

# **Implementation of the Senior Secondary School French Curriculum in Lagos State: Problems and Prospects**

*Oluranti ogunbiyi (ph.d)*  
*Ogunbiyolu2002@yahoo.com*

## **Abstract**

The implementation of the Senior Secondary School French curriculum in Nigeria has been of great concern to both curriculum developers and French teachers. The study focused on the problems and prospects of implementing the senior secondary school French curriculum in Lagos State. It highlighted the challenges of implementation and offered useful suggestions towards effective implementation of the programme.

## **Introduction**

Curriculum implementation is an enterprise of translating curriculum conception into new patterns of action. Curriculum implementation involves a variety of decisions and the performance of certain tasks. Such decisions are implementing goals, techniques and interpreting structures, executing policies and following procedural steps as outlines in the design, utilizing resources and influencing the attitude and feelings of peoples involved. Implementation involves participation at local level, a degree of flexibility in plans and among planners, a measure of decentralization of control, effective communication strategies, capital development, building and equipment design, material development and distribution, management of available resources, staff development, training and re-training.

In Nigeria, the French language is a foreign language. Since Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking countries, the importance of the language in Nigeria for social, political, economics and international relations cannot be overemphasized. The use of language is to facilitate communication, to promote understanding between language originator and language recipient, and to enable useful, appropriate and efficient action to take place (Moody, 1970). This paper tries to identify some of the important factors that are necessary for the successful implementation of the French curriculum in Lagos State.

## **Problem of the Study**

Some of the problems of French curriculum in Lagos State senior secondary schools are:

1. Shortage of qualified language teachers
- ii. Inadequate teaching aids
- iii. Lack of relevant text books
- iv. Problems of multi-lingualism
- v. Lack of well-equipped language laboratories and libraries
- vi. Lack of interest on the part of the students
- vii. Lack of motivation for both students and teachers alike.

## **Professional and Practical Problem**

French teachers are difficult to come by in most of the secondary schools in Lagos State. Most of the teachers available are not trained to teach the French language. Since teachers are very vital to the implementation of any curriculum, their preparation should be considered essential in any meaningful educational implementation strategy. It is a known fact that teachers in our schools avoid teaching some sections of the curriculum for example, (Oral drills) on the pretext that our students have not attained the necessary intellectual levels. Since it is the teacher who interprets the objectives and contents in the curriculum plans and manages the learning situation; their quality, quantity, willingness, self-motivation, interest, commitment and use of methodology are very essential for the success of the programme. The teacher interprets the objectives and content in the curriculum plans and manages the leaning situations.

In order to have dedicated, competent and well trained French teachers for effective teaching, French teachers should be given pre-service and in-service training. Conference and workshops should also be organized for them. The teacher-pupil ratio should not be more than thirty students to a teacher. A case where a French teacher teaches forty-five to fifty students in a class is not appropriate. When the classes are large, the curricula cannot be fully implemented

Curriculum implementation in Lagos State Schools is that which will be essentially beset with uncertainties, prejudice, fantasy, imprecision, limited resources and a high risk of

probabilities (Adegoke, 1984), since its schools are congested to the extent that three or more schools are established in the same compound.

### **Material/Infrastructural Resources**

Lack of material/infrastructure resources is a major constraint in the implementation of the French curriculum. Unavailability of teaching aids and language laboratory hinders effective teaching of the French language. The language laboratory is very essential in the teaching and learning of the French language. In the language laboratory the teacher is able to teach the students the basic skill with the help of tape recorders, video and radio cassettes.

### **Laerner Problems**

The Nigerian child learning French language has a lot of problems to cope with. There is the problem of mother tongue interference to the second language. The Nigerian child first thinks in his mother tongue before translating it into the second language which is the English language, finally he has to re-translate his thoughts from the English language to the French language. This adds to the child's inability to learn the language effectively. The child needs a patient and dedicated teacher who will help him overcome all his language defects.

Obanya (1976) talked about the drop-out rate of senior secondary school students in Nigeria. At the senior secondary level, French curriculum at this stage involves more of analysis of the language rather than the conversational aspects which are taught at the junior secondary level. At the senior secondary level the teacher's knowledge of the content as well as the teacher-student rapport is very crucial for effective learning.

### **financial and Economic Problems:**

In the early sixties, scholarships were awarded to both French teachers and students in Lagos State. This was to encourage them to study the language. At this point in time more people were attracted to teach and learn the language, but now most French teachers are leaving the classrooms for industries. If teachers are adequately enumerated and given appropriate motivation most of them would prefer teaching to going for other jobs.

### **Administrative and Communication Problems:**

In most cases, the teachers are carried along while development the curriculum. House (1974), believed that the teacher at present is seldom the initiator of what will go for implementation at classrooms level, He ideally should and he should become more actively involved in the implementation process. The social interaction among the various groups of implementers is also very important for effective implementation.

### **Lack of Textual Materials:**

Non-availability of textbooks hinders the effective implementation of the senior secondary school French curriculum in Lagos State. Most of the materials recommended by the curriculum planners are not available in our available in our schools. In 1984, a committee of Anglophone French language teachers was set up to review *Pierre et Soydou* by Jacque David. It was discovered that most of the materials in book do not have the African child in mind. The book does not portray the African culture and civilization and as such the students find it difficult to read and understand.

The textbook does not follow the main objectives of the French curriculum which states that the child must be able to discuss intelligently about his immediate environment. The knowledge of the immediate environment is necessary in order to make a comparison between his own environment and that of the language he is learning. Researchers have shown that students learn language better if the textbooks portray their culture and civilization. Stern (1984), teaching a foreign language is concerned with the education of that country.

### **Prospects:**

The problems identified perhaps give a ray of hope in terms of the implementation of the senior secondary school French curriculum provided the following situation as earlier identified are properly addressed. For instance an increased in time allocated from the present 35-40 minutes duration per week to about one to two hours per week would be more desirable. This will enable learners to attain mastery of the language. Surely, this would give brighter future prospects for the teaching and learning of the French language in Lagos State Secondary Schools.

Drills and practice are means of overcoming linguistic problems of mother tongue or first language interference. If emphasis is laid on drills and practice starting from the junior secondary level, it would facilitate the future learning and teaching of French as a social language.

In order to alleviate the problem of shortage of qualified French teachers, it is advisable that the Lagos State Ministry of Education should look outwards for French in Lagos State Schools. If there are enough qualified French teachers, it may ginger the students to have more interest in subject. Modern teaching side like video films, tape recorders, films and projectors should be provided along with modern language laboratory to encourage the learning and teaching of French.

Some schools in Lagos State have started in this good direction. Very soon, it is hoped that this trend would catch on in other schools. Non availability of textbooks hinders the effective implementation for the senior secondary school French curriculum in Lagos State. If the materials recommended are made available in the schools, both the teachers and the students would be encouraged to have an in-depth knowledge of the language.

### **Conclusion**

It is very important that Nigeria should study French language for international mutual understanding and cooperation. It is also essential for socio-economic and technological development of both Anglophone and the Francophone neighbours. Re-training of French teachers through in-service programmes would be necessary for the effective implementation of the curriculum. French language educationists should be invited to prepare textbooks for the students' integration of their learning experiences and their everyday activities.

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