

INCORPORATING SECURITY EDUCATION INTO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM FOR NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The study investigated the opinions of French language teachers in public secondary schools in South East Geo-political zone of Nigeria with regard to the incorporation of security education into the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools. Two research questions guided the study. The first research question sought to find out the themes that promote security education that could be incorporated into the curriculum while the second research question was on the strategies which could be used to integrate the security education themes into the curriculum. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 884 French language teachers in public secondary schools in the zone in the 2018/2019 academic session. Only 801 of the teachers were actually used for the study as the researchers could not reach 83 of them. A 36-item questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three specialists. Two of them were in the teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) while one was in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. They were all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The data collected were analyzed with mean scores and standard deviations. The results showed that teachers agreed that themes like bravery, carefulness, curiosity, dignity of labour, equity, friendliness, forgiveness, honesty, justice, love, negotiation, patriotism, self-discipline, respect, tolerance and vigilance should be incorporated into the French language curriculum to propagate and promote security education. They also agreed that French language teaching strategies could be used to integrate these themes into the curriculum. It was recommended, among

others, that French language curriculum should be enriched to accommodate these themes.

Keywords: *Education, Security, Curriculum, French Language, Strategies, Integration.*

Introduction

Education is a globally recognized tool for effective national development. Its major concern is to equip its recipients with the knowledge, skills and values that would make them live and function effectively in the society. This is why Akudolu (2011:1) describes it as “a process that leads to behaviour change of an individual through the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values”. This effort at the positive modification of the people’s behaviour is geared towards the creation of awareness in them on the need to adjust to contemporary context. It is in line with this that Tahir, Olowonefa and Abdulrahman (2019) see education as a process which aims at instilling in the individual the ability to adjust to their total environment. Achieving this means that it has to assist the individuals to develop themselves intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, morally and spiritually to cope with the demands of the contemporary society. This process is based on what the society actually needs and desires. It is in recognition of this very important role that Nigeria has her first goal of education as the “Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen” (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, NERDC (2013:2).

However, it is clear that many products of this education system are not living up to that stipulated national ideal as the country is bedeviled with many security problems. Obasonjo (2019:5) succinctly captures the security situation in Nigeria in an open letter to the President of the country, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, when he points out that Nigerians are being faced by daily issues of insecurity where people are being “---- victimized, killed, maimed, kidnapped, raped, sold into slavery and forced into marriage and for children forcibly recruited into carrying bombs on them to detonate among crowds of people to cause maximum destruction and damage”. The letter came as a result of the spate of killings executed by kidnappers, bandits, insurgents, cultists and armed robbers across the country. This horrifying security situation in Nigeria is hardly surprising as the country harbours two terrorist groups, Boko Haram and Fulani killer herdsman, once adjudged the deadliest and fourth deadliest terror group respectively by the Global Terror Index. Boko Haram specializes in killings, bombings, abductions and in gory displays of violence while the killer herdsman have virtually taken over the

South Eastern Geo-political zone of the country, killing, maiming, raping, robbing innocent Nigerians and turning people's farms and forests into battle grounds. A report by Ndujihe, Agande, Yakubu, Ajaji and Brisibe (2019) shows that even foreigners from Chad, Mali and Niger Republic are now involved in wrecking untold hardship on the people.

As if the above scenario is not scary enough, marauding gangs of armed robbers, kidnapers, assassins, ritual killers, petty thieves, human traffickers, fraudsters and cultists are on rampage all over the country. As a result of all these, there is a feverish tension in the land. People are living in fear. Such fear sometimes leads to parents withdrawing their children from school or outright closure of schools for a long time (Akintunde, 2015). National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP, 2015) reports that trafficking in Nigerians is on the increase. Their documentation shows that it has led many Nigerians into slavery, illicit sex and drug trade nationally and internationally. According to Onuoha (2019), 750 cases of internet fraud were recorded in just the first eight months of the year. Zhiya and Umaru (2019: 302) aptly summarize the situation when they write that "Travelling in Nigeria is fraught with danger and uncertainties. Even at home, life is not safe because armed robbers, assassins, Boko Haram and murderers can strike at any time of the day". Of course, the natural consequence of the turmoil is mass poverty. Ogbu (2018) has it that Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world. This corroborates an earlier report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2016) that an average of 5 to 12 percent of the population are falling into borderline, abject or absolute poverty levels annually.

It is because of the mounting security challenges that the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced Security Education into the country's education system. It is a stand-alone subject that is taught throughout the basic education levels (NERDC, 2013). In it, the pupils are exposed to the basic information and training to be aware of threats to their environment and identify proper ways of handling and responding to them. This enlightenment on safety precautionary measures instills security consciousness in the learners as they learn how to support and assess safety, identify comfort levels and methods of reporting safety concerns. It provides information on security tips and the functioning of security gadgets. These sensitize the learners to the happenings around and within their environment and prepare them on how to cope with security challenges. Through it, the learners are expected to imbibe security measures such as close monitoring of one's environment and the building of friendly and harmonious relationships. In a nutshell, it deals with issues that

have to do with protection from loss, danger, criminals or actions that threaten the serenity, comfort, conduciveness, peace and safety of a place or people. It is envisaged that the inculcation of such competences would go a long way in preventing idleness among the citizens, in taking their minds off violence and consequently making them responsible members of the society.

The introduction of the subject is quite in line with the global best practices of aligning education with issues of public interest. Bello (2013) points out that different educational approaches have been used in the past to address issues of injustice and human rights violations. These include gender education, civic education, human right education, intercultural education and inter-faith education. In line with these, Ogwu, Ukwuezeh and Ukoha (2019) have called for issues relating to security to be integrated into language classes. This interdisciplinary approach to security education is necessary as the government's solutions to the festering security problems seem to be largely coming in terms of rhetoric and not in concrete terms. Day in day out, news of soaring insecurity wafts across the length and breadth of the country. Report by Bello (2019) shows that the government still has a lot to do to save Nigerians from the throes of criminals. The task of ensuring the safety of lives and property and cultivating the culture of value for human life is an exercise that should involve the entire curriculum endeavours. Issues in this category, according to Igbokwe and Egbe (2011), have to be taken care of in education through curriculum enrichment. This entails the rethinking and expanding of the curriculum offerings to reflect the ever-changing societal realities.

Applying this to security education implies its incorporation in other school subjects to deepen the understanding and appreciation of its tenets by the learners.

One of the subjects that is quite capable of propagating, promoting and deepening security consciousness and value for life is the French language. It is a subject that can easily be connected to the realities of the learners. The subject itself is value laden. Its curriculum for secondary schools in Nigeria consists of a set of very important and interesting objectives, contents, learning experiences and evaluation techniques that are anchored mainly on topical and contemporary local, national and international issues. To simplify the subject and sustain the interest of the students in it, the items in the curriculum are selected and arranged to meet the demands of the English/French bilingual policy of French as the second official language in Nigeria. In order to achieve its objectives, the curriculum from junior to senior secondary education levels

is organized in units, with each unit explored in six different aspects, namely: aims and objectives, possible language expressions, vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and orthography, suggested class activities and teaching aids, and finally feedback evaluation (NERDC, 2012). All these are designed to be presented and explored in participatory, experimental and learner-centred ways. When enriched properly, exposing the students to these may encourage them to develop a right attitude to life, their environment, their interpersonal relationships, and above all, instill in them the desire to be good citizens.

It is against a backdrop of the foregoing expositions that the present researchers decided to investigate the opinions of French teachers in public secondary schools in the South East Geo-political zone of Nigeria with regard to the incorporating security education into the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools. The study focused on the identification of the themes that could promote security education that could be incorporated into the curriculum; and the strategies that could be used to get them integrated. Hence, the study was guided by two research questions, namely:

1. What themes that promote security education could be incorporated in the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools?
2. What strategies could be used to integrate the security education themes into the curriculum?

Method

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey design in carrying out the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 884 French language teachers in the public secondary schools in the South East Geo-political zone of Nigeria. This zone is one of the six Geo-political zones into which Nigeria is divided. The zone has five out of the 36 states of the federation. The states are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. There was no sampling as the population was manageable. However, only 801 of the teachers were actually used for the study as the researchers could not reach 83 of them. The instrument for data collection was a 36-item questionnaire. The questionnaire has two clusters. The first cluster which had 17 items sought to find out the themes that promote security education that could be incorporated into the French language curriculum while the second cluster, which had 19 items was on the identification of the strategies that could be used to integrate the security education themes into it.

The instrument was structured on a 4-point scale on which the respondents reacted to. The items on the questionnaire were weighted thus: Strongly Agree

(SA) 3.50 – 4.00, Agree (A) 2.50 – 3.49, Disagree (D) 1.50 – 2.49 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 0.00 – 1.49 points. It was validated by three specialists. Two of them were in the teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) while one was from Educational Measurement and Evaluation. They were all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha method. The first and the second clusters of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and 0.71 respectively. The data obtained were analyzed with the use of mean scores and standard deviations.

Results

The results are presented and analyzed according to the research questions.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Themes that could Promote Security Education that can be incorporated in the French Language Curriculum

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Bravery	2.61	1.13	Agree
2	Carefulness	3.74	0.76	Strongly Agree
3	Curiosity	2.93	1.18	Agree
4	Dignity of labour	3.80	0.64	Strongly Agree
5	Equity	3.67	0.82	Strongly Agree
6	Friendliness	2.55	0.67	Agree
7	Forgiveness	3.16	0.85	Agree
8	Honesty	2.67	0.53	Agree
9	Justice	3.72	0.89	Strongly Agree
10	Love	3.12	0.70	Agree
11	Negotiation	3.58	0.68	Strongly Agree
12	Patience	2.46	1.06	Disagree
13	Patriotism	3.79	0.80	Strongly Agree
14	Self-discipline	3.10	0.71	Agree
15	Respect	3.14	0.64	Agree
16	Tolerance	2.95	0.87	Agree
17	Vigilance	3.84	0.73	Strongly Agree
Grand mean and standard deviation		3.23	0.86	Agree

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the themes that could promote security education that could be incorporated in the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools. The mean scores range from 3.84 to 2.46 with a corresponding standard deviation range of 1.13 to 0.53. The table shows that the teachers strongly agreed to the incorporation of items 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 13 and 17 into the French language curriculum. The items recorded mean scores of 3.74, 3.80, 3.67, 3.72, 3.58, 3.79 and 3.84 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.76, 0.64, 0.82, 0.89, 0.68, 0.80 and 0.73 respectively. They also agreed that items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15 and 16 have to be integrated into the curriculum. The items recorded mean scores of 2.61, 2.93, 2.55, 3.16, 2.67, 3.12, 3.10, 3.34 and 2.95 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.13, 1.18, 0.67, 0.85, 0.53, 0.70, 0.71, 0.64 and 0.87 respectively. The teachers however disagreed that item 12 should be included in the curriculum. The item recorded a mean score of 2.46 with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.06. Based on the grand mean of 3.23 and overall standard deviation of 0.86, the result shows that the French language teachers generally agreed that themes that could promote security education have to be incorporated into the French language curriculum.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Strategies that could be used to Integrate Security Education themes into the French Language Curriculum

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
18	Select French written comprehension topics that emphasize themes that propagate and promote security education	3.66	0.59	Strongly Agree
19	Encourage students to participate actively in French language lessons	2.64	0.71	Agree
20	Stress effective French language communication skills	3.18	1.02	Agree
21	Encourage students to assist one another in their French language learning endeavours	2.92	0.93	Agree
22	Give French language assignments that require cooperation among the students	2.95	0.68	Agree
23	Take French language students on excursions to correctional facilities and get them to discuss their experiences	2.99	1.11	Agree

24	Treat every student fairly and firmly in French language classes	3.73	0.56	Strongly Agree
25	Develop in the students the habit of thinking very well before taking a decision	3.14	0.72	Agree
26	Draw the students' attention to the spiral organization of the curriculum	2.38	1.02	Disagree
27	Select role plays that promote the values of love and kindness	3.48	0.64	Agree
28	Stress the dangers of cultism and other antisocial and violent behaviour	2.77	0.69	Agree
29	Emphasize the importance of active listening in French language classes	2.67	1.07	Agree
30	Focus French language oral comprehension exercises on how to interact positively with others	3.10	0.51	Agree
31	Choose French oral expression exercises that promote respect for the fundamental human rights and freedom of others	3.72	0.75	Strongly Agree
32	Concentrate the French language written expression activities on themes that test the ability to differentiate what is right from what is wrong	3.54	0.62	Strongly Agree
33	Encourage healthy competition in French language classes through debates	2.91	0.57	Agree
34	Use French language video recordings to drill the students on what to do in the event of a security threat	3.61	0.85	Strongly Agree
35	Use French language learning exercises to encourage the students to be security conscious and be ready to make necessary report to the police or any available law enforcement outfit	3.83	0.63	Strongly Agree
36	Build in the student, through French language learning exercises, the boldness to be ready to stand in any court of law as a witness against culprits	2.59	1.19	Agree
Grand mean and standard deviation		3.15	0.91	Agree

Table 2 shows that the French language teachers strongly agreed that items 18, 24, 31, 32, 34 and 35 were the strategies that could be used to integrate security education themes in the French language curriculum. The items recorded

means scores of 3.66, 3.73, 3.72, 3.54, 3.61 and 3.83 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.59, 0.56, 0.75, 0.62, 0.85 and 0.63 respectively. The teachers also agreed to the integration of items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33 and 36 into the curriculum. The items recorded means scores of 2.64, 3.18, 2.92, 2.95, 2.99, 3.14, 3.48, 2.77, 2.67, 3.10, 2.91, and 2.59 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.71, 1.02, 0.93, 0.68, 1.11, 0.72, 0.64, 0.69, 1.07, 0.51, 0.57 and 1.19 respectively. On the other hand, the teachers disagreed that item 26 could be incorporated into the curriculum. It recorded a mean score of 2.38 with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.02.

Based on the grand mean of 3.15 and overall standard deviation of 0.91, the result indicates that the French language teachers generally agreed that the suggested strategies could be used to incorporate the security education themes into French language curriculum.

Discussion

The first finding of the study revealed that the French language teachers were in support of incorporating themes that could promote security education into the curriculum of the subject. They agreed strongly that such themes like carefulness, dignity of labour, equity, justice, patriotism and vigilance, should form part of the French language curriculum. Also, they agreed that bravery, curiosity, friendly, honesty, love, self-discipline, respect and tolerance could form part of the curriculum. This finding shows that the teachers were in agreement with Igbokwe and Egbe (2011) that curriculum enrichment is needed to accommodate the changing needs and desires of the society. The security education themes, if properly integrated into the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools, would undoubtedly correct and reduce bad social behaviour among the students who are exposed to it. This may have informed the teachers' decisions. They probably hope for an arrangement where their subject would be in a really good position to inculcate in the learners certain indispensable virtues that would help them to develop good attitude to life and, as a result, face the challenges of the time more effectively and confidently. A French language curriculum of that quality would be a very powerful tool to provide inspiration to Nigerians to fight social upheavals, moral decadence, political stability and promote development through hard work, self-discipline and patriotism. That would surely go a long way in solving Nigeria's hydra-headed security problems.

However, the fact that the teachers disagreed that the theme of patience should form part of the curriculum calls for concern. This is because the absence of

such a theme in the country's educational services may lead to the production of citizens who abhor due process in their engagements. That is antithetical to the ideal of NERDC (2013) to develop the citizens into morally sound and patriotic citizens. Removing patience from the curriculum may erode the gain already made. It may lead to indiscipline and cutting corners, the same vices which have been fuelling the psychosocial beast known corruption in the country. This is the same problem that has been incubating and stoking insecurity in Nigeria. Any educational intervention in Nigeria that jeopardizes the sustainability of any gain that may have been made against corruption may have in itself failed. This is because the pervasive decay in the country may not have been redressed in the long term, and the resurgence of security problems would become the natural consequence.

Another finding of the study is that the French teachers strongly agreed that the strategies that could be used to integrate the security education themes into the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools included the selection of French language written comprehension topics that emphasize themes that propagate and promote security education, treating every student fairly and firmly in French language classes, choosing French oral expression exercises that promote human rights and freedom of others, concentrating the French language written expression activities on themes that test the ability to differentiate what is right from what is wrong, using French language video recordings to drill the students on what to do in the event of a security threat and the use of French language learning exercises to encourage the students to be security conscious and be ready to make necessary report to the police or any available law enforcement outfit. Similarly, they agreed that every other suggested strategy could be used to incorporate security education into the curriculum, except the drawing of the students' attention to the spiral organization of the curriculum.

The result that the French language teaching strategies can be used in the propagation and promotion of security education is a manifestation of the possibility that it is a value laden subject which, if properly enriched and taught, is capable of taking people's mind off crimes and criminality. This is in agreement with Bello's (2013) finding that different approaches have been used in the past to address issues relating to human right violations. It also corroborates Ogwu, Ukwuezeh and Ukoha (2019) finding that problems relating to insecurity have to be addressed through the English language curriculum. The French language on its own is very amenable to interdisciplinary approach to the solution of societal problems. That may be

the reason for the teachers' support for it to be used as an instrument in the tackling of Nigeria's seemingly intractable security problems. Even though they disagreed that drawing the students' attention to the spiral organization of the curriculum should be one of the strategies for integrating security education into the curriculum, that may be because they did not consider it necessary as the student-centred nature of the curriculum would make that self-evident.

Conclusion

French language teachers are of the opinion that themes that promote security education should be incorporated into the French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools. These themes include bravery, carefulness, curiosity, dignity of labour, equity, friendliness, forgiveness, honesty, justice, love, negotiation, patriotism, self-discipline, respect, tolerance and vigilance. They however disagreed that patience should be included in the themes. The exclusion of this theme in such possible enrichment of the curriculum may jeopardize the sustainability of the likely gains as impatience by the citizens may eventually return the country to the path of corruption which is a major cause of the serious security problems that the country is facing. The study also found out that French language teaching strategies could be used to integrate the security education themes into the curriculum. These include, among others, the selection of French comprehension topics that emphasize themes that propagate and promote security education. In a nutshell, the incorporation of security education into the curriculum will go a long way in making the country an environment where people will feel safe and protected in going about their normal daily activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The French language curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools should be enriched to accommodate themes that propagate and promote security education.
2. Nigerian French language teachers should be trained and retrained by the government to equip them with the competencies required to utilize the strategies that can be used to integrate the security education themes into the curriculum.
3. Workshops and seminars should be organized by NERDC for the teachers to train them on how to revive and encourage the dying virtue of patience in the country.

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