

Investigating French Teachers' Professional Pedagogical Skills for Quality Basic Education in Edo State

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ABSTRACT: *The French language is the second foreign language in Nigeria and its curriculum is core at the basic school level. Teachers' professional pedagogical skills are important for quality basic education at this level; hence, this study was carried out. Two research questions were formulated with one hypothesis to guide this study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The research population comprised all the 36 French teachers in the public basic schools in Edo State as at the 2022 school year. All the 36 French teachers were used for the study rated by their French language head teacher. A questionnaire titled: "French Teachers' Professional Pedagogical Skills for Quality Basic Education Questionnaire (FTPPSQBEQ)" was designed and validated. The reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and a coefficient of 0.83 was obtained for the instrument and the hypothesis was tested using ANOVA statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher personally administered the instrument to the respondents and data collected was analyzed using means and standard deviation. Findings revealed a high level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State. In the same vein, the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State did not vary by teachers' academic qualification. It was found that quality basic education is a function of teachers' professional pedagogical skills and therefore recommended that language teacher's education programme should emphasis pedagogical skills competence.*

KEYWORDS: French teachers, professional pedagogic. quality basic education

INTRODUCTION

Basic education refers to the whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings, which aim to meet basic learning needs. According to the International Standard Classification of Education, basic education comprises primary education and lower secondary education. In some countries like Nigeria, Basic Education also includes pre-primary education and/or adult literacy programmes. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is regarded as a priority for developing countries and it is the focus of Education for All, programme of the UNESCO. The UBE

programme is therefore part of Nigeria's effort to uphold and renew the commitment to the provision of basic education for all as required by a number of covenants and protocols to which Nigeria is signatory. The Jomtien (1999), declaration, the New Delhi (1991) declaration of the E-9 countries with the largest concentration of illiterates, including Nigeria, the OAU (1997-2006) Decade of Education in Africa and Darker world Education forum (2000) all combined to set an agenda for education in the 21st century, Obede cited in Ivowi (2021).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was introduced in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a reform programme aimed at providing greater access to, and ensuring quality basic education throughout Nigeria. The UBE Programme objectives include ensuring an uninterrupted access to a 9-year formal education by providing free and compulsory basic education for every child of school-going age. It comprises six years of primary education, three years of Junior Secondary Education, providing Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) among others. However, in-service training is crucial to the long term development of teachers as well as the long term success of the programme in which they work. According to Richards (2011), "the context for language programmes are diverse and the particular variables that come into play in a specific situation are often the determinants of the success of a programme". The Nigerian Language Policy which encourages the teaching of the three major Nigerian languages in the basic schools in Nigeria has also encouraged the teaching of French in Nigeria by upgrading French to the status of core curriculum from its elective position. The revised National Policy on Education stated that French should be a core subject at the senior primary and junior secondary school levels (FRN, 2004, 2913). Obede (2021) points out that "the core, which is compulsory, comprises the fundamental concepts, principles and applications of the subject matter which every student needs to know". The essence of this innovation was to facilitate communication between Nigerians, her francophone neighbors and other French speaking nations of the world, because Nigeria does not exist in isolation but part of the cooperate world.

Battye and Hintze (1992), noted that, the largest potential francophone populations outside Europe are concentrated on the African continent. Magnan &Tochon (2001), say that "French language means business, jobs, world travel, and global communication." Borodo (2014) asserts that "French language is a significant factor in international unity, and that most of the scientific literature are written in French language". French is a language of science, technology, large industrial and commercial enterprise. Omonigho states that Nigerians who can speak at least two international languages such as English and French have many advantages in the present globalized setting and that this can create job opportunities for people in professions that require bilinguals. These professions would suggest a much broader goals for our classrooms.

Organisation Internationale Française (OIF 2014) pointed out that, "French is one of the most useful and studied language, especially in the professional environment as determined by their diffusion around the world." French language education draws a special attention to Nigeria due

to the country's historical background, geographical location as well as its heterogeneous nature. Today, in our educational system, these features make the teaching and learning of English and French languages possible alongside national or local languages like Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Fulfulde, and Kanuri, Benin among others. Thus, the 9-year Basic curriculum in French has been developed and introduced in schools for implementation. The curriculum is very rich and if the contents are well implemented, most Nigerians would be bilingual in English and French.

The French language teaching is a profession in Nigeria, it is a career in a field of educational specialization and it also requires a specialized knowledge base through both academic study and practical experience. The professionalism of French language teaching provides French language teachers with professional training and qualifications on a continuous attempts to develop standards for French language teaching and for French language teachers' quality. To ensure quality basic education, professional teaching is imperative. Richards (2011) also asserts that, "good teaching is viewed as the mastery of skills or competences". He continued by saying that, experiencing teaching in a variety of different situations with different kinds of learners and teaching different kinds of contents, is how a repertoire of basic teaching skills is acquired. Guerreiro (2017), views teachers as professionals in their field. Teachers can be expected to research new and essential knowledge relevant for contemporary professional practice and to consistently refine their knowledge base to help their practice meet contemporary demands in teaching. In language teaching, Professional development and teacher preparation research also support the importance of teachers' quality and further identify content specific pedagogy as a key ingredient in quality teaching.

The quality of instruction is dependent on pedagogy, a term that refers to the method of how teachers teach. It is a discipline that deals with the theory and practice of education. According to Ogungbeye (2011), pedagogy is the science of teaching instruction and training while Pedagogical Knowledge is the generic knowledge about pedagogy, teaching approaches, how students learn, and method of assessment and knowledge of different theories about learning. Thus, professional pedagogical skill implies demonstrating an accurate, deep, and current knowledge of the subject matter. It is for these reasons that this article has set out to: Investigate French teacher pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State and to investigate the extent to which teachers' academic qualifications vary in their professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State.

The current status of French Language teaching in Nigeria

French language education was officially introduced into the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria in 1956. King's College, Lagos and Government College, Ibadan pioneered the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language, Timothy-Asobele, (1999). Researches in French language in Nigeria, pointed out that, in the seventies and eighties, expatriates were employed to teach the language in the secondary schools throughout the country. During these years, emphasis

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was placed on the training of French teachers. For instance, in the defunct Bendel State, now, Delta and Edo states, there were five Colleges of Education, one Polytechnic, and an Institute of Continuing Education with branches in all the headquarters of the Local Governments. In all these institutions, there was a Department of French. Consequently, courses offered by students in all these institutions were all geared towards helping to develop French language teaching. In addition, there were 630 secondary schools in the state and 275 of this number offered French. The Ministry of Education placed high priority on the teaching of French. Also, French teachers from all these institutions were motivated by the then Ministry of Education to attend conferences, workshops at both Local, national, and even international levels. The establishment of the French Language Village in Badagry in 1991 further boost the development of French Language Teachers. (Momoh 1984, Olayiwola 2015, Adebisi 2015, Faniran 2017).

In 1996, late General Sani Abacha declared French as the second official language in Nigeria. According to Igonor (2011), says this declaration was also reaffirmed by the Nigerian Government with a policy decision in 2002, making French second official language. This was again confirmed by the National Policy on Education (2004, 2013) Iteogu (2016), analyzed the three stages of facilitating its implementation:

Stage	Duration	Regulation
First	September 1998	1. French to be made compulsory from primary 5-6 2. French must be taken at common entrance before one is accepted into JSS 1. A pass in French is a criterion for acquiring JSS 3 certificate.
Second	September 2001-October 2004	1. French to be made a compulsory core subject from JSS1-3 2. A pass in French as a criterion for promotion from JSS3- SS1 3. Credit or pass in French as a requirement into the university.
Third	2004-ctober 200	1. Basic knowledge in French is required for recruitment 2. Basic knowledge in French is required for the promotion of civil servants.

Today French language is taught as a foreign language in the basic schools. Faniran (2017), describes it as a language learnt in the four walls of the classroom and spoken by both the French language teachers and the students because most educated Nigerians do not speak it and all uneducated Nigerians know nothing about it.

Although for quite some decades, much has been done by various experts in the field of French language education in Nigeria. It's still faced with a number of challenges which include French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education. French teachers' professional pedagogical skills in relation to knowledge of teaching, assessment, monitoring, strategies, selection of teaching learning resources and evaluation of learning are key to quality education at large.

Concept of Professional Pedagogical skills and Quality Basic Education

The concept of quality cuts across all levels of education. Quality in education implies standard of education. Akpan & Ita (2015) define quality basic education as education that empowers the learners with relevant skills, knowledge, ideas, values, and attitudes needed for the person to make informed decisions and live a self-sustaining life. According to Dickson (2017), quality instruction is key to educational process, it highlights achievement of set objectives, aims and goals. The Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN 2019) has established professional standards for the teaching profession in Nigeria, namely: Knowledge of Teaching, Assessment and Monitoring Strategies, Selection and Use of Teaching Learning Resource (TLR) and Evaluation of Learning.

The French language teacher is in principle a professional because he or she cannot only speak the language, but can also describe why it works the way it does and what different bits of it means, know how to teach it to learners in a form they can understand and learn. The language teacher also know how to manage classroom and relationships. Ur in Richards and Renandya (2002) say that, these are not just unthinking skills but thoughtfully evolved and flexible sets of professional behaviors. The combination of these kinds of knowledge enable the experienced French language teacher in Edo state to make informed and appropriate decisions in his classroom professional practices.

According to Pettis in Richards and Renandya (2002), to be “knowledgeable without appropriate skills necessary to apply this knowledge is limiting. The language teacher must be particularly knowledgeable and skillful so that the necessary range of topics is appropriately taught. Richards (2011) shows an example of language teachers’ pedagogical reasoning skills, the special skills that enable language teachers to do the following:

- Analyze potential lesson content (e.g. a text, an advertisement, a poem, a photo etc.) and identify ways in which it could be used as a teaching resource.
- Identify specific linguistics goals (e.g.in the area of speaking, vocabulary, reading, writing etc.) that could be developed from the chosen content.
- Anticipate any problem that might occur and find ways of resolving them.
- Make appropriate decision about time, spacing, and grouping arrangements.

Shulman in Richards (2011) described this ability as a process of transformation in which the teacher turns the subject matter of instruction into form that are pedagogically relevant and that are appropriate to the level and ability of the students. Tachie (2021) says that being equipped with such skills enable teachers to be more effective, flexible fluent thinkers and confident in their use and application of knowledge and processes. Experienced French teachers use these skills when they plan their lessons, decide how to adopt textbooks, and when they search the internet and other sources for materials they can use in their classrooms. Tsiu in Gatbonton (2008) points out that one is likely to find in experienced teachers, some manifestation of expertise.. (Tsui 2009, Borg 2006,) in Richards (2011), affirm that over time, experience is said to lead to the development of

routines the enable this kinds of skills to be performed fluently, automatically and with less conscious thought and attention to focus on other dimensions of the lesson. It is important to know that on-going knowledge is enhanced through professional development in any discipline, especially the French language, continuous education courses, reading current journals and research, and participating in professional organization activities.

This article is based on the Consensus Model. A model of teacher professional knowledge and skills including Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). This model emerged from a meeting of researchers studying Pedagogical Content Knowledge in 2012. (Gess-Newsome 2013). Richards (2011) “asserts that PCK refers to knowledge that provides the bases for language teaching and language learning which can be applied in different ways to the resolutions of practical issues in language teaching. It could include assessment, reflective teaching, and classroom management and so on.” According to Filgona et al. (2020), PCK is the knowledge needed to make the subject matter accessible to students. Content knowledge is what is being taught, pedagogical knowledge is how it is being taught.

The researchers in this summit assert that PCK varies greatly with different topics and therefore indicates that different PCK is required when teaching both within and beyond specialization. The concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) was first introduced by Lee Shulman (1986). Shulman (1987), introduced the notion of Pedagogical Knowledge. Evens et al. (2016), say that many terms are used as synonyms for PCK in the foreign language and second language context. For instance: Pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton 1999), knowledge about language (Borg 2001), Borg (2003) also use the term Teacher Cognition and so on. Pedagogical Reasoning Skills (Richards 2011) and so on.

(Golomek 2009) in Richards (2011) “claim that cognition entered second language teaching from the field of general education. Construct such as teachers’ practical knowledge, Pedagogical content knowledge and personal theories of teaching are now established in the components of understanding teacher’s cognition.” According to Gerriero (2017) pedagogical knowledge is the specialized knowledge of teachers for creating effective teaching and learning environment for all students.

Amosun and Kolawole (2015) did a research at Ibadan metropolis in Oyo State on pre-school teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and skill competences. The study comprised 50 pre-school teachers who were randomly selected from the pre-primary section of public primary schools in the five local government areas within Ibadan. The result shows that the level of pedagogical knowledge and skill competences displayed by the pre-school teachers was low. They suggested that teachers should be trained and retrained to develop the professional knowledge and skills in handling preschoolers in all the primary sections of the basic school. Akpan and Ita (2015), carried out a study on teachers’ professional development and quality Universal Basic Education in Lagos

state. The findings of the study reveal that teachers' participation in induction program, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training and seminars significantly relate to quality Basic Education. They recommended that the government and relevant agencies should provide more opportunities for UBE teachers to attend ICT training programmes as this will enhance their instructional delivery effectiveness.

Akbari, Dadvand, Samar & Kiany (2012) did a research on pedagogical knowledge based on English language teaching (ELT) in Iran. They used a mixed method research design to offer a tentative framework for pedagogical knowledge. Stimulated recall interviews were used with six practicing English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers to map out the categories and units of pedagogical knowledge they drew upon in their teaching practices. The overall findings pointed out a 7 component model of pedagogical knowledge in ELT. The components include: knowledge of language, of teaching, of learning, of classroom management, of students, of culture and of context. They also noticed that teachers develop their knowledge of pedagogy over time. Freeman (1993), in Borg (2003), conducted a longitudinal study of changes in the practices of four foreign language teachers doing an in-service Masters' degree. One of its specific aims was the development of teachers' understanding of the professional discourse of education. The results show some behavioral change and there was also patterns in some teachers work which remain unmodified and this had a clear impact on teachers' cognition.

Statement of the Problem

French language teaching in Nigeria has waded through many challenges since its introduction in the Nigerian school system. Today some progress has been made by recognizing the language as Nigeria's second foreign language and promoting it from an optional to a core curriculum position at the basic school levels. To achieve this, government set the minimum teaching qualification for primary and Junior Secondary School teachers according to the National Policy on Education as National Certificate in Education (NCE). In spite of these steps, there is shortage of French language teachers. Available literatures indicate that there is severe shortage of French language teachers in Edo State. The government seems to have a challenge in recruiting professionally competent French language teachers to feed all the arms of the UBE. For instance, for some years in Edo State, (2015 to 2022) en.m.wikipedia.org (2023). Colleges of Education where French teachers are trained to teach French in the basic schools were closed down. The Edo State government was not able to decide what to do with the colleges. These prevailing events have significantly stalled progress towards professionalism and adequacy of French teachers in the basic schools in Edo State. No regular professional seminars and conferences for French teachers both in the public and private schools since then.

Meanwhile, the basic schools are foundation years of future leaders of Nigeria and we cannot afford to toy with their education especially in the area of language most especially French, where faulty pronunciations tend to become a persistent problem, very difficult to eradicate in later years.

Also, the learning outcomes of French education seem to be poor in the basic schools as displayed by students' in the basic schools inability to communicate fluently in French. Richards & Farrell (2005), opine that, the insistence for a steady renewal of professional skills and knowledge is not necessarily a reflection of inadequate training, but a timely response to the fact that it is not everything teachers need to know that can be adequately provided at the pre-service level because the knowledge base of teaching constantly changes. It is against this background knowledge that this study seeks to investigate the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skill for quality basic education in Edo State.

Research Questions

To guide this study, two research questions were formulated.

1. What is the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in the basic school (Junior Secondary Schools) in Edo State?
2. Does the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skill for quality basic education in the junior secondary schools in Edo State vary by teachers' academic qualification?

Hypothesis

Research question two was turned into a hypothesis and tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

Ho: The extent of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State will not significantly vary by teachers' academic qualification.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design which describe French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in basic schools in Edo State was adopted. The research population comprised all the 36 French teachers in the public junior secondary basic schools in Edo State as at the 2022 school year. All the 36 French teachers were used for the study. A questionnaire titled: "**French Teachers' Professional Pedagogical skills for Quality Basic Education Questionnaire (FTPPSQBEQ)**" was designed and validated. The reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and a coefficient of 0.83 was obtained for the instrument. The researcher personally administered the instrument to the respondents (the subject head). Section "A" of the questionnaire requested for the demographic information of French teachers such as academic qualification of while section "B" contained 12-items on French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for the teaching of French language in the basic schools in Edo State with which the respondents were requested to rate the French teachers on a modified four point Likert rating scale of: Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1. Data collected were analyzed using means and standard deviation with critical mean set at 2.5 in line with the rating scale. If the calculated mean is below the critical mean of 2.5, it implies that the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education is low and vice versa. The hypothesis was tested using ANOVA statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

Research question 1: *What is the level of French teachers’ professional pedagogic for quality basic education in Edo State?*

To answer question 1, data collected were collated and analyzed with mean and standard deviation and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: **French Teachers’ Professional Pedagogic for Quality Basic Education**

Indices of French Teachers’ Pedagogic	Score	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Knowledge of Teaching, Assessment and Monitoring Strategies	88	3.52	.510	High
Selection and use of Teaching Learning Resource	79	3.16	.374	High
Evaluating Learning	80	3.20	.577	High
Grand Mean	80	3.20	.408	High

Data in Table 1 shows that all the indices of French teachers’ professional pedagogic were high. Detail analysis shows that the indices of Knowledge of Teaching, Assessment and Monitoring Strategies was highest (3.52), followed by the indices of Evaluating Learning (3.20) and then the indices of Selection and use of Teaching Learning Resource (3.16). Analysis further revealed that the level of French teachers’ professional pedagogic for quality basic education in Edo State was high with a mean value of 3.20. The result is illustrated in Figure 1.

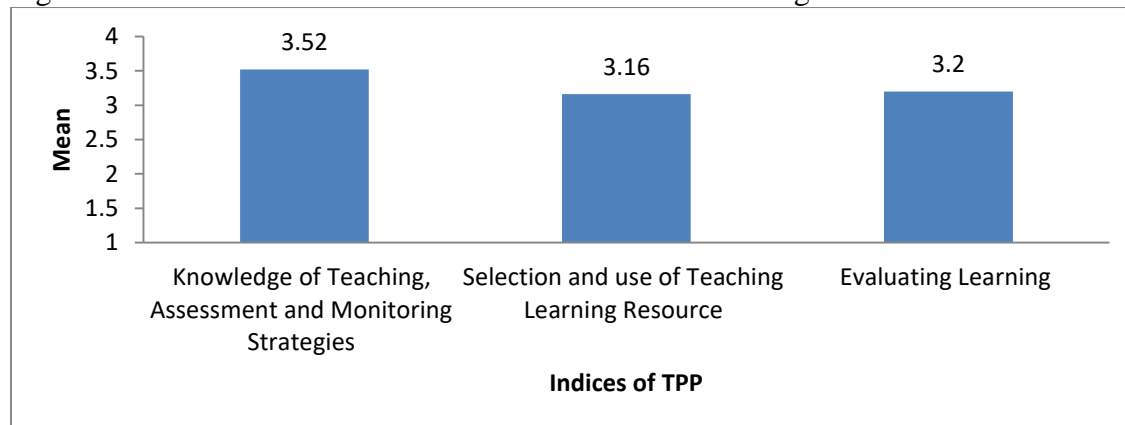


Figure 1: Level of French Teachers’ Professional Pedagogic

H_{01} : *The level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State will not significantly vary by teachers' academic qualification.*

This hypothesis was tested with ANOVA statistics at an alpha level of .05 and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: French Teachers' Professional Pedagogical skills for Quality basic Education will not Significantly Vary by Teachers' Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	.389	2	.194	1.185	.325	Not Significant (H_{01} : Accepted)
Within Groups	3.611	22	.164			
Total	4.000	24				

Data in Table 2 revealed an ANOVA value of 1.105 with a p-value of .33 tested at an alpha value of .05. The p-value of .335 is greater than the alpha value of .05, thus, the hypothesis is accepted. Conclusively, the study found that the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State did not significantly vary by teachers' academic qualification.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding with regard to the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State was high. This finding is supportive of the finding of Akbari et al. (2012). Who pointed out in their research a 7 component model of pedagogical knowledge and that teachers develop their knowledge of pedagogy over time. This finding also aligned with Amosun and Kolawole (2015), who suggested that teachers should be trained and retrained to develop their professional knowledge and skills in handling preschoolers in all the primary sections of the basic schools.

Finding from the hypothesis tested revealed that the extent of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education in Edo State did not vary significantly by teachers' academic qualification. This implies that irrespective of academic qualification of teachers, NCE, B.Ed., M.Ed. or Ph.D., professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education remains the same. This implied that irrespective of the level of category of educational qualification, they are nevertheless all professionals in their own right. Additionally, NCE is the minimum qualification to teach at the basic level of education as stipulated by the NPE.

CONCLUSION

It was therefore concluded in this study that quality basic education is a function of teachers' professional pedagogical skills which is common knowledge that no nation can rise above the quality of its human resources. It was further concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills for quality basic education based on academic qualifications.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore recommended that teachers should maintain and also improve on their professional pedagogical skills most especially in the area of selection +and use of Teaching Learning Resources (TLR) and Evaluating Learning for quality basic education. Teacher education programme should lay emphasis on these pedagogical skills at all levels. Although, all the indices of French teachers' professional pedagogical skills is high in Edo State, It is also important for language teachers to always not only upgrade their knowledge of subject matter but their knowledge of pedagogical skills.

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