have profit making as a legitimate goal, it should not be unexpected that they would prefer only the courses that their market surveys show as most sought after and neglect the ones that are less patronized. This then puts a question mark on the place of access provision which the non-governmental university proprietors would have the world believe as central to their motivation for venturing into the provision of university education. This study, based on proofs from literature of the relevance of studies in English, French, German and Arabic languages to national development, sought to appraise the contributions of non-governmental Nigerian universities in increasing access to such disciplines. The survey adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure and collected data through visits to the websites of all non-governmental universities in the country, and conducted interviews with relevant officers of sampled universities. Frequency counts and percentages were used in answering three research questions. The findings reveal an appalling general disinterestedness of non-governmental universities in providing access for prospective students of the languages as well as teacher preparation in them. Suggestions are then made accordingly.

Introduction

Obasi, Akuchie, and Obasi (2014) observe that public policy was able to use non-governmental universities to significantly increase total enrollment by 10.4% in 2013 though it failed to do so in the first decade of the operation of non-governmental universities. This means the room for improvement is not shut. While we strive for the improved access, it will be appropriate to examine the distribution of the access provided by the non-governmental universities across disciplines, bearing in mind the fact that some disciplines are more lucrative than the others.

Access to university education in Nigeria can be assessed from the glorious past, the present challenges, the future and its prospects. Basically, the provision of university education within the boundaries of Nigeria has its beginning in 1948 with the establishment of the University College, Ibadan as an affiliate of the University of London which kicked off with a total enrolment of 210 students (Okebukola, 2004). The colonial government had much earlier been uninterested in providing education for Nigerians. So, Christian missionaries shouldered the responsibility of the establishment and maintenance of schools for evangelistic motives right from 1842. Alade (2011) observes that between 1842 and 1882, the Christian Missions were in total control of the early and formal school curriculum and the supervision of its implementation in Nigeria. The colonial government started participating in educational provision for Nigerian children by giving grants-in-aids to missionary schools that met pre-stated conditions in 1772 (Muraina, 2010). This was not widespread, though. But as one of the fallouts from the Phelps-Stokes Commission's Report of 1922 (Fafunwa, 1975), the government stepped up involvement in the education of the native Nigerians.

It is noteworthy that the indisputability of the facts that there was noticeable increase in the manpower needs at the upper cadre workforce and there was real wisdom in filling some of the vacancies with natives that brought about the idea of establishing the University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan). As number of university education seekers continue to increase beyond the carrying capacity of only one university, more universities. For example, Adiotomre and Ekwevugbe (2006) reveal that the University of Benin was built to cater for 10,000 students at maturity but now admits over 25,000 full-time students. When it became clear that the federal government universities could no longer cope with admission demands by teeming qualified youths, state governments were authorized to start additional universities.

As a part of the efforts at alleviating the trauma of qualified applicants for university education that were prone to being turned down for no fault of theirs, the Alhaji Sheu Shagari-led democratic government inaugurated the Open University of Nigeria in 1982 (Kazeem and Ige, 2010). But even with more public universities, Onwe (2013) observes from literature that between the years 1999 and 2005, only about 11 percent of total applicants gained admission to Nigerian universities. Situations had always been that bad for admission applicants before the 1999 quoted by Onwe (2013), thus necessitating the licencing of non-governmental universities which commenced in 1999 (Obasi, Akuchie and Obasi, 2014).

Non-governmental Intervention in Access to University Education in Nigeria: Cases of Marginalised Disciplines

Obasi, Akuchie and Obasi (2014), however, note sadly that the rapid increase in the number of non-governmental universities from 3 in 1999 to 34 in 2007, then 41 in October 2009 to 45 in March 2011, and 50 in 2013 made insignificant impact on enrollment figures (merely 3.4% of total enrollment in 2007 and only 5% of total enrollment in 2009) which was about the same enrollment in one large federal university such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria with 39,219 students or University of Maiduguri with 38,514 students.

The much-needed consummation of the marriage between town and gown can happen only if the end-users of the products of universities are duly consulted. This is when society's felt needs in the area of manpower development can be satisfactorily met (Anyanwu, n.d.). But a critical investigation of the preferences of Nigerian non-governmental universities would reveal that economic considerations tower high above verification and satisfaction of actual societal needs.

Anyikwa, Madi and Ememe (2012) report that high unemployment rate among graduates, particularly in their specific fields of training, remains a problem in Nigeria. This further confirms the absence of any serious investigation into the society's actual needs by both public and non-governmental universities. That people continue to troop into such disciplines that are no longer attracting employment shows the general lack of occupational information on the part of university admission seekers. The universities' failure to mount courses that are specifically tailored to meeting societal needs proves lack of sense of community service generally and the supremacy of economic gains on the part of non-governmental universities.

Oloyede and Adekola (2010) have, however, identified limitations placed on the non-governmental universities by the regulatory bodies concerning the courses they are permitted to float. But it is common knowledge that such regulatory bodies do not place arbitrary embargos on courses that universities have been so committed to the extent of securing adequate human and material resources. So, the buck gets back to the universities that fulfill requisite conditions for most patronized disciplines but fail or refuse to make acceptable provisions for the not-so-patronised courses.

It has been severally pointed out that Nigerian non-governmental universities charge exorbitant and sometimes outrageous fees (Ajayi and Ekundayo, 2008; Obasi, Akuchie and Obasi, 2014). Most Nigerians cannot afford the fees. As concluded by Akinyemi, Ofem and Adebisi (2012) after a critical analysis of school fees charged by non-governmental universities for various courses of studies, the school fees required of a student in such an institution is higher than the total income of an average Nigerian family. So, access is further denied their children that are ordinarily qualified for university admission but are unable to make admission lists in public universities as a result of over-stretched carrying capacity. Lending credence to the excessive and over-riding economic motivation of non-governmental university education providers, including those established by faith-based organisations, pay their personnel poorly despite the huge sums collected from students as school fees (Oludayo, Uche, Omonijo and Eche, 2014).

Since non-governmental universities exist to bring huge economic gains to their individual or corporate proprietors, such universities concentrate on lucrative courses that only very rich parents can afford for their privileged children. Among such are Law, Medicine, Engineering courses of different types and prestigious social science courses. Most non-governmental universities have, therefore, not contributed to alleviation of the problem of admission to courses in Education and liberal arts. The words of Okebukola (2014) aptly describe this situation:

I applaud Lead City University, a private university for having a Faculty of Education. This is a terrain most non-governmental universities fear to tread on account of the thin number of candidates willingly electing to study Education. For me, it is a sign of genuine commitment on the part of the Proprietor, Board of Trustees, Council and Management of Lead City University to deliver quality university education rather than driven by a motive for profit.

Expounding on this, Okebukola (2014) observed that even where admission seekers willingly or otherwise agree to study Education, they and their parents are most unlikely to be ready to pay huge sums of money to pursue such a cause.

The current study seeks to provide a statistically valid picture of Nigerian non-governmental universities' contributions to the endeavour to ease admission difficulties that applicants for admission to such courses of study as English Language, French Language, Arabic Language and German Language encounter despite the usefulness of such programmes to national development. The paper also takes cognizance of the roles of a Faculty of education where teachers of languages are trained for both content knowledge and pedagogic competencies. In other words, a university that is committed to enhancement of opportunities for careers in the languages should offer the languages both in the cognate departments of its Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education.

The justification for investigating non-governmental universities' commitment to offering admission to prospective students of English language is predicated on the over-arching importance of the language to personal and national development at the local as well as the international level. It is the language of school instruction, governance, administration, legislation, judiciary, international relations, unification of the country's numerous ethnic constituents, and social prestige (Adeniran, 1980; Okedara 1997; Oluga, Adewusi, Babalola, Oyediran, 1999; FGN, 2004; Osisanwo, 2005). Despite government policy to the contrary, it remains the country's sole official language in actual practice (Olatunji, 2000). Because a credit pass in English language is compulsory for admission to any course in Nigerian universities and some other tertiary institutions (Iroegbu, 1997; Olatunji, 2000; Osisanwo, 2005), universities are supposed to promote pre-service and in-service education for a an effective and efficient teaching force for the language, hence the crucial need for English Language Unit in an appropriate department of Faculty of Education.

Furthermore, English is the language for official transactions in over 95% of international organizations (Crystal, 2000). Most scientific publications around the world are in English language (Osisanwo, 2005). To receive information directly from Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA) that is free from the adulteration due to transmission, good mastery of the English language is a must. Crystal (2000) states that about 1.5 billion people (one in four of the world's population at that time) used English as a first, second or foreign language. It is safe to assert that fifteen years after Crystal's (2000) work, the language has continued to wax stronger in geographical spread of use. Graddol (1997, 2000) testifies that the global prominence of the English language is not subject to any form of threat, and that this is the general submission of majority of those that are professionally concerned with the English language worldwide Interaction will be easy with over 1.5 billion people that speak English in various forms would be facilitated further if all Nigerian universities encourage extensive teaching and learning of English Language as well as training of teachers for the same purpose.

Since the National Policy on Education makes English the medium of instruction as from the end of the third year of elementary education, students' comprehension of learning contents in their various school subjects depends on mastery of the language. Students' endemic failure in English Language is thus a bad omen concerning their capability to make good use of all other subjects. There is thus an obvious need to pay more attention to the education of English Language teachers in terms of quantity and quality. Even students of other faculties need to be provided with adequate human and material resources for English Language learning in Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions.

The widespread use of French at the international level presenting anybody with adequate proficiency in the language with a lot of opportunities underscores the need for Nigerian universities to establishment and maintenance of French Language departments in Arts and Education faculties. The "smooth interaction with our neighbours" necessitates "every Nigerian to speak French" (FGN, 2004:5) which the Nigerian government observes cannot be played down without grave consequences. The preservation of linguistic diversity will be of inestimable benefits to Nigeria and the world. The teaching of French is a necessary requirement for this (Institut Francais Nigeria, 2015).

By encouraging a widespread teaching and learning of French, Nigeria would be contributing to a much-needed reversal of the imminent death of biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity which a forced homogenisation of the planet is engendering (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, Institut Francais Nigeria, n.d.). Opara (2010) also identifies French language's prospective significant role in ensuring cultural revival and integration in Nigeria and across the West African sub-region.

France is said to be the world's fifth biggest economy with enormous attraction for entrepreneurs, researchers and a lot of foreign students (Institut Francais Nigeria retrieved on 15th May, 2015). Within Nigeria, according to Owioye (2010), there are several French enterprises, among which are CFAO, SCOA, BNP, Total, Elf, Michelin, Peugeot, Fougere, SGE, Bouygues, SAE, SPIE-Batignolles, Degremont and BEC Frères, that would need the services of Nigerian experts. Professionals that possess working knowledge of French language can be gainfully employed in the afore-mentioned and other companies. Thus, encouraging the teaching and learning of the French language as well as training of teachers of same would be helpful in positioning Nigerians to appropriate a great deal of advantages academically and economically. According to Araromi (2013), knowledge of French language has significant effect on Journalism Education in Nigeria, at X^2 Calculated (9) = 44.50 greater than X^2 Critical (9) = 16.9 at $P=0.000<0.05$ in a study of 125 randomly selected Mass Communication students at the Polytechnic, Ibadan. The observation by Pinon and Haydon (2010:46) that the "US, France and the UK are the main investors in Nigeria and the country is one of the main hubs of investment in Africa" imply that the mastery of the English language and French is loaded with substantial economic advantages as the opposite also translates into loss of opportunities. Therefore, Owioye (2010) recommends the development and promotion of French for Specific Purposes in the similitude of English for Specific Purposes so that the teaching and learning of French language in our universities may be specifically functional, robust and beneficial. The foregoing and other benefits of extensive teaching and learning of French makes attention to the language in Nigeria adequately justified.

Arabic language, according to Adeyemi (2013), is spoken or read by more than a quarter of the world's population and it is a source of sciences, with quite some its words in still remaining in the books of Science and Mathematics. Stressing the contributions of Arabic to early advances in the fields of science and technology, Adeyemi (2013) points out that words like "alcohol" and "alkali" are derived from Arabic names *al-kahl* and *al-qaliy* respectively.

Proving the nexus between language and economy, Adetunji (2014) asserts that Arabic has been a factor for economic development for many people at the individual as well as global levels. This is not surprising, considering the number of teachers that teach the language in both formal and non-formal settings worldwide and publishers of literary, linguistic and religious books in the language. Apart from revenue from the education industry, bilateral trade with Arabic speaking countries can be a good boost to the Nigerian economy. As pointed out by Tinsley and Board (2013), six Arabic speaking countries appear among the UK's top 50 export market in goods, with an aggregate value of over £12 billion accruing to the economy of in 2012. If Nigeria can also exploit similar opportunities to the tune of a quarter of this, the country's ailing economy can be expected to experience remarkable revival

Ayuba (2013) testifies to the immense contributions of Arabists to the world of literature that have attracted ample research efforts in Nigeria and beyond. So also Imam (2013) emphasises the need for members of the Nigerian Armed Forces to acquire working knowledge of Arabic language to facilitate optimal success in their international assignments in peace keeping operation. Imam (2013) cites an instance, as reported on BBC in August, 1992 on a special program, in which some officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces lost their lives in Somalia as a result of their ignorance of the language spoken by the enemies in the area of operation. The then commander could hear the communication among the rebels but he could not understand and interpret the interlocutory thrusts and thereby led his company into enemy's fire and this resulted in the avoidable death of about ten of them.

It is noteworthy that Arabic, French and German are among the languages most cited as priority languages needed in fostering British diplomatic skills for the ease of global communication for peace-building and combating organised crimes, cyber crimes and terrorism (Tinsley and Board, 2013). A critical consideration of some statements affirming Germany's prominent roles in the economy of Europe as well as the whole world would reveal how beneficial a widespread promotion of the German language in Nigerian schools would be. "Germany today effectively runs the European Union" and "Berlin has become the uncontested centre of the continent in both political and economic terms" and even the military aspect which Germany's expansionist instincts were formerly restricted is now enjoying remarkable enjoyment and support from Washington (Werbowski, 2013). Germany's strength as the most populous nation in the European Union (Münkler, 2015) can translate into a great advantage to any African country that demonstrates interest in German language.

Germany's export strength is also remarkable (Weidmann, 2011). Germany, being a major voice in the European Union and world economy, has the potentials to facilitate improved regulation of the global markets, especially capital markets (Dauderstädt and Kellermann, 2007). The language of a country such benefits is undoubtedly worthy of being promoted in Nigerian schools. While the Nigerian government does not need to be overly patronizing, there is still need to ensure access for those that willingly opt to study it at university level. If private interventions too increase the needed access, it would be a worthwhile service and credence to the non-governmental organisations' claim of going into university education provision with the motive of increased access.

With all the foregoing benefits of the concerned languages to Nigeria, it should be expected that the private universities would be committed to contributing access for the benefit of seekers of admission into degree and teacher education programme in the languages. But this can happen only if the universities have good rapport with and genuine interest in the wellbeing of the society. Thus, Anyawu (1970-1979:31) asserts that it is only through adequate discussion and mutual understanding that the much-needed "a marriage between town and gown" can be "consummated" and it is only then that the society's needs and what the universities offer can be harmonized.

Method and Materials

A three-stage sampling procedure was employed in carrying out this descriptive survey. The first stage took the form of convenience sampling in which visits were made to all available websites of non-governmental universities in Nigeria to glean information as regards school fees regimes and the names of courses and programmes offered by each. At the second stage thirty non-governmental universities were used through stratified random sampling to ensure a balance between privately owned universities and those owned by religious organisations. Thus, a total of 30 out of the 61 non-governmental universities at the time of the study were sampled. The third stage was in the form of convenience sampling of as many of the officers of each sampled university that agreed to provide needed information either face-to-face or

through a telephone conversation. The major instrument used for the study was a ten-item interview guide titled *Access to Language Courses in Nigerian Non-governmental Universities*. The statistical tools of frequency counts, percentages and column charts were used in answering two research questions. Visits were made to some of the sampled universities while telephone conversations, were held by the researchers with appropriate officers of other ones as preferred by each concerned officers. Frequency counts and percentages were employed in analyzing the data got from the encounters, showing how many universities in each sub-category offers access to each course.

Findings

Three research questions are generated to guide the conduct of this study, thus:

Research Question One: To what extent does non-governmental intervention contribute to the provision of access to university education for prospective specialists in English, French, German, and Arabic languages in Nigeria?

Table 1: Statistical Presentation of Non-governmental Universities' Access Provision for Specialty in English, French, German, and Arabic Languages in Nigeria

<i>Programme</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Not Available</i>	<i>Total</i>
B.A. English	30	15 (50%)	15 (50%)	30 (100%)
B.. French	30	2 (6.67%)	28 (93.33%)	30 (100%)
B.A. German	30	0 (0%)	30 (100%)	30 (100%)
B.A. Arabic	30	2 (6.67%)	28 (93.33%)	30 (100%)

Table 1 shows that 15 (50%) of the non-governmental universities sampled provide access to prospective applicants for admission to specialize in English Studies while another equal set (15 or 50%) does not. Only 2 (6.67%) of them provide access for specialization in French while 28 (93.33%) do not. The same statistics hold true about Arabic Studies (2 or 6.67% offer the B.A. Arabic programme while 28 or 93.33% do not). None of the 30 sampled non-governmental universities provide access for B.A. German.

The most obvious implication of this finding answers the research Question 1 that the extent of non-governmental universities' contribution of access to prospective specialists in English, French, German, and Arabic languages is very low. It means in the present times that there is not enough space for many qualified applicants for public university admission, the hope of any candidate for any of these languages, most especially German, is dashed as far as the possibility of securing admission to a non-governmental university is concerned.

Research Question Two: To what extent does non-governmental intervention contribute to provision of access teacher education in English French, German and Arabic languages in Nigerian universities?

Table 2: Statistical Presentation of Non-governmental Universities' Access Provision for Specialty in English, French, German, and Arabic Language Teaching Skills in Nigeria

<i>Programme</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Not Available</i>	<i>Total</i>
B.Ed. English	30	4 (13.33%)	26 (86.67%)	30 (100%)
B.Ed. French	30	0 (0%)	30 (100%)	30 (100%)
B.Ed. German	30	0 (0%)	30 (100%)	30 (100%)
B.Ed. Arabic	30	2 (6.67%)	28 (93.33%)	30 (100%)

Table 2 shows that only 4 (13.33%) offer English Studies teacher education while 26 (86.67%) do not provide opportunity for such. None of the sampled 30 non-governmental universities offers teacher education for French and German. Only 2 (6.67%) offer Arabic teacher education. The answer to research Question 2 is thus that provision of access for admission into English and Arabic teacher education programmes by the non-governmental universities in Nigeria is low while such universities contribute nothing in terms of access to teacher education programmes for French and German.

Considering the call for training and employment of more English Language, French and Arabic teachers at various fora (Olatunji, 2000; Ogah, 2004; Imam, 2013; Kolawole, Olatunji and Akanbi, 2015), for example, it is not very encouraging to note that only one out of two non-governmental universities supplement governmental universities' access into English Language teacher education programme.

The rate of provision of access to Arabic Language teacher education programme by non-governmental universities is too low for the attainment of the Arabic literacy needed to have enlightened citizens would not be swayed into the kind of religious fundamentalism that results in wanton destruction of lives and properties as being perpetrated by Boko Haram and its sister destroyers. Also, the lack of consideration for increased access to German teacher education is a terrible disservice to the nation and mere lip service to access boost brandished as major motive of private participation in university education provision.

Research Question Three: Is there any difference in access rate for English, French, German, and Arabic studies and teacher education between non-governmentally owned universities and their religious-mission-owned counterparts in Nigeria?

Table 3: Comparative Presentation of Privately Owned and Mission-Owned Universities' Access Provision for Specialty in English, French, German, and Arabic Language Teaching Skills in Nigeria

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Ownership Type/Programme Availability</i>	
	<i>Private Ownership</i>	<i>Religious Mission Ownership</i>
B.Ed. English	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)
B.Ed. French	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
B.Ed. German	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
B.Ed. Arabic	0 (0%)	2 (13.33%)

Table 3 indicates that both categories of non-governmental universities (privately owned and mission-owned) make equal level of low access available for English Language teacher education (2 or 13.33% apiece). Both categories in the sample contribute nothing to access to French Language and German Language teacher education programmes. But while 2 (13.33%) of the mission-owned universities provide access to Arabic Language teacher education, none of the privately owned universities does. It is, however, noteworthy that the two that offer Arabic Language teacher education are owned by Islamic missions. Discussions with some officers of the concerned universities also revealed that the universities receive financial and material aids from international Islamic organisations for the propagation of Arabic and Islamic education. Imam (2013), however, identifies lack of qualified Arabic language teachers as a serious problem.

According to Enahoro and Badmus (2013), all the non-governmental universities in Nigeria are still being confronted by funding problems except a few that are owned by religious organizations who augment their university's funding. This could be understood against the backdrop of the facts that (i) religious organisations attract the goodwill of individuals and other organisations that give offerings, pay tithes and special levies or donate generously towards God's projects and (ii) religious organisation's

schools are supposed to be primarily for evangelism and contribution to a better and Godlier society but not profiteering.

It is understandable that the elitist admission seekers that can afford the exorbitant fees charged by private universities may not be ready to pay so heavily for a course like language or language teacher education (Adeogun, Subair and Osifila, 2009). According to Ofem and Adebisi (2012), non-governmental universities in Nigeria charged between N164,000 (\$1,044.59) and N1,590,000 (\$10,127.39) because they are mostly for-profit institutions owned, financed and managed by either individuals or organisations and as such exempted from governmental funding. It is noteworthy that the charges have mostly increased as at the time of carrying out this study. However, if the non-governmental universities wish to stay committed to the professed motive of increasing access to the less patronised courses, they will need to charge fees affordable to prospective students of the concerned departments and faculties. If otherwise, they would be more honest to revise the reasons they would offer for their operations. This will not criminalise them in any way, though. After all, there is no crime in setting up a business enterprise for profit so long there is value for money.

Conclusion

The findings from the current study have revealed non-governmental universities do not significantly increase access to English Language and English Language teacher education programmes in Nigeria. The access rate contributed to Arabic Language and Arabic teacher education is even half that of English Language. Currently, none of the non-governmental universities contributes to access for candidates willing to specialize in German or German Language teacher education.

These findings show that the economic viability of each course mounted by the proprietors of the non-governmental universities takes precedence over their professed desire to increase access to university education and thus offer respite to the teeming qualified candidates yearly denied university admission just because of the limited carrying capacities of government-owned universities. This is, of course, not an attempt to disparage the significant boost in access to university education occasioned by the noble efforts of the individual and organisational proprietors of the university. No one can sanely expect them to invest in a venture that is certainly not going to bring any financial profit.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings are the following recommendations:

- i. The Nigerian government should not expect the profit-oriented non-governmental universities to make any significant input to increased access to the study of English, French, Arabic and German languages and teacher education in the identified languages. The government should, therefore, see to the provision of adequate admission opportunities into such programmes in public universities.
- ii. Government should commission and encouraged more extensive research on the potential benefits of increased access into such programmers in Nigerian universities.
- iii. Government should set up scholarship schemes for candidates for such programmes in non-governmental universities in order to ease the attendant financial burdens. Even the private universities will be encouraged to mount such programmes if they realize that patronage is increasing.
- iv. Having identified the areas of the Nigerian workforce that graduates from such language and language teacher education programmes can be optimally useful, the government should not delay in getting them absorbed into such areas.
- v. Non-governmental organisations and associations that serve as interest groups related to the languages should also provide incentives to students of such languages.

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