

## The role of teachers in national language policy implementation in Nigeria through digital technology and social media

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### Abstract

This study examines the role of teachers in implementing Nigeria's national language policy, focusing on the use of digital technology and social media as innovative tools for overcoming longstanding challenges. It highlights how teachers can leverage these platforms to enhance language instruction, expand access to resources, and foster community engagement. By integrating digital literacy into language education, teachers can address barriers such as inadequate training, limited materials, and overcrowded classrooms. The findings indicate that digital tools offer scalable, cost-effective solutions for policy implementation, particularly in bilingual education. Online platforms, social media networks, and digital content creation empower teachers to deliver more inclusive and culturally relevant instruction. While challenges such as limited digital literacy and weak infrastructure persist, targeted professional development and sustained investment in digital resources can significantly improve outcomes. Embedding digital strategies within the national language policy not only strengthens educational quality but also promotes cultural preservation and national unity.

**Keywords:** National language policy (Nigeria), bilingual education, digital literacy, educational technology, social media in language learning.

## Introduction

Teachers occupy a central position in implementing Nigeria's national language policy, which seeks to promote multilingualism, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen national unity (Adegbija, 2004). However, efforts to achieve these goals have often been hindered by challenges such as inadequate training, scarce resources, and overcrowded classrooms (Bamgbose, 1991; Igboanusi, 2008). The emergence of digital technologies and the widespread use of social media present new opportunities to overcome these obstacles (Collins & Halverson, 2018).

Digital platforms can transform the teaching and learning of languages by providing access to interactive resources, enabling collaboration among educators and learners, and fostering community involvement. For example, language learning apps and virtual libraries expand students' exposure to educational materials, while social media groups create spaces for peer interaction and knowledge sharing. These innovations allow teachers not only to improve classroom instruction but also to extend language learning beyond school walls.

Integrating digital literacy into language education represents a paradigm shift in policy implementation. By leveraging technological tools, teachers can deliver more inclusive, scalable, and engaging instruction. This approach emphasizes innovation, collaboration, and adaptability - key elements for realizing the objectives of Nigeria's language policy in today's rapidly evolving educational environment (Mundy et al., 2012).

## Background

### Overview of Nigeria's *National Language Policy*

Nigeria's national language policy is designed not only to uphold English as the official language but also to promote indigenous languages as vital tools for cultural preservation, effective communication, and national unity (Fafunwa, 1989). The policy stipulates that primary education should begin in the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, with English gradually introduced as a second language (Adegbija, 2004). This framework aims to ensure that children build a solid foundation in their native language before transitioning to English.

Despite its sound objectives, implementation has been inconsistent and uneven across the country. Challenges include limited availability of teaching materials in indigenous languages, inadequate teacher training for bilingual instruction, and regional disparities in language use (Igboanusi, 2008). In some areas, for instance, there is a shortage of teachers proficient in the local language, undermining policy effectiveness.

Teachers are central to the success of this policy. They not only deliver instruction but also create enabling environments for students to learn and use multiple languages (Bamgbose, 1991). Teachers can serve as advocates for indigenous language inclusion, bridging the gap between national policy and classroom practice.

The National Policy on Education underscores this responsibility. Section 1, Subsection 8a, mandates that “educational activities shall be learner-centered for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment,” while Subsection 8b requires that “teaching shall be practical, activity-based, experiential, and IT-supported” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). To meet these standards, teachers need strong institutional support - ranging from access to digital resources and teaching materials to robust training in bilingual education.

Without such investment, the objectives of the national language policy - and, by extension, Nigeria’s broader educational and developmental goals - will remain unrealized. Sustained government commitment to infrastructure and teacher professional development is therefore essential to unlocking the full potential of multilingual education.

### **Importance of digital technology in education**

Digital technology has transformed the landscape of education, introducing new teaching methods, learning experiences, and avenues for collaboration. By leveraging digital tools, educators can access a vast range of resources, design personalized learning pathways, and create more inclusive classrooms. Beyond enhancing pedagogy, technology also democratizes access to knowledge, bridging geographical and socioeconomic divides.

In Nigeria, where the national language policy plays a critical role in shaping educational practices, digital platforms and social media offer innovative solutions to longstanding barriers. Teachers can now use online repositories to access teaching materials, exchange insights with colleagues, and enrich classroom instruction with multimedia resources. Social media, in particular, has become a powerful tool for community engagement—linking teachers, parents, and stakeholders in shared efforts to promote indigenous languages.

Equally important is the role of digital literacy. Equipping teachers and students with the skills to navigate the digital environment effectively ensures that technology becomes an enabler rather than a barrier. When teachers integrate digital literacy into language education, they empower students not only to learn a language but also to participate meaningfully in a global knowledge economy.

Thus, digital technology is not just a supplementary tool - it is a cornerstone of effective language policy implementation. Its integration into classrooms positions Nigeria's education system to meet the demands of the 21st century while preserving cultural identity and promoting multilingualism.

### **Innovative strategies for policy implementation: Digital content creation and sharing**

A key strategy for implementing Nigeria's national language policy lies in the creation and dissemination of digital content, particularly in indigenous languages. Teachers play a central role in this process by using digital tools to produce a wide variety of learning materials. These may include engaging videos that illustrate language use, podcasts highlighting cultural perspectives, or interactive games that make language learning both enjoyable and effective (Albirini, 2006).

Digital platforms and social media extend the reach of these resources, enabling teachers to share their content widely and collaborate with colleagues across regions. Such cross-regional exchanges enrich teaching practices and expose students to diverse linguistic and cultural expressions (Gulati, 2008).

An added advantage of digital content is its adaptability. Materials can be updated quickly to reflect local contexts and tailored to suit different learner needs. This flexibility makes digital tools both relevant and cost-effective, especially in settings where traditional print resources are limited (Mundy et al., 2012).

By embracing digital content creation and sharing, teachers not only enhance classroom learning but also help preserve Nigeria's linguistic diversity. These strategies create a dynamic, inclusive, and culturally grounded model of language education that directly supports the goals of the national language policy.

## **Role of teachers**

Teachers are the linchpin of Nigeria’s national language policy. They are responsible not only for delivering curriculum content in English and indigenous languages but also for adapting instruction to the realities of multilingual classrooms. Beyond teaching language skills, they cultivate cultural understanding, communication abilities, and a sense of identity among students. Through interactive activities, real-life examples, and multimedia resources, teachers create immersive environments that bring languages to life.

## **Teachers as implementers**

Teachers are the frontline implementers of educational policy. They translate broad policy goals into meaningful classroom experiences. Their role goes beyond language instruction: they advocate for the inclusion of indigenous languages, model bilingual practices, and provide crucial support for students navigating multiple languages.

## **Professional development**

The effectiveness of teachers depends heavily on their training and ongoing professional development. Workshops, seminars, and continuous support systems help them refine their pedagogical skills, adopt new methods, and respond to diverse learner needs. Professional development also fosters collaboration among educators, encouraging the exchange of best practices and innovations. When schools invest in teachers’ growth, they empower them to deliver high-quality, relevant, and engaging language education.

## **Teachers as digital facilitators**

In today’s digital age, teachers must also function as digital facilitators. By integrating technology into lessons, they can create interactive and personalized learning experiences. Language learning apps, online platforms, and virtual classrooms provide real-time feedback and make lessons more engaging. Teachers can also contribute to cultural preservation by producing digital content—such as videos, e-books, or online games—in indigenous languages, strengthening students’ sense of identity and belonging.

Online professional development further supports this role, offering flexible opportunities to learn about classroom management, emerging technologies, and innovative teaching strategies. Teachers who embrace digital facilitation not only enhance learning outcomes but also ensure that students acquire the digital skills necessary to thrive in a globalized world.

## Challenges facing teachers

Despite their central role, teachers face serious obstacles. Many lack adequate training in indigenous languages, limiting their ability to teach effectively. There is also a shortage of instructional materials in local languages, leaving classrooms under-resourced. Overcrowded classrooms reduce opportunities for individualized attention, while broader socio-political and economic factors - such as instability and underfunding - further complicate policy implementation.

Teachers are indispensable to the success of Nigeria's national language policy. Supporting them with training, resources, and professional development - while addressing structural challenges - will ensure that they can fulfill their role as both educators and digital facilitators. Empowered teachers are not only implementers of policy but also agents of transformation in Nigeria's multilingual education system.

## Case studies of successful implementations

**Lagos Digital School Initiative:** The Lagos Digital School Initiative, spearheaded by the government, has been a pivotal program in integrating digital technology into the educational landscape (Okonkwo, 2020). By providing teachers with digital tools and comprehensive training, the initiative has revolutionized the delivery of online lessons, particularly language instruction in indigenous languages. Through this initiative, student engagement has soared, and language learning outcomes have witnessed a remarkable improvement, mainly due to the enhanced interactivity and accessibility of lessons (Akinola, 2021). Teachers, empowered with newfound digital skills, have expressed heightened confidence in utilizing these tools and have successfully reached a broader audience through various online platforms (Akinola, 2021).

**Kano e-Learning Project:** Another shining example of digital education success in Nigeria is the Kano e-Learning Project, as highlighted by Yusuf (2019). This project has been instrumental in equipping teachers in Kano State with digital resources and training to elevate language instruction and champion multilingualism. With tablets preloaded with educational content in languages like Hausa, English, and local varieties, teachers have found innovative ways to engage students. Moreover, the digital platform established for sharing resources and best practices has fostered a culture of collaboration and continuous learning among

educators (Yusuf, 2019). Particularly impactful in rural areas where traditional educational resources are scarce, this project has bridged the gap effectively (Adewale, 2020).

**Rural connectivity challenge in Benue State:** In Benue State, the lack of connectivity in rural areas poses a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of the national language policy (Eze, 2022). Recognizing this challenge, a pilot project has been initiated to introduce solar-powered digital classrooms in remote regions (Okechukwu, 2023). By equipping teachers with digital devices loaded with offline educational content in indigenous languages, this project aims to ensure quality language instruction even in areas with limited connectivity. The potential impact of this initiative is immense, promising to elevate educational standards in underserved communities (Okechukwu, 2023).

**Urban resource deficit in Abuja:** Despite its status as the capital city, Abuja grapples with resource constraints in public schools, hindering the effective implementation of the national language policy (Abdullahi, 2023). To address this challenge, a public-private partnership has been forged to provide digital devices and training to teachers in selected schools. This initiative not only aims to bridge the digital divide but also promotes collaborative learning among educators through a dedicated digital platform for resource sharing and skill enhancement (Abdullahi, 2023).

## **Strategies for effective implementation**

### **Professional development and digital literacy training**

A provision of a comprehensive training programs that focus on digital literacy and online teaching strategies can empower teachers to effectively integrate digital tools into language instruction. For example, these programs may include hands-on workshops where educators learn how to create interactive online lessons using various educational platforms. By engaging in such practical activities, teachers can gain valuable experience and confidence in utilizing technology to enhance their teaching methods.

Moreover, tailoring these programs to cater to the diverse needs of educators ensures practical skill development and enhances their confidence in utilizing technology. For instance, personalized training sessions can address specific challenges that teachers face in

implementing digital tools in their classrooms. This individualized approach allows educators to acquire the necessary skills at their own pace and according to their unique teaching styles.

Moreover, incorporating feedback mechanisms into the training programs can help educators continuously improve their digital literacy skills. By encouraging teachers to provide input on the effectiveness of the training sessions and the relevance of the content, program organizers can ensure that the professional development opportunities remain aligned with the evolving needs of educators in the digital age.

In conclusion, by offering tailored professional development programs that prioritize digital literacy and online teaching strategies, educational institutions can equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively integrate technology into language instruction. This proactive approach not only benefits educators but also enhances the learning experience for students in the digital era.

Essential for enhancing teachers' digital competencies, professional development programs focusing on digital literacy play a pivotal role (Gulati, 2008). These programs should encompass a wide array of topics, ranging from digital content creation to effective online teaching strategies and leveraging social media for community engagement (UNESCO, 2020). Tailoring these programs to cater to teachers with varying levels of digital proficiency ensures practical, hands-on learning experiences that are crucial for skill development (OECD, 2018).

### **Investment in digital infrastructure**

A critical component for the successful integration of digital tools into language education is substantial investment in digital infrastructure, encompassing internet connectivity, digital devices, and robust online platforms (Albirini, 2006). Especially in rural areas, where access to educational resources is limited, schools must be equipped with the necessary digital tools to facilitate language instruction effectively (Eze, 2022). Substantial investment in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and digital devices, is essential to ensure equitable access to technology across all educational institutions. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, schools must keep pace with technological advancements to provide students with the necessary tools for success. For instance, equipping classrooms with high-speed internet connections enables interactive online learning platforms and virtual collaborations among students from diverse backgrounds. Public-private partnerships



emerge as key players in funding and executing these initiatives, guaranteeing equitable access to technology across all educational institutions (Abdullahi, 2023).

Public-private partnerships play a crucial role in funding and executing initiatives to enhance digital access in schools, particularly in underserved areas. By joining forces, governments and private companies can pool resources and expertise to bridge the digital divide. An example of this collaboration is the initiative where a tech company provides laptops and tablets to schools in remote regions, while the government ensures internet infrastructure is in place. This synergy not only benefits students but also empowers teachers with professional development opportunities to leverage technology effectively in the classroom.

Moreover, investing in digital infrastructure goes beyond mere access to devices and connectivity. It involves training educators to integrate technology into their teaching practices and curriculum. Professional development workshops and ongoing support are essential components to ensure teachers feel confident and competent in utilizing digital tools for instruction. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be in place to assess the impact of digital investments on student learning outcomes and adjust strategies accordingly.

## **Collaboration and community engagement**

Encouraging teachers to collaborate with their peers and engage with the local community proves vital in promoting the use of indigenous languages (Mundy et al., 2012). Leveraging social media platforms can serve as a powerful tool in fostering community engagement, enabling teachers to connect with parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders to advocate for multilingual education (Gulati, 2008). Collaborative platforms further facilitate the exchange of resources and best practices, fostering a culture of continuous improvement in language instruction skills among educators (OECD, 2018). Below are some of the ways to achieve collaboration through the social media.

## **Community engagement through social media**

**Parent-teacher groups:** Establishing online forums or social media groups where parents and teachers can collaborate can significantly enhance language learning outside the classroom. This platform allows for continuous communication, sharing of resources, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

**Local language campaigns:** Utilizing social media platforms to promote the importance of indigenous languages and celebrate linguistic diversity can raise awareness and garner community support for language policy implementation. We have good examples of successful implementation from some states in Nigeria. For instance, the Lagos Digital School Initiative is a government-led program providing teachers with digital tools and training has shown promising results in improving language instruction and student engagement. Furthermore, the Kano e-Learning Project is another wonderful program by the Kano State government to improve the standard of education in the state. The state government equipped teachers with tablets loaded with educational content in local languages, this initiative has demonstrated the potential of digital resources in enhancing language education.

However, there are areas needing improvement. These includes the issue of connectivity, training and resources. Rural connectivity in some states is a challenge to achieving results. Addressing the lack of internet connectivity in rural areas through innovative solutions like solar-powered digital classrooms can bridge the digital divide and ensure quality language instruction. Resource deficit is another important issue to consider. Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors to provide digital devices and training can mitigate resource constraints in urban schools, promoting effective language education.

The integration of digital technology and social media presents a groundbreaking approach to implementing Nigeria's national language policy. By empowering teachers with digital tools, we can overcome traditional barriers and create a more dynamic and effective language education system. This innovative strategy not only enhances teachers' capabilities but also ensures that students receive a rich and inclusive education that celebrates Nigeria's linguistic diversity.

Expanding on this, imagine a classroom where students are engaged in interactive language learning activities through educational apps tailored to Nigerian languages. These digital tools not only make learning fun and engaging but also provide instant feedback to both teachers and students, facilitating a more efficient learning process. Additionally, the use of social media platforms can connect students from different regions of Nigeria, allowing them to practice their language skills with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, by incorporating digital technology into language education, teachers can access a wealth of online resources to supplement their teaching materials. For example, they can utilize online language tutorials, virtual language exchange programs, and multimedia resources to enhance their lessons and provide students with a more immersive language

learning experience. This not only enriches the curriculum but also exposes students to a variety of learning methods that cater to different learning styles.

## **Conclusion**

The integration of digital technology and social media in language education not only revolutionizes the way languages are taught in Nigeria but also fosters a more inclusive and diverse educational environment. Investing in digital infrastructure is a multifaceted endeavour that requires collaboration, innovation, and a long-term commitment to providing all students with equal opportunities to thrive in the digital age. Only through concerted efforts and strategic partnerships can we create a truly inclusive educational environment where technology serves as a catalyst for learning and growth. By embracing these innovative tools, we can bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and modern technological advancements, ultimately empowering both teachers and students to thrive in a multicultural and multilingual society.

## **Recommendations**

- Offering comprehensive training programs that focus on digital literacy and online teaching strategies can empower teachers to effectively integrate digital tools into language instruction.
- Tailoring these programs to cater to the diverse needs of educators ensures practical skill development and enhances their confidence in utilizing technology.
- Substantial investment in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and digital devices, is essential to ensure equitable access to technology across all educational institutions.
- Public-private partnerships play a crucial role in funding and executing initiatives to enhance digital access in schools, particularly in underserved areas.
- Encouraging collaboration among teachers and engaging with the local community through social media platforms can foster a culture of continuous improvement in language instruction.
- Leveraging these platforms to advocate for multilingual education and promote the use of indigenous languages can create a supportive environment for language policy implementation.

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