

Challenges Of The Teaching And Learning Of French As A Foreign Language In Ghana : The Way Forward

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the grand challenges, which are difficult but solvable facing the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language in Ghana. The paper attempts to identify, define the big challenges and propose suggestions that can provide new opportunities for professionals of every human endeavour, spur new directions and innovation in order to change the Ghanaian public opinion about the role and importance of foreign language teaching and learning. Bilingualism or Multilingualism (knowing more than one language) is no longer a choice or an option but a must for businesses communication, offers employment opportunities and promotes global economic growth. Empirical evidence and research findings confirm and add to our understanding that French is among the principal languages of diplomacy and of important international organizations, a language of instruction, language of government and lingua franca of business. However, there are grand challenges facing the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. The researcher therefore attempts to address these challenges, focusing on priority areas in foreign language education, policy formulation and implementation, monitoring, and suggesting the way forward

Keywords: challenges, communication, foreign language teaching and learning, language education, language policy, second language,

1. Introduction/Background

Languages by nature are very dynamic and closely intertwined with human culture. The use of language is deeply entrenched in human culture. Culture is therefore indispensable in the study of language. Learning a language is therefore learning the behaviour of a given society and its cultural customs. Language is a product of the thought and behaviour of a society. An individual language speaker's effectiveness in a foreign language is directly related to his/her understanding of the culture of that language. So, we can conclude that language is part of culture, and through it, we can express cultural beliefs and values. Guessabi (2017) argues that culture is a language in itself [1]. Language is obviously a vital tool not only a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but it also forges friendships, cultural ties, and economic relationships. It is evident that knowledge in the language is relevant to the understanding and appreciation of the socio-cultural practices of any linguistic community. In this light, knowledge of the codes of behaviour of other people is very necessary if a foreign language student is able to communicate effectively in the target language. Throughout history, scholars have reflected on the importance of language and have given diverse definitions of it. Benjamin Whorf as cited in Algeo (2001) argued that language shapes thoughts and emotions, determining one's perception of reality [2]. John Stuart Mill as cited in Kroon (2017) sees language as the light of the mind [3]. Language as a term refers to all instruments, means, vehicles or modes of communication. Whether a language is written or not, whether it is African, European, it is primarily spoken. It is a fact that oral communication is considered to be the primary function of every language. Languages all over the world fulfil this communicative function. Language is an essential tool that we use to communicate with other people in our day-to-day activities and working lives (Adejimola, 2008) [4]. It consists of words and meanings that are put together into

discrete units to form sentences (Van Berkum, 2008) [5]. Sentences joined together become information that can be used to exchange ideas with other people (Lieberman, 2008) [5]. The roles of foreign languages particularly French are crucial in global communication. Foreign languages play several roles in internal and external communication, create job opportunities and promote the understanding of other cultures. Good communication in foreign language becomes so vital in today's world owing to the impact of globalization. For global competitors, the most important factor is the ability to communicate on a wider range, quicker and clearer basis and ability in communication is focused on foreign languages which are widely used. In social constructivist theory, meaning is seen to arise from social processes constructed through the use of language where knowledge is created and shared. As Allen (2005) pointed out, language is used to produce and reproduce knowledge [6]. Knowledge sharing through language is the formal and informal exchanges of ongoing social interaction that mobilizes knowledge that is dispersed around the organization or its stakeholders (Doz, Santos, & Williamson, 2001; Kalla, 2006). [7]-[9]. Knowledge sharing through the French as a foreign language will create employment opportunities and social capital necessary for thriving concerns. In this regard, Ghanaians in the 21st Century should be part of this knowledge sharing through the use of the French language.

2. History of the French Language in Ghana

Despite the official status of English (a colonial heritage) as a second language, the teaching and learning of French started as far back as 1879 (Amonoo, 1988) [10]. It began in the Central Region at Mfantshipim and Adisadel schools in Cape Coast, when the then colonial school authorities deemed it necessary to introduce French as a second foreign language. It eventually spread to other schools in Ghana. The decision to teach and learn French, it must be

noted, was as a result of the geographical location of Ghana as it is bordered by three francophone neighbours namely: Togo in the east, Côte d'Ivoire in the west and Burkina Faso in the north. This strategic geographical position makes it expedient for the teaching and learning of French in the country. Consequently, the government of Ghana, with support from the French government has, over the years, put in place several measures to enhance the teaching and learning of French. As a result, departments of French in three Colleges of Education (Mount Mary, Wesley and Bagabaga) and other tertiary institutions were created with the aim of increasing the number of trained teachers of French for the basic and secondary schools. Even though there have been improvements in the patronage of the French language over the years at the various levels of education in Ghana, there are several challenges that limit the efforts of Ghana and French governments in promoting the study of French in the country. Ghanaians in general and students at all levels of education in particular frequently view the French language as a challenge, a difficult subject. It is still easily observed that enrolment figures at all levels of education remain abysmally low. Research study shows that there is a shortage of French teachers at the JHS level. It was reported in 2008 a shortage of 4000 teachers of French at the secondary level (AFC Report, 2010) [11]. This has a direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning of French at the JHS and SHS levels where there are over 800 senior high schools. As a result, French teachers have high pupil teacher ratio particularly at the JHS level and this, coupled with inadequate teaching and learning materials, affects the quality of French taught to JHS pupils in most schools, especially at the rural areas. Studies indicate clearly that only one percent of the over 30 million Ghanaians can speak French (OIF, 2018) [12]. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 indicate clearly the low enrolment for French at the JHS, SHS and tertiary levels.

Table 1: Number of public/Private Educational Institutions

Category	Number
Primary Schools	18,530
Junior Secondary	8,850
Senior Secondary	900
Technical Universities & Polytechnics (Public)	10
Colleges of Education	46
Universities	31

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2018

Table 2: Number of pupils who sat for BECE & WASSCE (2013 to 2018)

Year	BECE	WASSCE
2013	155,600	32,918
2014	171,247	19,003
2015	180,350	19,607
2016	192,540	21,998
2017	199,160	22,410
2018	212,180	25,193

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2018

Table 3: Number of teachers who graduated from Colleges of Education (2010 – 2018)

College	..10	..11	..12	..13	..14	..15	..16	.17	.18
Mt. Mary	130	133	123	117	117	119	114	85	92
Wesley	108	113	120	76	90	84	137	65	89
Bagabaga	35	32	39	45	37	80	76	30	73

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2018

Table 4: Number of students who graduated with French from universities (2001- 2018)

Year	UEW	KNUST	UCC	UG	Total
2010	97	70	15	144	326
2011	83	78	16	172	349
2012	93	39	19	138	289
2013	110	113	19	112	354
2014	125	54	17	103	299
2015	98	55	17	161	331
2016	94	70	24	112	300
2017	148	38	35	139	360
2018	177	48	30	125	380

Sources: Researcher's Field Work, 2018 (Compiled by the Researcher from MIS: KNUST, UG, UEW, UUC)

Ghana as a member state of various international organizations like the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and United Nations Organisation (UNO), finds it expedient for the teaching and learning of French in order to foster unity, understanding and enhance the socio-economic and political development among member states. To achieve these goals, all barriers whatsoever should be removed. For ECOWAS in particular and AU in general, the most lingering and obvious challenge is that of language and that challenge is the barrier between the French for Ghana in particular and Anglophone countries in general. Francophone countries do not have much problem with the English language. Today, various efforts are being made to eliminate the language deficiency and maximise the overriding benefits of regional integration. Various tertiary institutions (both public and private) in Ghana particularly the University of Education, Winneba, University of Cape Coast train French teachers for the first and second cycle schools. There are equally Colleges of Education which train teachers to handle the French language at the basic level. Additionally, from 1970-1995, the Government of Ghana with generous support from the French government saw the need to establish regional centres for the teaching of French (CREF). The objective for the creation of these centres was to boost the teaching and learning of French through the organisation of in-service programmes and training workshops. As a result, the National Coordination Office of CREF was set up in 1997 in conjunction with the Ghana Association of French Teachers (GAFT) for the continuous training of French teachers to upgrade and improve on their professional competencies in the content and methodologies and sharpen their skills in the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. Francozone, a resource and documentation centre was established in 2006 in Accra to enhance research in the various areas of French language teaching and learning in Ghana. The country's interest in the teaching and learning of French and culture culminated in the attainment of membership status in the prestigious International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF) in

2006, under the leadership of President J. A. Kuffour. As a member of the 56-member organization in 2006, it implies that Ghana:

- accepts to adhere to the democratic values, cultural diversity through co-operation and the use of the French language.
- can have easy access to some special priority research and development grants/funds (e.g. FSP), which, as a non member, she would not enjoy.

As a member, Ghana also benefited from OIF's assistance to:

- strengthen the French language skills for Ghanaian diplomats and public officers with international responsibilities and engagements
- increase the number of teachers of French at the second and tertiary levels
- develop partnership with the private sector for the teaching of the French language in private companies and associations (OIF, 2006) [13].

It is on record that enormous efforts have been made by the French government to encourage and ensure that the study of French is beneficial and relevant to Ghanaians. There is therefore the overriding need for Ghanaians to communicate in French, not only because Ghana is surrounded by francophone countries, but also French is the second international language after English.

3. Basic Facts about the French Language

There are basic established facts about the importance and prospects of the French language. Studies indicate that the French is among the more than 6,000 languages registered around the world (Grimes, 1992) [14]. It is also one of the most useful and most studied languages especially in the professional environment as determined by their diffusion around the world, their interests from the economic and political point of view, as well as the geographical proximity with the country of origin (OIF, 2014) [15].

3.1. French is Ranked Second after English

Research studies show that the French language comes second after English as the ten most studied languages in the world. Table 5 shows the ranking of the ten most studied languages in the world.

Table: 5 Ten most studied languages

S/N	Language	Position
1.	English	1 st
2.	French	2 nd
3.	Spanish	3 rd
4.	Italian	4 th
5.	Chinese	5 th
6.	Japanese	6 th
7.	German	7 th
8.	Arabic	8 th
9.	Portuguese	9 th
10.	Russian	10 th

Source: <https://www.mosalingua.com/en/most-studied-languages-in-the-world/>

From table 5, it is obvious that European languages including French have the upper hand. This is because

their culture is the main reason people learn their languages around the world.

3.2. French is an Official Language in Many Countries across the Five Continents

French is spoken by approximately 125 million people as a first language and 165 million as a second language. The Francophone world is spread across Europe, Africa, and the Americas as well as in and around the Pacific, with Europe and Africa offering the largest concentration of countries where French is recognised as an official language (OIF, 2014) [16]. In 2015, approximately 40% of the Francophone population (including L2 and partial speakers) lived in Europe, 35% in sub-Saharan Africa, 15% in North Africa and the Middle East, 8% in the Americas, and 1% in Asia and Oceania. French is the fourth most widely spoken mother tongue in the European Union. Of Europeans who speak other languages natively, approximately one-fifth are able to speak French as a second language. French is the second most taught foreign language in the EU. It is also the sixth most spoken language in the world, behind Mandarin Chinese, English, Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic, and is the second most studied language worldwide with about 120 million current learners (Ethnologue, 2016) [17]. French is one of the world's most influential languages, and is reputed to be the foreign language which is most widely used in international communications, after English. Today it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (<https://www.un.org> 2016) [18]. Spanish is by far the most studied language in the United States, whether in high school or college. According to the Modern Language Association (MLA), in the United States, colleges and universities offer plenty of opportunities for students to learn foreign languages as requirement for graduation. Below is a list of foreign languages taught in American schools and colleges based on Fall 2013 Enrollments. They reflect the popularity of these languages in terms of percentages and the total number of enrolled students where the French comes second after Spanish.

1. Spanish is the most studied language in the US, with 50% of college students choosing to learn Spanish.
2. French is next at just over 12%
3. American Sign Language is studied by 7% of students
4. German is studied by 5%
5. Italian is next at just over 4%
6. Chinese is at 3.9%
7. Arabic is steadily growing, at 2.1% in 2013
8. Latin, at 1.7%, is still taught in most US universities
9. Russian was chosen by 1.4% percent of students
10. Ancient Greek, at less than 1%, comes in last place, followed by Ancient Hebrew, Portuguese, Korean and Modern Hebrew, respectively.

Source: ACTFL (2015)

3.3. French a Language for Business

The use of foreign languages has huge impact on business performance within SMEs. Evidence suggests that Small and Medium Size enterprises (SMEs) that compete in global markets look for employees with language skills and lose revenues when their work force does not have adequate foreign language skills. Multi-national corporations such as Apple, automobile manufacturers like General Motors have adopted French language as the

most effective means of gaining access to global commerce and trade (<http://www.communicaid.com/france-business-culture.asp>). This is reflected in the fact that French is seen as a worldwide language. Over 49 African countries use it as first or second language and several million students are currently learning French across the globe. The knowledge of the French language will not only allow for access to commerce and trade, it also provides an efficient way by which business is conducted. Apart from cultural differences and aside the predominance of English, French serves as an efficient means of communication to conduct business throughout the world. It has also provided an effective tool used to deal with political differences seen as barriers to trade between Francophone and Anglophone countries in particular (<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Language-barrier-347516>). French is among the top three most useful languages for business after English and Mandarin Chinese (the world's second-largest economy). It is the second business language of the European zone after English ahead of German, Russian, Italian and Spanish (Bloomberg, 2011) [19]. Bloomberg Rankings first identified the 25 languages with the greatest number of native speakers, and then narrowed the list to 11 that are official languages of G20 countries. Countries where English is the official language, or one of multiple official languages, were excluded. This is perhaps the over-riding reason why the French language apart from English has been considered as one of the most influential languages in the business world.

3.4. Knowledge of French is Beneficial to Individuals

Research studies indicate that knowing foreign languages increases individuals' chances of finding a better job in their own country and abroad (European Commission, 2012) [20]. Demand for foreign language skills in the global labour market is steadily rising and also bound to increase in the short- to medium-term future. Existing research further indicates that there is a wage premium associated with foreign language knowledge in some European countries (Williams, 2011) [21]. With the continuous spread of French as the language of choice throughout the global business community, it is important for non-French speakers to understand that without the necessary French language skills they run the risk of being left behind. To be a cog in this dynamic world of business, it is important to learn the language. Hence, learning French is primary to individual success and should be given to anyone wishing to gain access to the corporate world of today's business. As the importance of French continues to spread, learning the language appears to be one of the most productive means to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world because study proves that language knowledge is valuable in seeking employment (Beyene, 2012) [22]. Today, the knowledge of French language at a proficiency level is closely associated with employment opportunities for professionals globally because it is one of the most influential languages, and is reputed to be the foreign language which is most widely used in international communications, after English. However, there are grand challenges facing the teaching and learning of in Ghana.

4. Challenges of the French Language Education in Ghana

We need to worry that several challenges limit the various efforts of Ghana and French governments in particular, individuals and other stakeholders in general at promoting the teaching and learning of French in the country. In this regard, we need to interrogate the French language enterprise in Ghana's education in order to find answers. Research has led to the following challenges which characterize our French language education programme.

4.1. No Clear Policy Framework for French Language Teaching and Learning

There are various challenges facing the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. Data indicate that majority of students graduating from Senior High Schools (SHS) did not have the opportunity to learn French. Even those who graduate with French at the basic level are not able to continue at the SHS level. It is therefore not surprising that majority of Ghanaian professionals who graduate from various tertiary institutions lack the knowledge of the French language (OIF, 2018) [12]. This is mainly because there is no serious policy framework for French language teaching and learning in Ghana. A cursory look at all educational reforms in Ghana (from Governor Gordon Guggisberg's 1925 Education Ordinance through Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's 1951 Accelerated Development Plan of Education, Kwampong Review Committee of 1966, Dzobo Review Committee of 1974 that proposed the JSS concept, modified by Evans Afom Committee in 1986 and implemented in 1987, up to the Anamuah-Mensah Education Review Committee of 2002) indicate clearly that the educational policies never provided any meaningful focus regarding the teaching and learning of the French language. The Ministry of Education launched new education reforms in 2004 following the report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (October 2002). One key area prominent in this policy initiative was language and literacy at the lower primary level. The 2002 President's Committee report recommended that French be introduced at the primary school level as an optional subject, and by extension into all schools based on the availability of teachers. The report also emphasized the need to introduce French into all Colleges of Education to equip newly trained teachers to teach French in basic schools. The White Paper on Report of the Education Reform Review Committee (Oct 2004) clearly stated the Government of Ghana's intention to ensure that French became a compulsory subject at the Senior High School (SHS) level and that efforts be made to ensure that the Junior High School (JHS) curriculum prepares students to meet this benchmark. The White Paper also established that an early and routine acquaintance with second, third, fourth language (bilingualism/multilingualism) confers on children great advantages in their life-long proficiency in those languages (GOG, 2004). The facts of geography and globalisation impose on Ghana a necessity to promote among wide segments of the commercial and financial sector's workforce a proficiency in the French language. Being an English-speaking country is also a source of considerable competitive advantage in international economic and political relations which Ghana needs to build upon. An objective analytical assessment of the

Education Sector Performance Reports for the past years shows that little attention has been made to track the progress on the teaching and learning French in public schools. It is on record that the French language is not among the eleven Ghanaian languages that got government sponsored status.

4.2. Difficulties in French Language Policy Implementation

Despite the prominence of French language teaching and learning in key policy documents, much less emphasis has been placed in the strategic and operational documents of the Ministry of Education (MOE)/Ghana Education Service (GES). For instance, even though the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) prioritizes Ghana's educational needs and sets targets for achievement in the next 10 years, the teaching and learning of French has not been well captured in this key Government policy document. The most recent Education Strategic Plan (2010-2020) has not mentioned strategies for promoting French language and learning in Ghana. The Educational column which captures the policy objectives on languages does not mention French (MOE, 2009). This is a total deviation from the previous ESP (2003-2015), which under the Quality Education section had policy objectives (QE8), targets and strategies for the development and improvement of the study of French in basic, SHS and Colleges of Education levels of education (MOE, 2003). Any language policy process involves formulation and implementation. The implementation of language education policy has been bedevilled with serious difficulties leading to inconsistencies between policy and implementation. As Fishman (1972) pointed out, language policy has to do with political decisions which concern rules, regulations and guidelines about the status, use, and territories of languages [23]. This implies that it is the duty of Government to provide a clear foreign language framework for a successful management and implementation. Clearly, there are always inconsistencies between policies and practices on the ground. The OAU Language Plan of Action for Africa adopted in 1986 suffered a serious setback (Bamgbose, 1991) [24]. Despite the efforts of various governments at formulating language policies, we cannot boast of any recognised or effective body/machinery for monitoring the implementation of these policies in the country. It must therefore be noted that, no matter the laudable objectives of any language policy, it is bound to fail if the implementers do not believe in it or agree with its dynamics. This is a clear case of French language policy implementers who are mostly heads of institution, directors in the education enterprise.

4.3. Inadequate Trained Teachers of French

Teachers are a critical education resource in every country. From early childhood programmes through primary and secondary school, the presence of qualified, well-motivated and supported teachers is vital for student learning. Teacher shortages, French in particular remain a serious concern worldwide. In fact, there is ample evidence that there is a real shortage of teachers of French at the JHS level. Reports show that only 10 percent out of the fourteen thousand basic schools in the country teach French (AFC Report, 2010) [11]. There are only three

Colleges of Education (formerly Teacher Training Colleges) (Mount Mary, Wesley and Bagabaga College of Education) which specialise in training French teachers for the Ghana education system. However, French teacher trainees make up between 20-30% of the entire student population of these colleges. This is because the country's 46 Colleges of Education do not place much premium on training of French teachers. As a result, there is a low turnout of teachers who graduate from the three Colleges of Education and Universities. The situation is further compounded by an ill-conceived policy of 'in-in-out' geared towards the training of a generalist teacher who would be able to teach all subjects at the primary and JHS levels. This implies that in addition to courses in Education and General Studies, students are expected to take at least seven (7) foundation subjects (English Mathematics, Ghanaian Language and Culture, Integrated Science, Environmental and Social Studies, Pre-Vocational Skills). Technical Skills and French are options to be offered by specific Colleges of Education (Three-Year Diploma in Basic Education, Course Structure: Revised Syllabus. Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, October, 2005) [25]. We have noticed that students in the three colleges who offer French are expected to take all the foundation subjects except Integrated Science. This implies that the students are learning as many as eleven (11) subjects including French for just two years (4 semesters). This is the 'In-In' component of the programme. The 'Out' component which is Teaching Practice has a duration of 32 weeks (2 semesters). These three Colleges of Education find it difficult to attract enough students for French teacher training. They confirmed that there had been limited promotion of the teaching of French across the country and that very few students were opting for French, particularly at the teacher training college level. This was validated by data obtained from each of the Colleges of Education. One of the main reasons for the lack of interest in French teaching has stemmed from the challenges faced by SHS leavers who do not obtain a firm grounding in French at JHS level. Other reasons for lack of French teachers and French language learning at all levels relate to limited numbers opting for French at teacher training level. This low patronage is partly due to trainee teachers' fear that they may fail their college examinations because of very few contact hours in French. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 showing enrolment figures presented earlier for the various levels of education confirm the lack of effective professional teachers of French in our schools. Consequently, teachers of French end up having a high pupil-teacher ratio at the JHS level in particular. This, of course has serious consequences and direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning of French at both the Junior and Senior High schools. It does not prepare and equip teacher trainees adequately with the requisite content knowledge of the language. Consequently, the performance at the terminal examinations (BECE & WASSCE) remains abysmally low. Effective teaching strongly influences what and how much students achieve in school.

4.4. Subject Combinations

The policy regarding subject combinations at the secondary schools and Colleges of Education is a big

challenge. For instance, French teachers at SHS level complained of subject combinations that take students away from studying French up to the SHS3 level. French language is put in only one basket for General Arts, thereby denying Science and Business students the opportunity to study it. The French has to compete with other subjects in the Technical and Vocational sections. Even in the General Arts section, French also competes with Ghanaian languages. Hence, French is not considered a core subject. As a consequence, the number of students taking French is very low in the SHS schools. Secondly, the switch back to a 3 year SHS cycle further reduces the choice of French subject because the three years is too short for students to prepare adequately for their French WASSCE exams (especially with students who enter SHS with no prior experience in the language).

4.5. Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resources

There is inadequate teaching and learning materials available at most training colleges and universities. Most of our schools, even tertiary institutions, lack basic teaching and learning resources including well-equipped language laboratories, multimedia equipment, textbooks as well as supplementary readers to encourage and promote the study French. Language laboratories that were established at the University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana have deteriorated, become obsolete and dysfunctional. Mount Mary's College which used to have one of the best equipped audio-visual language laboratories for French is in a state of disrepair and no longer provides audio-visual materials, tape recordings and CDs for the French students. Some of the other colleges used textbooks, tapes and CDs with students (Wesley College) but resources were limited at Bagabaga. Most of the French books are also outmoded. It must be noted that the objectives underpinning the teaching and learning of French are clearly spelt out in the French syllabus: the four basic skills of language learning (listening, speaking, reading and writing). This obviously is a key constraint to quality French language teaching and learning in Ghana.

4.6. Poor Teaching Methods and Approaches

Another fundamental challenge to the effective promotion of French teaching and learning concerns the methodologies that French teachers use in the classroom. The Ghana Education Service recommended the use of the communicative and task based approaches (i.e. an eclectic strategy) for teaching French at the JHS and SHS levels to enable learners to communicate in the target language. This, unfortunately, is far from the reality on the ground in the sense that most teachers still adopt the traditional method (grammar-translation) which dwells on the structural elements of the language: grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. These aspects of the language though indispensable for communication, are often taught in isolation, hence out of context.

4.7. Insufficient Funding for French Language Education

Another grand challenge to the promotion of French language education is the dwindling government funding and logistics support. Between 2005 and 2009, funds allocated to support the ten (10) CREF (Centre Regional

de l'Enseignement du Français) including the National Coordination office drastically reduced to GHS 80,000 (CREF, 2009) [26]. Consequently, the limited funding affected the number of in-service training programmes that CREF could organise over the period hence, teachers' performance at the JHS level in particular was greatly affected. Ghana's major donor country, France, has also slightly shifted her financial and logistics support to other areas of national development (from FLE to FOS: Français sur Objectifs Spécifiques-French for Specific Purposes). The change in focus implies a significant reduction in French government funding to support the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language (FLE). In 2008, the Agence Française de Développement provided over a million Euros for the teaching of FOS to senior officials in public and private sector organisations in order to equip them conduct business negotiations in French (Daily Graphic 2008, October 10, p. 47).

4.8. Lack of interest and motivation for French

Ghanaian professionals in general and students in particular at all levels of education frequently view the French language as a big challenge. Some individuals regrettably dropped out the French language education programme due to several personal reasons such as lack of interest for the subject; lack of motivation to continue learning the subject; fear of failing in the French language studies due to a weak background of at the JHS & SHS level. These reasons are contributory factors to the low level of French language education in Ghana. Obviously, ignorance or lack of knowledge about the importance of the French language plays a vital role in the learning of French.

5. The Way Forward

From the foregoing enumerated challenges, calling for more funding or investment for French language education in particular and education in general without knowing clearly the specific nature of the problem that the funding will be used to fix, is not likely to produce the desired results. It is necessary to start asking the right questions, the ones that can change the Ghanaian public perception of the French language education.

5.1. Where is the Political Will and Commitment to Language policy?

We must begin to make efforts to address our big challenges of French language teaching and learning which remain unsolved even though the teaching and learning of French started several decades ago. In every educational enterprise, the issue of language(s) is central in the formulation of educational policies which should have a strong bearing on national development. Consequently, the political will and commitment on the part of government should be the key ingredients in language policy formulation for that matter French. As indicated earlier, policy issues have direct bearing with political decisions. Government needs to formulate a very clear language policy and ensure that the necessary political structures are put in place in order to achieve maximum communication through the French language at the various levels of education. In an ever-changing educational, economic and political landscape, we call on students who are the primary beneficiaries, professionals

and other stakeholders to develop a sense of appreciation for the French language that has the potential to yield great rewards. The French as a foreign language choice thus has serious implications for Ghanaian professionals in terms of employment opportunities. Therefore, the importance of foreign language knowledge in relation to employment opportunities should not be taken for granted.

5.2. How Effective is the Issue of Monitoring?

It should be noted that the lack of a vigorous monitoring programme of the French language policy in the country has led to the numerous inconsistencies in the area of teaching. Despite the creation of regulatory bodies like NIB (National Inspectorate Board), NTC (National Teaching Council), NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment), which are mandated to perform different but complementary roles in the education enterprise, there is nobody specialising in the area of the French language. There is therefore an urgent need for the creation of a special unit charged with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the French language policy. This regulatory body should be mandated among other things to:

- Liaise with policy implementers to identify and ensure areas of application of the French language policy.
- Create and design awareness campaigns/programmes to sensitize stakeholders, particularly student bodies at the various levels about the importance and benefits of learning foreign languages particularly French.
- Undertake/initiate research into language policy related problems in order to provide feedback to policy makers.
- Determine incentives packages designed to motivate and facilitate compliance and sanctions for non compliance.

5.3. Promoting bilingualism/Multilingualism in Ghana

The French as a world language is learned and spoken internationally by a large number of people as a second or foreign language. A world language is characterised not only by the total number of speakers (native and second language speakers), but also by its geographical distribution as well as use in international organisations and diplomatic relations. Knowing two or more languages and being proficient in the best known languages for that matter English and French is positively related to job opportunities. In view of Ghana's active membership within ECOWAS and other international organizations, government and all stakeholders of education should therefore take a second look at our national language policy. The bilingual/multilingual policy will undoubtedly guarantee cross cultural participation and understanding of our people in the sub-region. If Ghana government were to invest massively in this policy, it should be possible to achieve our national development aspirations and more importantly our regional integration objectives in terms of communication. If this policy is to be implemented, Ghanaian students should be interested and take advantage in learning French as a foreign language. Proficiency in the French language will make Ghanaian professionals competitive with their francophone counterparts in global

affairs. Ghana as a member state and having diplomatic relations with French countries, makes it expedient for its citizens to be bilingual. Therefore, it is necessary and crucial for government to promote and encourage bilingualism/multilingualism in the country since the White Paper on bilingualism stated clearly the policy of an early introduction of English and French at the lower level of education.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to identify, explain the challenges and seek suggestions relating to the teaching and learning of the French as a foreign language at the various levels of education in Ghana. Attempts have been made to review and explain major concepts relating to the importance of foreign languages with particular reference to French in terms of global communication and job opportunities worldwide. More importantly, the challenges identified such as policy framework for French language teaching, inadequate trained teachers of French, difficulties in language policy formulation and implementation, lack of teaching and learning resources limit the efforts of Ghana Government, students and other stakeholders in promoting the study of French and creating a more multilingual Ghana. Even though the teaching and learning of French started several years back, there has been limited promotion and patronage of the teaching of French across the country. Consequently, very few students opt for French, particularly at the SHS and Colleges of Education. Through the French language, knowledge is shared and passed on to others within a community. It is a fact that education is a necessity and the hub around which the development of a nation revolves. The facts of globalization, geographical location and economic development impose on Ghana the need to give priority to French language teaching and learning: a language that is sure to make Ghanaian professionals compete favourably with their francophone counterparts at the global job market. It is good news to hear in the 2018 edition of la Quinzaine de la Francophonie, the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa affirm government's decision to place particular emphasis on the study of the French language across the educational system. Fortunately, a new curriculum has been designed which took effect in September 2019 with the introduction of French at the upper primary level. It is our hope that this time round the implementation of the new curriculum with the inclusion of the French will be taken with all the seriousness it deserves.

7. Recommendations

In view of the global importance of foreign languages and with respect to language teaching and learning, this paper has identified and recommended three key target areas to promote French language skills in different levels of education. These are as follows:

6.1. A Life-Long Language Learning Process

This should aim at promoting the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language from a very early age: primary, JHS and to continue to the SHS and tertiary levels of education. There will therefore be the need to develop learning programmes for students at the various levels. Therefore, teaching and learning materials and

equipment particularly textbooks are highly recommended. There is equally an urgent need to review the policy on subject combinations and make the time table more flexible to give Science and Business students at the SHS the opportunity to learn French.

6.2. Promoting and Improving the Teaching and Learning of French

There will be the need for a vigorous and consistent policy framework for the teaching and learning of French language in Ghana. This is targeted to implement language learning policy objectives in schools as well as increasing the number of French language teachers, providing them with suitable training programmes and monitoring the French language skills of students. In this regard, the number of French language teachers urgently need to increase to cater for the increasing numbers at the basic and secondary levels. Therefore, more Colleges of Education specialising in French language are needed - at least one per region to decentralize and widen the opportunities for trainees to opt for French. There should also be a level of specialisation for French and French teacher trainees should be exempted from the 10 subjects they typically have to study and the contact hours increased as well beyond 10 hours per week.

6.3. Creating a Friendly Bilingual & Multilingual Environment

This target area should aim at establishing language-friendly communities with our francophone neighbours, promoting linguistic diversity (bilingualism/multilingualism for that matter) and making the French language learning more accessible and motivating at the various levels of education. The teaching and learning of French as a foreign language must be geared toward employment opportunities and growth. Educational policies have to respond better to students' learning and professional needs and work more closely with stakeholders by linking language teaching to the creation of career paths. The successful implementation of these recommendations means that government funded support programmes are crucial for promoting and ensuring the development of best-practice models of French language infrastructure. This would enable graduate professionals communicate effectively in French and successfully compete in the global market.

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