

## THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE

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### **Abstract**

The nexus between teaching and research in our educational system cannot be overemphasized. Effective teaching is a vital aspect of any functional educational system. This of course, cannot be attained without research. This paper therefore, x-rayed the gap between French Language teaching and research in Nigeria. It reviewed that the use of French Language is dwindling in the country due to the fact that the French Language teacher who takes the centre stage in teaching and learning process has among other factors limited access to research which is the lubricant needed by the French teacher in order to discharge his/her duty appropriately. Solutions are as well proffered so as to curb the situation.

**Keywords:** Teacher, Research, gap, French Language and Education

One thing is clear, the French language has attained an amiable status in Nigeria. In 1996, the Late General Sani Abacha, a former Nigeria Head of State in Nigeria declared the French language as the nation's second official language. As a modern language, French is a medium of communication of several international organizations such as United Nation (UN), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU) and so on.

In Nigeria, the study of French became imperative after the declaration of the Late Head of State, General Sani Abacha. According to Adekunle (1976), the language policy of every country should make provision for the following areas of communication; internal communication, scientific or technical communication. In order to ensure that the French language becomes a second official language in Nigeria, the *National policy on education* (NPE) forth edition (2004:10) stated that:

For smooth interaction with our neighbors, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but non-vocational elective at the secondary school. In the same vein, the reviewed edition of the nine years *Basic education curriculum* (2007), still presented the French language as a compulsory subject at the basic secondary school level. It is geared towards exposing pupils to acquire language skills of another international language apart from the English language. This noble idea has witnessed lots of obstacles in the country. One of these obstacles is the gap between the French teacher and research.

### **Research**

Many countries have realized the value of human capital development in the overall growth of the nation and have taken steps to incorporate it into their nation's development plans. (Ofuokwu,

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2011:36). Research comprises creative work undertaken in a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society; and the use of this stock of knowledge. Research is equally used to confirm facts, reaffirm the result of previous work, solve new problems or existing problems, support new theories or develop new theories. Research to Creswell (2008), is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. Almost every day, new knowledge and methods that need to be disseminated in schools emerge. Adaraleye (1975) observed that education deals with bodies of knowledge that are not static. This makes it imperative for the French teacher to update his/her knowledge through research so as to disseminate the right information to the students who see the teacher as a reservoir of knowledge.

*The National policy on education* (2004), stated that teacher education will continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum; teacher will be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession in-service training will be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education. Moreover, the place of research in human existence generally cannot be undermined by any responsible government and people. Research is to French teacher what the heart is to a human being. This simply emphasizes its role and importance to a French teacher.

### **The Ideal Teacher**

The saying that no educational system can raise above the quality of its teacher continues to affirm the relevance of the teacher in any teaching or learning process. To this end, Agana (2002:57) outlined some of the attributes of an ideal teacher to include one who is highly motivated, conscious and efficient. Teachers who are creative and have enough intellectual and professional up-bringing for the assignment and that which makes him adaptable to the dynamic society around him as well as fit into the social realm of him immediate and larger society. Lassa (1996) asserted that education is the key to national development. The National policy on education (2004), outlined the goals of teacher as follows:

- production of highly motivated conscientious and effective classroom teachers for all levels of education;
- encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- help teachers to fit into social life, the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goal;
- provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situation; and
- enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.

The aforementioned clearly states the goals of teacher education in the country. Unfortunately, the second goal which borders on the spirit of enquiry (research) is yet to be attained with respect to the French language in Nigeria.

### **Teacher Education**

The role of teachers is very crucial in the assessment of quality instruction in schools. It is on this basis that Fafunwa (1971), stressed that teacher education should be basically related to every phase of development in Nigeria. For whatever one does, be it economic, political or social spheres of activities, one is faced with the problem of trained manpower needs but no adequate education can

take place without competent teachers to handle the programme. He further argued that for development to thrive in the country, teacher education must be designed in such a manner as to prepare the teachers fully through training (French teachers inclusive) to enable them tackle the tasks ahead.

In the same vein, Emenogu (1991) pointed out that teachers are pillars on which the educational system rests. Their preparation and training is crucial to the attainment of the goals of educational system and to the enhancement of qualitative learning outcome. According to Afe (1995) cited in Agboghroma and Gabriel (2008), teacher education is that component of the education system saddled with the responsibility of educating and training of teachers to acquire knowledge, competence and skills of teaching for improvement in the quality of teachers for the school system.

### **Lack of Motivation**

According to (Chibuikwe: 2012:177), “motivation is a force which propels one to achieve a particular purpose”. Osteracker (1999) opined that motivation has three dimensions; physical, social and mental depending on the nature of the reward system. Motivation is an indispensable factor in the teaching and learning process. Productivity is seen as the ratio of what goes into a business and what comes out of it. It is obvious that productivity is high when motivation is high. This was equally the view of Ekanem (2008), who asserted that there has been a dwindling enthusiasm and commitment on the part of physical education as a result of lack of motivation from the government as well as the society. Iroegbu (2008) affirmed that the realization of excellence at all levels of education is dependent on teacher motivation among other factors. Where motivation is present, job performance is effective. Where it is lacking, workers’ needs desires and expectations are not met and workers perform their jobs poorly, exhibiting such traits as indifference, apathy, absenteeism, high turn-over rates and organizational disloyalty (Chibuikwe 2010).

Adequate research and personal experience have shown that teachers in Nigeria are poorly motivated (Federal Government of Nigeria and UNICEF 1997-2001). The poor motivation is evident through irregular payment of their salaries and other fringe benefits, and irregular promotion of deserving ones. According to Agbakwuru (2003), adequate motivation of workers (teachers) ignites, propels, pokes energizes, arouses or spurs, directs, regulates and sustains their behavior towards the attainment of organizational goals.

### **Inadequate Funding**

Research cannot be carried out without fund. The quest for adequate financial resources for French teachers in Nigeria educational institutions to enable them carry out research continuously cannot be overstated. This is because poor funding impedes French teachers from going into research as and when due. It is therefore, expected that this will certainly affect the productivity of the teachers. According to Eboh(2000), improving the amount of research skills is necessary for the progress along the various dimension of educational development.

According to Oduaran(1998), conferences, workshops and seminars are adult learning methods that provide opportunities for useful exchange and linkages of ideas and issues promoting participation in research programmes among members who are in search of current knowledge and skills in the area of research. Although government has been providing little fund for teacher. (French teachers inclusive) to embark on researches, but the funds are still insufficient compared to what is

required to undertake this enormous task ahead of the French teachers. (Omotayo, 2008:15) opined that one of the intractable problems facing education today is how to adequately finance it. From all indication the federal government has done a lot to increase funding for education, though the cry for adequate funding still persists.

Enyi (2001) cited by Okechuukwu and Ismail (2008) observed that presently, there exists inadequate research training for lecturers in colleges of education in Nigeria and the situation is worsened by government's inadequate research funding.

Inadequately funding has been the bane of most French teachers who on their own, cannot fund research as a result of the present reality of the economic situation in the country. It therefore, becomes imperative that more funds be made available to French teachers with the view of increasing their research capabilities since quality education cannot be achieved without teachers who are well equipped in education research.

### **High Cost of Materials**

The reality on ground remains that French language teaching are learning in capital intensive. Most French textbooks are exorbitant because a good number of them are foreign and are not easily affordable by French teachers considering their level of income. This implies that extra effort must be put into this unique area of study in Nigeria education system. This brings the fore the urgency of increase in federal Government budget allocation to French language learning in order to cater for education materials as well as boost research programmes among French teachers. Dare (2008) cited by Iroegbu (2012:88) stressed that one of the intractable problems facing education in Nigeria is inadequate funding. He argued that in attaining good and desired education output, Federal Government needs to increase budget allocation to educational sector. This clarion call is vital to ensure that the French language occupies its place as Nigeria second official language.

### **Educational Funding**

Every serious minded country will always place its education as a priority. In the colonial era, educational funding was undertaken by both private and public sector. The public sector comprises the local authorities and the government while the private capacities as religious, ethnic or social groups (Fafunwa, 2004). With the attainment of independence in 1960, funds to education came from the Federal Government, the regional (later state), the Nigerian public and international organizations (Fafunwa, 2004:221). However, the introduction of *National Policy on education* in 1977 and the 1979 Constitution placed the financing of the educational system on the Federal Government, state and local government, in addition, it was stated that government would welcome and encourage the participation of local communities, individuals and other organizations for educational funding (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981:498;Fafuwa, 2004:278).

It is evident that the Federal Government alone cannot fund education in the country; the participation of private organizations and good spirited individuals will definitely enhance educational funding in the country. To this end, Fafunwa wondered how long government would almost single handedly bear the brunt of the huge sums of money required for developing education. He asked: "Will Nigeria be in a position economically to support a European style of education or will she seek other alternatives to suit her need?" To this, he answered: "Only time and economic realities will tell" (Fafunwa, 2004:221).

## Conclusion

We cannot continue to blame the French teachers for low performance when the favorable condition for imparting the right knowledge is not guaranteed. French teachers are in a dilemma considering their financial state and the imperative of research in their profession. Research is a mandatory lubricant to French teachers. To this end, the Federal Government, private sectors and all stake holders in education should take research as a priority in educational planning and execution in the country. French language teaching and learning must be sustained in our educational system if Nigeria still aspires to remain relevant in the global world.

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