

# FRENCH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM REVIEW FOR VALUE AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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## Abstract

*There is no nation today that is free from challenges of values and culture. Nigeria, being a multilingual and multiethnic nation is bereft with tribal, ethnic, religious, political and cultural issues that brew different types and levels of social ills such as insecurity, terrorism, different types and levels of intolerances, to mention just a few. The situation hinders economic and technological advancement and lowers the efficiency rating of the nation. The school should play an intervention role to bridge the gap. The major tool for this is the curriculum which should be reviewed from time to time to ensure potency for values and cultural enrichment. This paper examines the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum to identify possible areas of deficiency in values and cultural orientation. It also makes appropriate contributions toward curriculum inclusions for effective values and cultural processing in the Senior Secondary School.*

**Keywords:** French language curriculum, curriculum review, values and cultural enrichment, senior secondary school level.

## Introduction

Education is the instrument for the all-round development of the human person and of that person's contribution to social life. (UNESCO, 1992). This refers to holistic education which is a product of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for cognitive, affective and psychomotor developments.

"The one continuing purpose of education, since ancient times, has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible to what it is to be a human being. Other statements of educational purpose have also been widely accepted: to develop the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career or to promote a particular social or political system. The broader humanistic purpose includes all of them, and goes beyond them, for it seeks to encompass all the dimensions of human experience." (Arthur W. Foshay, 1991) This means that complete education includes values and culture education.

The National Policy on Education (2004), Section 1, No 6 and the 2013, 6<sup>th</sup> edition aim at 'the development of the individual into a morally sound patriotic and effective citizen with special emphasis on culture as a tool for progress. It aims at ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of the society and the world of work.

In the review of the French Language curriculum for value and cultural enrichment at the Senior Secondary School in Nigeria by the Nigerian Education

Research and Development Council, 2007, the curriculum has as focus a follow up of the Federal Government reform in Education and the need to attain the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and the critical targets of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies, (NEEDS), which can be summarized as value orientation, poverty eradication, and wealth generation, entrepreneurship. Hence it became imperative that the existing curricula for the Senior Secondary School be reviewed and re-aligned to fit the reform program. In response to these developments, a committee on Curriculum Development made up of creative, stakeholders and chaired by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council took the initiative to provide the guidelines for restructuring the curriculum. Following this perspective, the philosophy and focus of the French language curriculum aims at providing learners with the necessary competence to enable them use the French language as a veritable tool of self-expression in relevant circumstances.

This paper also reviews the cultural and values content of the curriculum as contained in the 2007 French language curriculum, evaluates the goals achievement and proposes means of enriching it in order to achieve the aims. It also makes a situational analysis of the pedagogical framework and the didactic tools put in place for the attainment of the said goals. The 2007 French language Senior Secondary curriculum essentially outlines components to teach for the acquisition of the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing through lexis and structure while it excludes literature.

The curriculum also represents minimal contents to be taught and encourages teachers to enhance it. Also, a critical examination and comparison of the Senior Secondary West African French Language Examination past question papers and the Cambridge Certificate Examination show that the French taught in Nigeria is examination oriented rather than teaching French for value and cultural enhancement through the communicative approach. The Cambridge past question papers contain questions that are of interest and relevant to everyday need and life experiences of the learners. The WEAC French language questions are too technical bereft of topics that are relevant to the cultural values and interest of the learners. Hence, the implementation of the policy lacks values and cultural enrichment.

Furthermore, a closer look at the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum shows that for the whole of the three years only two weeks have lessons on culture or civilization. This is seen only in SS1. No place for it in the SS2 and SS3 curriculum. What we can see include journeys made to France, London and Togo. In SS1, third term, lesson 10, we read on being informed on the life and culture of other people. It shows how to be able to give information on Nigeria and France. [French and Nigerian political life, the names of their Presidents, the Senate, the National Assembly, the official residence, the prime minister, executive power, etc] Some selected textbooks like 'Nouvel Horizon', 'On y va' and 'Bonjour L'Afrique' do have some cultural components integrated into the comprehension passages in the form of pictures or some written texts for learners. In a country like ours, bereft with political and economic instability, moral decadence and indiscipline, problems of insecurity and inhumanity often linked to problems of ethnicity, negative and conflicting values gained from the improper use of modern technologies, we need more components of the values and cultural education to enhance the teaching of culture and humanistic values to students.

The purpose of this communication is to show that French language has the potentials for inculcating culture and values in our students at the Senior Secondary School level. It is a fact that arises from the social dimension of language which places emphasis on the fact that communication is embedded in the context of a particular culture. Added to this is the cultural dimension of language as an integral part of language education. (Byran 1989:41).

The concept of language for cultural/intercultural enrichment and understanding is theoretically well founded on the basis of intercultural education, political education and theory of socialization. (Doye :1991). The 'Cultural Studies' renaissance in Britain' modified the aim of language education to "intercultural understanding'. The task of education in modern times is to promote intercultural enrichment and understanding. Therefore, any well meaning educational system should emphasize those disciplines that can promote it. From this perspective, we see the usefulness of intercultural understanding in interactions between people of different cultures within and outside Nigeria. Opara (1989) calls this 'boundary crossing' of our children into other cultures. A true example is Nigeria's relationship with Economic Community of West African States. (ECOWAS). This is one way of showing their need for intercultural education. Communicative competence in French language actually permits this. She further affirmed that no other discipline possesses such a favorable condition for intercultural understanding than languages. On the basis of these, we are justified to say that French language has the potentials of enriching the Senior Secondary School French curriculum in matters of culture and values.

According to UNESCO (1975b: 5), balanced education content goes beyond the scope of quantitative balance of subjects or the achievement of a list of behavioral objectives. It should be seen 'in terms of the converging influence of the various components of the educational process on the development of the personality through cognitive, affective, ethical, aesthetic and sometimes, the physical affects'. It encompasses the totality of education: the 'development of the complete man'. It is believed that education content should include more of culture and national values so that learners may not lose their national identities but be able to appreciate their culture. (Eyford 1986). Balance of the curriculum content also means the capacity of the content when taught and learnt to satisfy individual, national or global needs as it affects the emotional, the physical, the spiritual; and other cognitive needs. French language education is regarded as an aspect of the education content that makes for the development of the model of the educated person. In view of the fact that French language satisfies the learners' linguistic needs, as it is believed that French language will enrich the curriculum components of culture and humanistic values thereby correcting the imbalances we have observed in this respect. A curriculum is balanced when the designer gives adequate attention to the 'proportionate treatment of all the relevant areas of knowledge'. Within the context of this communication, there is the quest for a balance between the academic content of the French language curriculum and the practical corresponding to culture and values education content as essential ingredients of the education of students as members of the Nigerian society.

Educational experts have observed that the country is experiencing 'crisis in culture and values education' (Nwosu 1980, Woodland 1982, Asiedu 1986) and Opara 1989. A trait of moral uprightness and tolerance have been found lacking both in the students and in a majority of people and it has been observed that they are also

lacking in school education. This is because teachers 'assume that students automatically acquire appropriate social skills as the by-products of learning in ordinary lessons' (Owhotu, 1984, Asiedu 1986) as cited by Opara (2000) in her exposé on 'Enhancing Humanistic Values Education through African Literature in French in Colleges of Education in Nigeria', she supported the views of educationists that the school is in the best position to inculcate in learners this type of education. This is the reason for the quest for a review of the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum for value and cultural enrichment as a lot of impoverishment has been observed in learners' behaviors in this perspective. Educational experts and researchers believe this originates from the perspective observed in the academic and the culture and values contents of the curriculum.

### The Need for Cultural and Intercultural Enrichment and Values in the Senior Secondary School French Curriculum

In 1961, it was agreed upon by the United Nations at the Adis Ababa Conference that all French speaking countries should make French language their official language for the purposes of cooperation and unity, trade and economic enhancement, diplomatic relations. It is believed that peace and unity will eliminate wars, and nothing goes for the Anglophone countries. No country is left out of culture and value issues. Lack of respect for humanistic values and culture form the basis of many problems that we now face in the country. There is insecurity, religious intolerance, corruption, greed, economic and social disadvantages, lack of national development, terrorism and a lack of respect for the human rights for one another and ethnic strife.

The aim of this communication is to find ways of enriching the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum in matters of values and culture, to bridge the gap where there are not enough cultural values in the curriculum content. How can French language help? French language is rich in enhancing cultural values. There is a saying that if you know somebody's language, your language will make you to be at home with that person's values. How do we study it? How do we do it? We believe this is achievable through the curriculum. How are we going to use the curriculum to give us cultural orientation? What culture and values in curriculum that we can enrich in Senior Secondary School classes? Why are these values important? Our people often say that education without character is nothing. Europeans and Africans cherish peace, brotherliness, and national stability, social and economic progress. We will teach them through the French language aspects of the world culture that will make them to become citizens of the world with respect for every person's human rights, no matter the color of their eyes.

The Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995) defines curriculum as "the subjects included in a course of study or taught at a particular school, college." Many educational experts have given their definitions as regards the concept of curriculum. Tanner (1980), Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), Marsh & Willis, (1995), Sawyer, (2004) to mention but a few. Adegoke, K. A. in *'Philosophical issues in Curriculum Development'*, in Curriculum Theory and the Disciplines, provides a comprehensive definition of the concept of curriculum: 'curriculum is normally used to refer to all the experiences which are provided to the students under the direction (conscious and unconscious) of the school. It includes activities which are academic and non-academic, vocational, emotional and recreational. It includes all those activities in which students engage under the auspices of the school, what they need to learn

(syllabus), how teachers help them learn (pedagogy), using what supporting materials (textbooks) and methods of assessment (testing), in what kind of facilities and employing what means of evaluation to improve the program'. In this regard, we will consciously through the curriculum create an environment for the children to acquire culture and values education.

The quest for value and cultural enrichment of the senior Secondary French language curriculum emanates from the fact that we believe French language education is a worthwhile venture. This has been demonstrated by its relevance on personal, national and international levels. Several authors have worked on the issue of relevance as encompassing the concept of curriculum content to learners' needs and its centrality to circumstances surrounding the learners' various situations. This fact explains further the relevance of the cultural and cultural enrichment of the French language curriculum in all its ramifications to the students and the society at large.

In addition, the relevance of culture to technological, political and economic advancement or national development has been the subject of much communication. (Aghaje, (1996), Annastasia Mbakogu (2004), Nwosu, S. N. Educating for Values. (Inaugural Lecture series) University of Lagos, to mention but a few. Intercultural education is relevant in education of the children because it helps to solve the problems emanating from lack of mutual understanding between peoples of different ethnic groups which have often proved to be sources of civil wars and strife. The need to review the Senior Secondary French language curriculum to enrich the value and culture component as has been deemed necessary demonstrates the role of language in disseminating culture and values education.

In what areas is it that the curriculum in use cannot adequately provide for the value and cultural education of the students? 2. What is inherent in language education in general and in French language in particular that can provide and transmit values and culture to students and the society at large? It is believed that the inclusion of culture and values in this context will end up making the education to have a human face. It is also believed that it will make students to live morally, and not like animals fighting over unnecessary issues, they will live creatively and productively in a democratic society. It is also believed that through this we will add humanistic values to the education contents that students need to become an educated person.

### Theoretical Framework

Educational experts (Fafunwa 1981, Bradley & Boyd 1976) have expounded on the role of humanistic values education as essential ingredients in national development. They have equally noted the pivotal role of the school as a principal agent in the transmission. Our National Policy on Education affirms the importance of humanistic values education for the development of national consciousness and civic responsibility and has stressed that language is one of those disciplines that can ensure the transmission. The exigencies of globalization, population explosion with its socio economic realities and the impact of modern technologies on modern societies necessitate the usefulness of humanistic values in societies. It is believed that conscious efforts should be made by the school to add humanistic values education to the academic component in order to be able to tackle the moral

decadence in the society from its roots. Enrichment of the value and component of the French language curriculum we believe will help the society achieve this aim.

The Nigerian society is a multiethnic one; hence we need to educate children to be broadminded, capable of having the freedom to hold opinions and granting the same rights to their fellow citizens. This will demonstrate their understanding of the universality of human values, good neighborliness and the spirit of brotherhood. This is why Nigerians are encouraged to learn the French language for better intercultural understanding. It has been discovered that language is a very potent means of transmitting culture and values because language and culture are inseparable. Hence, then, that language can be used to transmit value and culture of the target language. This is what transmits culture and values in the process of communication and interaction among peoples.

In language education, the curriculum is expected to state categorically the objectives of learning what aspects of the culture of a specific people. It is expected to integrate culture and language in the body of knowledge to be transmitted to learners. The cultural objectives are to focus on the appreciation of cultural diversity through its creation of cultural awareness and a reinforcement of students' positive views and attitudes concerning other people's culture. This is one aspect of the cultural and values enrichment that we propose to bring into the French language education.

Other ways in which culture and humanistic values can be revealed in language education is through the teaching and learning of literature. This includes oral and written literature. (Moody, 1981 and Creighton, 1965). Owhotu, (1980) explains the role of literature in the didactic purposes of poetry, legends and drama in the traditional African setting. This have been found to help in the transmission of the culture and values to children and adults alike through the use of stories that demonstrate virtues of kindness, tolerance and instills in them the spirit of unity with his people. Literature increases interest and love for the country. Through literature, students can get to understand the culture and values of other tribes in Nigeria. This can motivate students to want to learn French. Indirectly it will improve inter-state relationship and improve social and economic lives through marriages or businesses opportunities. This is in line with one of the cultural contents of the National Policy of Education and the 2007 Senior Secondary curriculum of French. It helps to give the students a broader vision of the world. Another aim of the 2007 French Language curriculum is to enable learners to relate with the outside world and the culture which the target language transmits.

French literature is spectrum though which the cultures of both the source and the target languages can be learnt. Nigeria being a multicultural nation should encourage her citizens to be able to polyglot and learn foreign and the Nigerian languages. In addition to intercultural understanding, the second basis for using language for cultural /inter-cultural enrichment and understanding is using the French language for **political education**. Bolnenkamp, Dirks and Knab, (1966) affirmed that every subject and every form of education contributes to political education. Hicks, 1988 call it political literacy or the ability to influence decision making at national and international levels. In the Nigerian Policy on Education, it appears as education for citizenship where it is named as one of the responsibilities of education. It is a cross curricular theme which concerns all subjects. (NPE, Revised Edition, 1998).

### Theory of Socialization

According to Berger and Luckmann, (1969), this is the process of internalizing the world beyond the boundaries of one's own society. Through this, people acquire their own social norms and intercultural communicative competence as an extension of primary and secondary socializations. Primary socialization is based on the family, while secondary socialization is based on internalizing the norms of the society. Tertiary socialization is logically the third level at which development continues through encounter with foreign values. It has these advantages: introduces the process of the individual's social constitution. 2. It describes the third stage in the development of the individual which is a stage of diverse intercultural encounters and presents a necessary extension to the first two without suggesting that the phases are separated from and exclusive of one another. 3. It includes precisely those important dimensions of the individual on which language education depends: cognitive socialization, evaluative socialization and socialization as acquisition of action competence. 4. It embraces the social and the individual aspects of the development of the individual, that is, his or her socialization and individualization. (Opara, C. C. French Education for Intercultural Understanding: Implications for National Development'. In Journal of the World Council for Curriculum & Instruction, Nigerian Chapter).

### The place and Role of Language in Cultural / Intercultural Understanding

Authors like Moody, (1981) and Creighton, (1985) affirmed the potentials of language to promote cultural awareness, peace and social integration. They uphold the fact that language instills a full cultural identity in the individual by enabling him to develop an appreciation of his personal and societal values and norms as he is equipped to tackle issues in their cultural contexts. It enables someone to learn other people's language and so exposes the individual to understand and appreciate the values, norms and ways of life (culture) of the person whose language is being learnt. Hence, it fosters broadmindedness, tolerance and the mutual respect for people. According to the Arabs, a new language is a new man. This means that exposure to a new language offers the learner the extension of his own mind and personality. It therefore goes that the best medium to achieve intercultural enrichment/ understanding and peace education is language.

Owhotu (1986) argues that even the traditional patterns of lifelong education is composed mainly of language and literature (local myths, legends, oral poetry, drama, oratory, proverbs, wise sayings, riddles, etc). The traditional folklore is the embodiment of cultural life and personality. According to Nwoga (1978), language deals with the underlying basis of peoples' religious beliefs and practices, the foundation of their social institution and the subtle implications of their daily actions. Following a publication titled Language: A medium for cultural /intercultural enrichment /understanding, by Opara, (2000) language education for intercultural enrichment consists of **whatever the individual needs to know, understand and do, not only to survive in his own cultural group but also to participate and contribute to the success of the larger Nigerian society**. Such knowledge, she says should accord him:

1. Freedom of movement within the nation in order to enjoy the advantages and rights it offers on equal terms with other cultural groups.
2. Access to information about what is going on around him within the nation.

3. Ability to communicate and integrate freely, directly and immediately with fellow Nigerians.
4. Ability to participate in the collective life of the nation, exercising his due share of democratic influence in aspects of the nation's affairs that concern him.
5. Language for economic purposes.
6. Language for political / diplomatic purposes.
7. Language for citizenship and effective living in a democracy.
7. Language for intellectual development.
8. Language for personal or social purposes.

Therefore, defining the educational needs of Nigerians in this way highlights the role of language in cultural and intercultural enrichment and understanding. The study of languages in Nigeria brings about cultural and intercultural understanding among us and between us and our neighbors with inherent prospects for national development. Such values thus acquired will enable Nigerians live in harmony within our multicultural reality. This has enormous and rewarding prospects for nation building.

#### 'Challenges to language as a medium for cultural / intercultural understanding and values enrichment

Following Opara (2000), and notwithstanding the prospects of language as medium of cultural and intercultural understanding and values enrichment, there are some challenges.

1. Lack of linguistic complementarity causing barriers to language integration and harmony within the multilingual and socio-cultural situations in the country.
2. Linguistic interference.
3. Lack of motivation and goals of language education.
4. Problems of communication posed by multilingualism.
5. Ethnicism.
6. Political instability.
7. High level of illiteracy.
8. Rural-urban divide.

#### The Way Forward through overcoming these challenges

1. Establish complementarities to achieve linguistic harmony and integration within Nigeria's multilingual setting through embarking on primary education through the mother tongue. The values for this are obvious and cannot be overemphasized. (Dicker, (1993), Garcia, (1991), Cummins, (1981), Bani (1980).
2. Use of contrastive studies to reduce linguistic interference.
3. Inculcation of self discipline and values in schools to acquire tolerance and appreciation for others and positive attitude towards others.' (Opara, (2000) French Education for Intercultural Understanding :Implications For National Development).

#### Methodological strategies

The quest for cultural value and enrichment in the Senior Secondary French Language curriculum finds possible solutions in intercultural education which makes him to develop the spirit of tolerance for others because he undergoes learning

in the target language; different cultures in the environment and that of the target language. Intercultural education is necessary to be able to achieve the aims of language education: national development and unity. This has been expressed in the National Policy on Education. (1970) Opara (1989) spoke of the origin of intercultural pedagogy among the multicultural societies of Europe and America. This was the method used in North America and Germany to solve the problems originating from the coexistence of foreign nationals with native population where the method of intercultural education was used to teach the youth to understand other people's culture. This method can be used to teach our students to understand our culture and other people's culture.

#### The curriculum components be enriched in culture and values through Syllabus and Pedagogy

##### 1. Syllabus

The values and culture component of the syllabus can be enriched by including passages that expose the culture and life of the French and Africans in oral and written comprehension passages. Literary texts based on topics like marriage in France and in Nigeria or in any other African country can serve as the basis to teach values attached to honesty, fidelity and interpersonal understanding, peaceful coexistence, marriage customs, friendship and cordiality between families members of the couple. Mutual understanding, cooperation and unity are among the reasons given by the United Nations for the institution of language education for the people. He is able to understand the importance of respect for others and human dignity as values embedded in culture to ensure a peaceful environment where there can be human security, economic progress and political stability for promoting national development.

Cultural and values education acquired from the study of recommended literary textbooks make students and the society at large to be aware of ways of providing solution to societal problems. In this way, the curriculum will be meeting the needs of the society. Literature teaches the students to love their country, it teaches them about human problems and how to solve them through examples seen in the textbooks. Makpu (1999) affirmed the potentiality of the textbook to eliminate stereotypes in Nigeria, for example, 'literature is a medium for inculcating social awareness and civic viewpoint to solve national problems' (cited in Opara (1989). Through the use of oral literature, students learn of other cultures, we see this example in the universal stories formed around the tortoise that was greedy or the lizard and the elephant who wanted to become the king. In a multiethnic society, students see themselves as one family, sharing the stories of these animals in their different cultures and learning lessons of character development from them. In this way, habits and character traits that can help solve societal problems like corruption, greed, dishonesty, hatred are inculcated into the students.

##### Pedagogy

Opara (2000) conducted a research on the use of African literature to propagate values in students at the College of Education level. The study was based on the belief that literature is effective in enhancing values; hence African literature in

French is instrumental in propagating values. Three hundred and one students and fifty-six teachers from sixteen Colleges of Education offering French in Nigeria were used as samples for the study. **The data analysis and findings** revealed no strong relationship between teaching strategies used in the different colleges and the inculcation of values in students. It was however discovered that restrictive teaching methods prevented the effective inculcation of values in students. Hence, there is the need for the development of appropriate instructional strategies to inculcate values in the students.

Sequel to this and in another study, Opara, (2010), elaborated on the innovative pedagogical principles involved in using literature as a tool for enriching the values and cultural components of the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum. This she said should be based on a 'systematic process of presentation coupled with careful planning and preparation as it demands absolute mastery of the language and the cultural knowledge of the topic to be taught. To this should also be added a psycho-social foundation of values commitment.' Through this process, she concluded that the student will not end up being only versed in recalling the cultural norms, codes and patterns of behavior but will also have been molded into a critical thinker and an autonomous moral and value-laden individual'. An example of this type of instructional strategy is the one proposed in teaching oral literature to a class made up of multiethnic students. This was illustrated by the use of a song that is normally sung to children at night when they want to go to bed and they cry. In the pedagogical approach, she used a double edged sword to teach linguistic and cultural competence. The song originated from a Togolese legend written by Y. E Dogbe. While the Ewe song motivates the learners and the story is interesting to them, they are also thrilled by the appeal to the senses which facilitates their understanding and imagination. She started by locating the country of origin of the author on the map of Africa, she then elaborated on the language, the ethnic group, their religious beliefs, the superstitions and the myths associated with the night while making a comparison of the country with other countries. (Opara, 2010). This instructional strategy is a means of internalizing the content of the song as well as the culture of the people. The students in the class see a resemblance in their culture and that of the others as illustrated in the song.

Inculcating values education can be achieved through informal means. Instructional materials like real life objects are of real values in integrating culture and values in language education since what we are teaching is a living language. This method also promotes the use of experiential methods in place of lecture methods. Moody (1981:13) also proposed the use of informality and flexibility in integrating culture and values education into French language pedagogy.

Other areas of values education can be taught through the use of curriculum **integration of themes and topics that can promote culture and values education**. This is achieved by integrating the various themes to be taught in culture and values to French lessons. Authors like Moody, (1981) & Creighton (1965), Bradley & Boyd (1976), Doye (1991), Buttjes (1991), Opara (1989), Borelli (1991) have worked on the usefulness of the French language for intercultural understanding and its role in instituting peace and national development in the country.

Ability to speak French language permits communication among different ethnic tribes and the francophone. It is on this socio cultural dimension of language that we

have based our means of using French language education to inculcate culture and humanistic values education into the Senior Secondary School French language curriculum.

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