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**PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ON THE LEARNING OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OYO METROPOLIS**

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# PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ON THE LEARNING OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OYO METROPOLIS

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## Abstract

Nigeria is surrounded by African Francophone countries, thus, it is expected that learning and promoting French language should be a welcome development by all and sundry in the country. Generally, the student intends to find out the perception of primary school administrators towards the learning of French in Oyo Metropolis. This study adopted a descriptive research design to survey the perception of primary school administrators on the learning of French language in Oyo metropolis. The population for this study comprises school administrators of primary schools in the four local governments in Oyo metropolis which are Oyo East, Oyo West, Afijio and Atiba. A total of eighty-nine (89) participants were involved in this study. A researcher made questionnaire titled "Perception of Primary School Administrators on the learning of French language in primary schools (PPSATLFLPS) which contains twenty items was used in collecting data for this study. Percentage was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Cumulative mean and percentage were used to answer the research questions, while the t-test and ANOVA were used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. It was found out among others that the Perception of school administrators in Oyo metropolis on learning of French language was positive. Based on the findings, this study recommends that there is the urgent need for the government of the day to ensure enforcement of its declaration of 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2016 making French a compulsory language to be studied in all schools from primary to tertiary institutions as well as other declarations of past governments. There is the need for the relevant associations of French teachers, French village, etc. to intensify efforts in promoting advocacy through workshop among school administrators.

## Background to the Study

Nigeria, a member of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is hedged on all sides by countries whose official language of communication is French such as the Republic of Benin, Cameroon among others. These countries, including Nigeria need to co-operate and

integrate with one another in order to form a common front and find solutions to their problems of under-development, poverty, socio-political instability, cultural and inter-territorial wars (Onyemelukwe, 1995). This perhaps underscores the inclusion of French in the Nigerian school curriculum. French language teaching in Nigeria is designed to provide the learners with the sufficient communication skills and aptitudes to make the language a tool for communication first, with the immediate African francophone community (West African francophone community) then the rest (France and Canada for instance) of the francophone world.

To this end, French language was ascribed the status of Nigeria's second official language by General Sanni Abacha in 1996. The declaration was made at the francophone summit held in Burkina Faso in 1996, where he was honored as a special guest (Onyemelukwe, 2004). General Sani Abacha thus laid emphasis on the importance of the learning of French Language by stating that:

We have seen that we are virtually surrounded by French speaking countries. And these French-speaking countries are our kith & kin. But be of the differences inherited in the languages of our colonial masters, there has been a vacuum in communication with our neighbours. It is in our interest to learn French (Ade, 1998).

Though, it has been criticized as an attempt by the then military Head of State to pursue a selfish goal and personal agenda because the declaration came at the time when Nigeria suffered stiff diplomatic penalty. But nevertheless it is an indication of government's commitment and recognition of the importance of teaching French in our schools in Nigeria.

However, there is no doubt that there is decreasing learning and communication in French which is raising concern among teachers, who believe the language may die in Nigeria (1996a, 1996b). This has been proven across literature, Ogunbiyi (2012) has established that the teaching of French language in schools in Nigeria is not given priority and much attention it deserves despite its enormous accrued benefits to Nigerian citizens, being a nation that share boundaries with francophone countries. Government's apathetic attitude towards the learning of French made the language to be facing enormous challenges, which have made it to be relegated in Nigerian schools. Poor remuneration for teachers, lack of employment for French graduates, inadequate materials for learning and poor representation of French in Nigeria, among others were some of the issues confronting the teaching of this language.

In spite of all these challenges, one fundamental achievement is the inclusion and development of curriculum for French language in Nigerian primary school curriculum which both the public and private primary schools are expected to implement accordingly. An insight from the literature revealed a measure of progress in primary schools in Lagos State where French language is being taught

(Adesulu, 2015). Also worthy of note is the recent declaration of French as a compulsory language to be studied in all schools from primary to tertiary institutions. The Minister of State for Education, Prof. Anthony Anwukah stated this in a press report of Friday 31st January, 2016 (The Nation Newspaper, 31st January, 2016).

Nevertheless, some parts of the country where teacher training institutions that produce teachers for French language teaching are situated, such as Oyo town, are expected to have more schools if not all, where French language is being taught in at least the primary schools. However, observation has revealed that not all the schools are teaching French language. The implication of this is that there is no general consensus that the primary schools in Oyo metropolis are teaching French language to their students despite the inclusion of French language in Nigeria primary school curriculum and the availability of trained teachers from the two teacher training institutions in the town.

The primary education being the basis is an essential foundation of every education system, therefore, primary school administrators are important stakeholders in the development of every education. It is upon this background that the researcher deemed it fit to examine the perception of school administrators of primary schools on the learning of French language with an understanding that, if the study of French language is to take its proper place, it begins from the foundation education i.e. primary education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the perception of primary school administrators on the learning of French in Oyo metropolis. Specifically, the study examined:

- a. the perception of the school administrator on the teaching of French language in Oyo metropolis based on gender
- b. whether Primary School Administrators are aware of the potentials of teaching French language
- c. the interest of primary school administrators in the teaching of French
- d. the challenges in the teaching of French language in the primary schools in Oyo metropolis

### **Research Questions**

- a. What is the perception of the school administrator on the teaching of French language in Oyo metropolis?
- b. What is the perception of the school administrator on the teaching of French language in Oyo metropolis based on gender?
- c. Are the Primary School Administrators aware of the potentials of the teaching of French language?

- d. Are the Primary School Administrators interested in teaching of French language?
- e. What are the challenges in the teaching of French language in the Primary Schools in Oyo metropolis?

### Research Hypothesis

- a. There is no significant difference between male and female administrators' perception in teaching of French language

### Methods

#### Data Analysis and Result

All the research questions were answered accordingly except the research question two which was answered alongside with its corresponding hypothesis.

**Research Question 1:** *What is the perception of the school administrator on the teaching of French Language in Oyo metropolis?*

In order to answer this research question, respondents' responses to the questionnaire were collated and analysed. The results are as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Rank Order of the Perception of the School Administrator on the Learning of French Language in Oyo Metropolis**

| S/N | Description                                                                                                                   | Mean |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1.  | I believe teaching French Language to primary school pupils is needful                                                        | 3.20 |
| 2.  | I know that teaching French Language to primary school pupils will facilitate their understanding of English Language as well | 2.96 |
| 3.  | During my period of studentship, I was taught French Language and I appreciate it                                             | 2.65 |
| 4.  | I would always encourage a child to learn French Language                                                                     | 3.05 |
| 5.  | To me, learning French Language is not a waste of time particularly for primary school pupils                                 | 3.31 |
| 6.  | It interests me when I see little children speaking French                                                                    | 2.94 |
| 7.  | I am highly optimistic that teaching French Language to the pupils would help their academic performance in language subjects | 3.01 |
| 8.  | I would rather encourage a child to learn Nigerian Sign Language                                                              | 2.89 |

9. Nigeria government has declared French Language as the second official language 3.42
10. I wasn't taught French Language during my studentship but I'll like to learn it 3.30
11. If Nigerians all understand French Language, it would help our economy as well as development in commerce, scientific and technological research, administration and education 2.98
12. I believe making French Language a compulsory second language in Nigeria educational system will place the country at an advantage in ECOWAS 3.43
13. I believe every Nigeria should learn French language to promote our communication and relationship with Francophone countries around us 3.37

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**Weighted Mean Score**


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**40.51**


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Table 1 indicates that 83 respondents participated in this study. Responses to items that sought information on perception of the school administrators in Oyo metropolis on the learning of French Language revealed that the perception of the school administrators in Oyo metropolis on the learning of French Language was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 38 and their weighted mean score was 40.51 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score.

**Research Question 3:** *Are primary school administrators aware of the potentials of the teaching of French language?*

**Table 2: School Administrators' Awareness of the Potentials of the Teaching of French**

| Level of Aware | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Not Aware      | 40        | 48.2       |
| Aware          | 43        | 51.8       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>83</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 2 reveals that out of the 83 teachers that participated in the study, 40, representing (48.2%) were not aware of the potentials of the teaching of French Language in Oyo, while 43 representing (51.8%) were aware of the potentials in the teaching French Language in Oyo. This shows that the majority of the respondents in this study were aware of the potential in the teaching of French Language in their schools.

**Research Question 4:** *Are the primary school administrators interested in teaching of French Language?*

Table 3: School Administrators' Interest in Teaching French Language

| Level of Interest in Teaching French | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Not Interested                       | 31        | 37.3       |
| Interested                           | 52        | 62.7       |
| Total                                | 83        | 100        |

Table 3 reveals that out of the 83 teachers that participated in the study, 31 representing (37.3%) were not interested in teaching French Language in Oyo, while 52 representing (62.7%) were interested in the teaching French Language in Oyo. This shows that the majority of the respondents in this study were interested in the teaching of French Language in their schools.

**Research Question 5:** *What are the challenges in the teaching of French Language in the primary schools in Oyo metropolis?*

Table 4: Ranking Order of Challenges in the Teaching of French Language in the Primary Schools

| No | Items                                     | Frequency | Mean | Ranking         |
|----|-------------------------------------------|-----------|------|-----------------|
| 1. | Insufficient competent teachers           | 83        | 2.46 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| 2. | Funding                                   | 83        | 2.07 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| 3. | Low awareness of the potentials of French | 83        | 2.31 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| 4  | Negative attitude of the students         | 83        | 1.67 | 6 <sup>th</sup> |
| 5  | Poor policy implementation                | 83        | 1.98 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| 6  | Insufficient learning materials           | 83        | 2.11 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |

Table 4 indicates that 83 respondents participated in this study. The major challenges in the teaching of French language in the primary schools are insufficient competent teachers which has a mean score of 2.46 (1<sup>st</sup>), while low awareness of the potentials of French with a mean score of 2.31 come 2<sup>nd</sup>. Other items too are challenges because they have mean scores which are below the benchmark of 2.50.

#### Hypotheses Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There is no significant difference between male and female primary school administrators' perception in the teaching of French Language.*

**Table 5:** Analysis of the Difference between Male and Female Primary School Administrators' Perception of Primary in teaching of French Language.

| Gender | No | Mean  | Std   | df | Cal.t | Sig.(2-tailed) | Decision                           |
|--------|----|-------|-------|----|-------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Male   | 36 | 44.07 | 3.45  | 81 | 0.53  | 0.00           | <b>H<sub>01</sub><br/>Rejected</b> |
| Female | 47 | 24.25 | *3.40 |    |       |                |                                    |

**P > 0.05**

As shown on Table 5, the calculated t-value was 0.53 while its calculated significance value is 0.00 at alpha level of 0.05. On this basis, the null hypothesis one was therefore rejected. This means that there was a significant difference in the perception of primary school administrators in teaching of French Language based on gender. The reason was that the calculated significance value (0.00) was lower than 0.05 alpha level; ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). This is in favour of male teachers with a mean score of 44.07 greater than the mean score of 24.25 for female teachers.

### Summary of the Findings

Based on the data collected, analyzed and interpreted, the following findings are obtained:

- Perception of the school administrators in Oyo metropolis on the learning of French Language was positive.
- A majority of the respondents in this study are aware of the potentials of the teaching of French Language in their schools.
- A majority of the respondents in this study are interested in the teaching of French Language in their schools.
- The major challenges in the teaching of French language in the primary schools are insufficient competent teachers, funding, poor policy implementation and insufficient learning materials
- There was a significant difference in the perception of primary school administrators in learning of French Language based on gender.

### Discussion of the Findings

It was revealed in this study that perception of the school administrators in Oyo metropolis on the learning of French Language was positive. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Igonor (2011) who revealed that 58.8% of the respondents involved in their study had positive attitude toward the learning of French language.

Another finding revealed that a majority of the respondents in this study were aware of teaching of French Language in their schools. This result negates the

position of Olayiwola (2015) that in spite of the importance of French language to Nigerian citizens, the language is yet to be taken seriously.

Also, a majority of the respondents in this study were interested in the teaching of French Language in their schools. This perhaps may be as a result of their awareness of the potentials of teaching French to pupils in their schools. It was also revealed that the major challenge in the teaching of French language in the primary schools was that of insufficient competent teachers. This finding corroborates the findings of Tar (2011) that competent teachers and teaching materials are two-headed challenges facing the teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results, this study concludes that a greater number of school administrators have positive perception of the learning of French in primary schools in Oyo State, although, French language is not offered in some schools which can be attributed to low level of awareness of the benefits of French language, insufficient learning materials, insufficient competent and qualified French teachers and a host of other challenges.

### **Recommendations**

The following are recommended in the study:

- i. There is need for an association of French teachers and other stakeholders to intensify efforts in promoting French teaching in all the Primary schools in the state
- ii. Government and other relevant stake holders should be organizing public lecture or workshop periodically to sensitize the public about the importance of learning French language.
- iii. Association of French Teachers and other French language promoting agencies in Nigeria should form information bureau where institutions in need of competent French language teachers for various levels of education could go and recruit them.
- iv. There is need for the government of the day to fund French education programmes so as to attract foreign investors from French speaking countries into Nigeria market.
- v. Government should put necessary measures in place towards promoting learning of French language.
- vi. Government should encourage local production of French learning materials through the creation of fund for the advancement of major foreign languages such as French, Latin, and Greek.

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