



Importance of French Language in the Teaching of Vocational Education in the Francophone Countries

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Abstract

The importance of French language cannot be over emphasised given the roles being played as an important global language and the enviable status she enjoys in the international relations. Its impacts in the area of economic, political and even culture cannot be easily jettisoned. French is crucial to major international organisations like NATO, EU & UN as an official language. The language is equally used in the teaching of vocational education studies in the Francophone regions. The roles being played by French in the teaching of the vocational studies cannot be ignored because several teachers, technicians and vocational studies experts make use of the language in the teaching of vocational education curriculum in the Francophone countries. It has been established in this paper that despite the numerous advantages and accomplishments recorded by the vocational education in the Francophone countries, the scheme is still being confronted by some challenges like poor public image, mismatch of vocational education graduates in their chosen fields among other notable challenges. It is recommended that the Francophone government should intensify efforts towards developing vocational education in the region by investing more funds in its growth and also take concrete steps in finding lasting solutions to the identified challenges in the paper. This gesture if accepted and adopted will help in encouraging Francophone youths to continually demonstrate interest in vocational studies.

Keywords: Vocational education, francophone, lycée, baccalauréate, mismatch.

1. Introduction

French is an important language in Africa and in the entire world. It is one of the leading languages in the world. (Tijani, 2008) affirms: Universally, French is important as it is a foremost foreign language spoken in all continents, a main language for cultural spheres like cuisine, fashion and a useful talent for both education and employment. French was introduced to other parts of the world through colonisation, especially through the obnoxious policy of colonialism. The language shares the status of official language with another language in such bilingual countries like Luxembourg, Rwanda, Madagascar, Mauritania, Cameroun and Canada. It is also one of the three national languages in the trilingual countries of Seychelles, Switzerland and Belgium. It is virtually as significant as Arabic which is the main official and national language of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. It is an important language because it facilitates harmonious communication among Anglophone neighbours in West Africa. (Tar, 2011) notes: Precisely, French is viewed as one of the most extensively used and an international language in West Africa, as a result of its relevance in all fields of life particularly by sharing borders with Francophone regions. It enjoys a privilege reputation in the former colonies of France, particularly in French Polynesia,

New Caledonia and Vietnam. The language enjoys the preferred status in such Portuguese African countries as Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. One can conveniently assert that French is an important world language. As a matter of fact, the language is the 5th intercontinental global language after Portuguese, Spanish, English and Arabic in terms of the number of its speakers who are found in all the seven continents. French is the second most important language of the world after English, with the two bestowed with a past history and the potentials of privileged usage and acceptance in diplomatic, interpersonal, business and social cultural relations all over the universe. (Ajiboye, 2003) remarks: French is considered as one of the most essential foreign languages adopted by most countries. A greater number of these countries intermingle to become a cohesive federation for technological advancement, political and economic motives. French is equally recognised as the second largest number of speakers in the Europe, after German. It is one of the three languages that are used by the African Union for its publications and authorised transactions. It is competently and actively spoken by more than 250 million people in the world and pleasantly learnt by and used by another 400 million in non-Francophone regions who have been exposed to the teaching and learning of the language. It is also worthy of mentioning that the language belongs to the enviable Committee of 12 of the global 5440 languages that are spoken by more than 200 million people. French is a basic requirement for occupation and it serves as the most indispensable means of communication for

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official operation. Furthermore, French is one of the working languages of UNESCO and NATO. It is, in conjunction with English and Arabic, one of the languages of the Islamic Conference as well as the Arab League. It is the official language of the Vatican with Latin and equally one of the official languages of the Olympic Games. The above advantages and reputation being enjoyed by French worldwide are being highlighted here so as to demonstrate the significance of the language in Africa and in the world. This will enable the non-Francophone people to know what they stand to gain in learning one of the important languages in the world. According to latest data released by the Director of the West African Regional office of the Francophonie in Togo, at the International Interdisciplinary Conference on French studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra in February 2016. French is the 2nd foreign language used in the media globally, the 2nd official language in several international organisations, the second most studied language in the world, the third globally adopted language in the commercial sector and the fourth language used in global computer network. Nowadays, the language is convincingly the fifth most vocalised in the world after English, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish.

France established a web of French schools abroad to help in propagating the teaching and learning of French language to enhance the development of French economy and political interests. These foreign schools also help in promoting French language and culture by offering admission to more than 250,000 international students. The brilliance of French schools abroad demonstrates the reason of their acceptance. These institutions constitute the French education linkage, complemented by the Agency for French Education Abroad. Their conformity with the objectives, curriculum and fundamental principles of the French educational system is guaranteed by its official approval. It is remarkable to note that France intends to see the French language being in existence in educational systems of its foreign and European allies where it is the most preferred and taught language after English. France is renowned for an enormous network for teaching and learning French through its 93 multidisciplinary Instituts Français. These Instituts being administered by the Ministry for Europe and International Affairs and Ministry of Culture ensure that the Instituts Français participate in developing and promoting the use of French language internationally and reinforce action network and cultural cooperation by promoting French language education and admitting more than 700 learners yearly. These educational establishments have also improved different innovations like numerical platforms such as IF Prof, IF Classe, IFOS and Culturethèque. French Maternal Language Programme was created in 2001 by the Ministry for Europe and International Affairs to offer linguistic assistance to French expatriates children from five to sixteen year old so as to sustain the usual connection with the French culture and language through extramural activities.

2. French Language as a Medium of Instruction

The use of French in teaching vocational studies involves incorporating the language into the curriculum to improve specialised skills as manifested in France through its national language design and accreditation programme. This method can assist students by enhancing their job potentials and foreign attractiveness, particularly in sectors like tourism, business and technology. According to *La France en Nouvelle Zelande*, proficiency in French is essential for anyone considering a career in any international organisation. The European Commission Report (2009) reinforces the above claim. The Report notes: Bilingualism can boost salaries, 93% of businesses strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that, 'Foreign language skills provide the company with added value which supports growth'. In order to ensure quality teaching in vocational studies, France places high premium on the training of language teachers. Efficient implementation demands adopting modern teaching techniques, ensuring appropriate teacher training and making the curriculum to be in harmony with the demands of the job markets. The language can be taught as an integral part of vocational training and not as a separate subject, integrating professional precise vocabulary and skills. Institutes like Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry run special diplomas that confirm professional French competences for several spheres, such as healthcare, hospitality and business. The need for French language teachers in the teaching of vocational education has widened the scope of training for language teachers so as to equip them with sufficient competences and skills that foreign language teachers should furnish themselves with. The general objective is to inform teachers and trainers about the necessity to make use of those methodologies and techniques that are special to the teaching of language for specific and specialised motives and subsequently to simplify the setting up of suitable and sufficient training technique.

French is mainly taught as an international or second language in several countries, although it is the language of teaching in France and other French-speaking regions. In areas like West Africa, it operates as a process to promote regional integration and gain economic advantages. French language is being adopted as a means of instruction in several educational settings, advancing bilingualism and offering cultural, economic and regional integration especially in countries such as Nigeria where it operates as a connection to adjacent Francophone nations. The importance of French in the teaching and learning of vocational studies cannot be ignored given the roles being played by the language in disseminating the contents of vocational studies curriculum. French is also essential as a means of teaching diplomatic and economic benefits inherent in the domain of vocational studies, allowing access to massive universal information and promoting foreign relations and understanding of several vocational cultures across the globe. (Adebisi, 2015) affirms: It is equally believed

that the linguistic deficiencies of Nigerians made them to be in constricted situations at different foreign conferences, such as the humiliation endured by Nigerian scholars when they intermingle with their Francophone colleagues at foreign convention and seminars where the latter demonstrate good command of English while the Nigerians appear vulnerable in French. As an official language in various international organisations, a profession in any field demanding universal interaction is substantially enriched by French proficiency. Moreover, French instruction helps learners develop broader worldview, argumentation skills and critical thinking contributing to societal and personal advancement. The advantages of using French language as a means of instruction can be summarised thus:

1. Provincial amalgamation: The knowledge of French enables Nigeria to improve communication and integration with her neighbouring Francophone countries.
2. Socio-cultural and economic benefits: The language enhances international financial/economic transactions through effective conversations among Francophone business men and traders.
3. Foreign presence: French is an indispensable linguistic tool among different international organisations where Nigeria commands enviable respect from the member countries.
4. Civilisation motive: The teaching and learning of French affords the students the opportunity of imbibing the French culture and literature, thereby widening students' appreciation cultural awareness.

3. French Secondary School System

French secondary education is partitioned into two compulsory phases, the college (lower secondary, ages eleven-fifteen years) and the lycée (upper secondary, ages fifteen-eighteen) concluding with the Baccalaureate (Bac) examination for higher education or vocational training. Colleges are general middle schools, while lycée offers general, technological or vocational paths. Ultimately, the college is saddled with the responsibility of preparing students for the advanced subjects of the lycée. Students are made to sit for an examination, le diplôme nationale du brevet at the end of the troisième classe. It must be emphasised that the examination is not required for admission to the lycée and being successful does not guarantee that a pupil will transit to the higher level school. During the last conseil de classe of the year, held in June, teachers and administrators decide if or not a pupil can move to the next grade. They evaluate students' behaviours, skills and class participation in arriving at their decisions. The decisions will culminate in one of the following pronouncements.

1. The student progresses to the next level of education.
2. The student is asked to repeat the class.

3. He or she can, in specific cases, be offered to skip a grade and be promoted to the next class.

4. Types of Lycées

There are three types of lycée, Lycée Général, which offers a vastly academic curriculum. There is also Lycée technologique, which concentrates on technological route and academics. The newly created one, Lycée professionnel, which is our area of focus is primarily meant for vocational studies. The lycée professionnel leads to the baccalaureate professionnel. The subjects are designed for students who do not plan to continue into higher education. The vocational training is for crafts-people and it involves internship in commercial enterprises. The subjects are appropriate for students who demonstrate adequate skills in a hands-on educational approach than in academic schooling. There are nearly 100 specialities, including road freight transport driver, butcher, cooking, preservation of industrial equipment, building technician, leather crafts and others.

5. Vocational Baccalaureate: A New Level in French Secondary School.

The advent of the Vocational Baccalaureate is dated to 1983/84 following a decision in the Vocational Consultative Commission (CPC), *Commission Professionnelle Consultative*, and a statement by the Employers' Union of the Metalworking and Mining Industries (UIMM). The body made an urgent request for the qualitative and quantitative growth of vocational qualification and skills at the French level IV of education through a recent diploma 'Vocational Baccalaureate'. The urgent request is informed by the continued decline in the number of high school students who move to tertiary institutions after being successful in the General Baccalaureate examination. It was observed that a good number of students who cannot pass the end of secondary school examination roam the streets and in most cases end up being social misfits and threats to the society. Consequently, the Ministry of Education recommended to the government the creation of this new diploma at level IV known as Vocational Baccalaureate. The diploma will afford the students who are less academically endowed to pursue their interest in vocational studies and equally contribute their quota to the technological development of the French society. The law establishing the diploma was passed in December 1985. The main objective was to revalue and promote vocational education in schools now called vocational lycées and hereby permit the students who hold the diploma to be seen and addressed as 'bacheliers', an exalted title previously enjoyed by only few students who are able to pass the general baccalauréate. In English, bachelier translates to a holder of the baccalauréate or high school graduate in the context of the French education system. It is used to describe a person who has successfully completed the baccalaureate which is an important secondary school examination. The desire to make education more

democratic was marked by the Ministry of Education objectives in the Guidance 1985 Law which stipulated that the 'Nation wants to lead 80% of a typical age group to the Baccalaureate level'. These are young and unsuspecting members of the French population that were hitherto denied opportunity to continue their studies after failing the general baccalaureate.

The French classified educational system was laid solely on strong structuring dualism until the advent of vocational baccalauréate in 1985. The secondary students were restricted to two options: the academic and technological baccalaureates which are considered as being prestigious. These diplomas offer students the opportunity of continuing their education in the tertiary institutions while the holders of CAP and BEP were viewed as the direction of demotion and marginalisation from tertiary education, thereby resulting in low self-esteem. The trend however changed with the introduction of Vocational Baccalauréate which affords students who are vocationally minded to also display their vocational skills. It is worthy to mention that the introduction of Vocational Baccalaureate enable students who fail General Baccalaureate, (SSCE) to continue their studies or catching up with their colleagues through options that are socially more prestigious. Consequently, this diploma offers some succour to the students who are less gifted academically to forge ahead with their chosen areas in vocational studies. These students have been able to distinguish themselves in their chosen fields and could pursue their vocational studies even to the tertiary institutions. About 40 years since its conception, one can ask if the Vocational Baccalaureate has been able to achieve its goals and objectives. Has the introduction of the certificate been able to influence societal views about French secondary school which hitherto did not recognise the importance of vocational studies, or more specifically, has the social opinion about vocational education changed since the Bac. was introduced. According to a Leonardo da Vinci project entitled '*Analysis and Comparison of Social Representation of vocational education teaching (VET) in different European countries*', he suggests that, for students, the vocational education programme appears to be an era for a different conversions: from school to work, from childhood to adulthood, from enslavement to freedom, from poor self-esteem to self-assurance, from disappointment to accomplishment. (Phillipe, 2002) is more emphatic, he remarks: the introduction of Vocational Baccalauréate appears to be the desired tonic needed by the less endowed secondary school pupils to actualise their vocational skills.

From the time immemorial, the French people have always looked down on vocational education and training, (Pelpel & Troger, 1993). Until lately, possibly with the introduction of the Vocational Baccalaureate in 1985, the disposition of an average French man has been negative and indefinable apathy. The new diploma being obtained after an initial period of

vocational training and allowing immediate entry into working life, was not only meant to confirm the importance and relevance of diverse skills deposited in young French learners but also to renew interest in vocational education training. It can be asserted undoubtedly that the programme has fulfilled its mandate given the vast number of young learners who have benefitted from the programme and the visible several contributions of the learners to the growth of science and technology. Hyland, 2020 notes: VET is an embodiment of hope, prospect and courage to the less endowed French learners. Its colossal influence in industrial growth and economic development cannot be discounted. Vocational education contributes to industrial growth in various ways. It supplies different skilled labour who engages in the production of goods and services, thereby increasing productivity in diverse industries. Vocational education equally ensures entrepreneurship and job creation, its contributions in the area of aligning education with labour market needs cannot be ignored. The hands-on training enables graduates to acquire practical specific skills needed for industrial and manufacturing growth. It helps in converting natural resources into finished products, thereby stimulating the local and national economies. From different studies conducted by (Marquette Meriot & Kirsch, 1994), the Vocational Baccalauréate seems to be a fascinating achievement with laudable accomplishment in the industrial development. It must be emphasised that the programme affords the vast number of young learners who would have dropped out of school to discover and also develop their skills.

It is remarkable to note that there are some centres for training apprenticeship in the French lycée. These are centres where apprentices can learn different trades according to their choice or interest. Apprenticeship is a type of vocational training which affords young learners from 16 to 25 years of age to acquire a trade under a private work contract lasting from one to three years. They are usually under the supervision of a master and also learn some courses in alternation with their practical work. There are two forms of lycée, for general and technological education, (LEGT) and vocational lycée (LP). But in accordance with the framework law of 1989, all technological and vocational diplomas may be acquired through the apprenticeship system. While initial training in formal schools remains the real motive of vocational lycée programmes, the Ministry of National Education wants state schools to give opportunity to apprenticeship. Article 57 of the five-year law on employment and vocational training dated 20th December 1993 permits apprenticeship sections or units for training in apprenticeship to be accessed in all lycées, in intimate relationship with the business community and with the agreement and assistance of the region.

6. Benefits of Vocational Education in France

The advantages of vocational education are more numerous when put side by side with the traditional

educational system. The vocational education system in France places high premium on the preparation of students for upcoming careers as displayed in the curriculum. To start with, vocational education is quite relevant to real life situation. Secondly, it affords the students the opportunity of blending vocational studies with their chosen working life. Furthermore, vocational education is designed and scrutinised to meet the high standard expected by employers. It is remarkable to note that the vocational education is advantageous to the society because it assists the economy to grow. Students obtain practical hands-on experience with technical equipment that is applicable to a definite job. All classes are conceived to be appropriate and reliable within the work place in vocational education. There is a fostered collaboration between schools and major corporations. This is visible in the data provided by Bird, 1996 who states that in France's vocational education, only a few people forge ahead to the higher education, (23%), as the greater number of students decide in most cases, to graduate and then start working. Vocational education is very realistic and pertinent to real life as classes offer hands-on contributions when acquiring and learning new methods and skills. The education permits the growth of these techniques to the benefit of the kinesthetic learners. Another advantage for making schooling pertinent to the real world is a reduced drop out among students because some alternative educational opportunities are offered to students that are not too academically inclined. It is generally assumed that vocational education is the source of succour for students who have been found to be academically deficient and who need practical hands-on experience to thrive in their chosen fields. Every child acquires knowledge independently and each child has different skills and talents, therefore, vocational education is helpful in making schooling appropriate and stimulating.

It is worthy to note that vocational education and training (VET) is often viewed and relegated to the background, thereby having unfavourable feeling and negative posture among students because it appears to divide them along social classes. Traditionally and in most cases, the academic and theoretical schooling was hitherto reserved for the highly placed and affluent parents while the students from the poor background are relegated to vocational studies. This ugly trend had since changed with the introduction of vocational baccalauréate, Jean-Paul Gehin notes in *Vocational Education in France*: In contemporary France's educational system, the vocational route is now viewed as a positive stream of education because it leads to a baccalauréate and offers all students practical skills. The vocational education is now accessible to all ethnicities and races found in France and given identical rights for any student that desires to embrace it. Students can now aspire to pursue their vocational studies to the highest level of education in the university, an opportunity that was formerly elusive. Students within the vocation stream enjoy suppleness

and every student has the opportunity to finish a baccalauréate and continue onward to the university. The success rate in France for the baccalauréate rose to 75% in 2005, following different academic routes that have been opened for students to achieve their aspirations as far as vocational education is concerned. While the vocational education is initially conceived to lead students to the labour market, it must be emphasised that the programme is so flexible and can afford students the opportunity of enhancing their educational status through further studies. The educational system in France is not restrictive because as long as students meet requirements, they can interchange between learning routes and working systems, being able to move from general and technical education or from vocational training into technical studies.

France occupies an enviable position in the world in the employability focused education, ranking second worldwide for producing highly sought-after graduates. French tertiary education intermix practical skills development with academic excellence. The country exceptional system of specialised institutes and universities provide students with different routes to professional success. French vocational institutions groom graduates for seamless integration into global workforce through compulsory internship, specialised programmes and industrial partnership. The potency of French tertiary education is found in its dual-track system intermixing extensive workplace experience with theoretical knowledge. Students naturally finish four to six months of professional immersion every year, producing graduates that are mentally and physically endowed for real-world challenges. French institutions outclass other European counterparts in the aspect of nurturing partnership with major corporations, allowing students to make professional networks before graduation. Contemporary French education stresses developing exchangeable skills through project-based learning and cross ethnic teamwork. For instance, Paris School of Business or LISAA, Private Schools of Galileo Global Education Network, collaborate and work in partnership with major companies projects throughout their degree programmes. It is worthy of being mentioned that latest data indicates extraordinary accomplishment level for French graduates in 2025, indicating that 78.6% of modern graduates get vocation within their first year after finishing their programme, while this number moves to 92% for people from highest-ranked Institutions according to *Galileo Global Education*. It is equally of interest to note that salary potential indicate an inspiring picture with new graduates making between 35,000 pounds and 45,000 pounds yearly in their first positions. The starting salary can rise to 42,500 pounds making French graduates among European leaders in entry-level compensation for those in Business School Alumni. The cross-border patronage for French graduates is constantly strong with 35% of graduates commencing their vocations abroad because of well organised and well unified

vocational studies. It is important to stress also that French academic credentials carry significant influence throughout the global market. The European Qualification Framework affiliates French degrees with international standards, ensuring seamless acknowledgment throughout the European Union and beyond. Major transnational corporations vigorously and pleasantly recruit French graduates from French institutions, particularly as a result of high premium placed on the combination of practical experience with theoretical knowledge. The French government has launched consensual agreement with several countries to facilitate degree recognition, thereby streamlining the process for French qualification holders engaging in vocations or higher studies in foreign countries.

Contemporary French academic institutions have changed their curricula to meet changing market needs. The newly opened campus of Narratiiv or Paris School of Technology and Business from Galileo Global Education's exclusive network, provide latest high quality equipment for students to merge real-world problem-solving with virtual reality labs grooming students for evolving tech roles. In addition, some private prominent universities can provide dual-degree programmes teaming up with European colleagues. French professional bachelor's programme outclasses others in preparing students for instant workforce entry. These three-year degrees combine classroom learning with hands-on projects, showcasing workplace immersion periods that last lasts 4-6 months yearly. The curriculum adjusts rapidly to market demands, especially in evolving fields like sustainable energy and digital transformation. Students develop specialised skills through alliances with regional businesses, while mentors from target industries guide their professional growth.

7. Challenges of Vocational Education and Dispositions of French Youths to the Scheme.

France commits vast resources to the development of vocational education and training for youths and particularly adults but the project has not met fully the government aspiration despite the modest achievements already recorded. This is due to the fact that the basic literacy and numeracy skills of several French adults is still weak compared to other European countries, with damaging effects on employment opportunities, wages and workers' welfare. Access to basic skills training appears inadequate compared to the number of applicants, many of whom come from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. It must also be highlighted that secondary vocational education and apprenticeship training is still being confronted by image problem in the French society and within families. The public perception of vocational training is often rather negative because a good number of French population still consider it as a dead end and a second-choice education. Vocational education and training is viewed as an alternative way to increase employment prospects for young people who do not have the resources, motivation or skills to pursue

further education, (Shavit & Muller,2000). Polls show that vocational education is often perceived as a solution for academically low performers. Three out of four European citizens (75%) agree that students with low grades are oriented toward vocational education in their country and (63%) agree that it is easier to obtain a qualification in vocational education than in general education streams (CEDEFOP, 2017). The government has been able to stabilise the number of apprenticeship but that is mostly due to those studying at the tertiary level or at least for a higher secondary diploma. The labour market patronage of those with only shorter vocational qualifications are not good compared to those who acquired tertiary qualifications. The government needs to intensify its efforts in this regard by encouraging major corporations to show more interest in lower cadre vocational workers who are willing to combine advanced theoretical concepts with practical experience in the tertiary institutions, thereby enhancing their professional status.

Recurrent surveys have indicated severally that vocational education has not achieved its stated objective in the area of vocational education graduates finding appropriate jobs that are suitable to their vocational training. There are several mismatch cases among graduates when the desired jobs are not found or accessible. When there is a mismatch between the educational level and the job level, the term over-education or vertical mismatch is used, according to (Hartog, 2000). A situation in which there is a mismatch between an individual's field of study and the vocational field in which one is employed is usually described as horizontal mismatch, (Witte & Kalleberg, 1995). Previous studies have indicated that the situation of young people whose jobs are horizontally matched is due to some factors like unemployment rate, appropriate salary for job description and job stability. (Wolbers, 2003) & (Robst, 2007) however affirm through their findings that the number of young people whose jobs are horizontally matched is still considerably low compared to those whose jobs are horizontally mismatched. It should be noted that the challenge of horizontal mismatches has been a recurrent problem despite the government huge investments in vocational education and the efforts of the major corporations towards encouraging the youths. Thus, horizontal mismatches are believed to have a damaging effect on the specialised occupation of young people, a negative consequence similar to that of over-education. The government should intensify its efforts in this regard so that young people will be continually motivated to vocational education. This is because the instances of horizontal mismatch are often viewed as a dysfunction of education and vocational guidance systems that fail to produce the appropriate quantity of well-trained people in the appropriate vocational fields at the right time. One is tempted to ask a question that, why do we have education job mismatches among young people who acquired vocational education even when the contents of the training programmes are so carefully

designed to respond to the demands of the professions. The probable response to this thought provoking question is based on this fundamental idea. The initial education acquired by young individuals and the qualifications obtained at the end of schooling cannot explain alone the process of integration into the labour market. It is assumed that the young graduates need to acquire more industrial experience to be found worthy and appropriate to the chosen vocation.

Furthermore, it has been revealed that young people graduating from vocational schools are not adequately informed about the probable risks of the respective vocational trainings obtained through the vocational education. There are several risks that are related to vocational studies, these risks include, mental health challenge, occupational risks, physical injuries from industrial related activities, lack of adequate preventive measures, depression, anxiety and low confidence. We cannot also rule out academic and career risks which influence a worker to narrowly and ignorantly focus on acquisition of degree with less career progression or earning prospects. Workers in the industry are also likely to indulge in unhygienic behaviours such as tobacco smoking, frequent consumption of unhealthy food, risky alcohol consumption and insufficient physical activity. They are not sufficiently informed about the jobs hazards likely to be encountered in the field. According to Eurogip News, (2024), nearly nine out of ten young people (87%) graduating from CAP and Vocational Baccalaureate courses are exposed to at least one occupational risk or the other. There are also cases of young men who are involved in repetitive tasks like using machines to move weighty loads and there are also unspecified number of young people who are exposed to dangerous industrial chemical products. The Eurogip study indicated that young people receive insufficient training in occupational risks, thereby exposing them to unforeseen and avoidable industrial risks. For instance, according to the aforementioned study, 28% of vocational school leavers had no information on physical and chemical risks during their programme, 42% maintained that they had no safety and health training when they took up their jobs and 36% had no individual defensive equipment. The study reveals that young people receive more training in prevention in the event of multiple exposures to occupational risks.

Closely related to the challenges of vocational studies is the disposition of French youths to the educational policy. The dispositions of the Francophone youths towards vocational education is basically encouraging and quite positive given the innumerable advantages that it stand to derive from it. The French youths tend to develop interest in the working or professional life as soon as they leave school. As far as the students are concerned, vocational studies are highly beneficial because it enables them to acquire practical, hands-on skills that lead to direct career opportunities and faster participation in the workforce as against the traditional academic paths. The vocational studies also afford

them the acquisition of important qualities like confidence enhancement, improved job placement and creativity cum problem-solving skills. Another source of attraction to the youths is the personalised learning environment and focus on personal skills development which ultimately boost employability and can lead to increased wages. The dispositions of Francophone youths to vocational education are generally inspiring and influenced by governmental reforms, but also shaped by socio economic factors and cultural views on education. The government is genuinely encouraging active youth participation in vocational education training by designing the curriculum in relation to the market and industrial needs, providing financial inducement to participants. Despite this positive government dispositions, the participants' socio economic backgrounds still influence the career decision of participants because the educational background and social status of the parents ultimately determine the realisation of the participants' aspirations.

It should be equally emphasised that the Francophone youths' mood about vocational studies can also be influenced by individual aspirations, cultural backgrounds and structural factors like the evolving French labour market and educational system. While some youths are logical and choose vocational paths for job security, others may hold misconceptions, with decisions shaped by family values, educational horizons and societal perceptions that sometimes under value vocational trades in favour of academic routes, though reforms are attempting to align vocational education more closely with industry needs and improve career pathways. Some factors are mainly responsible for influencing the dispositions of the French youths towards the vocational education. These factors include cultural and social factors. The family values and opinions about vocational education which are determined by family backgrounds and cultural values can lead to different perspectives on the worth and values of vocational as compared to academic paths. Youth motivation can also influence the youth dispositions to vocational education. For some youths, they are attracted to vocational studies because of immediate employment and a clear means to professional life. The last and not the least are the societal perceptions and misconceptions. This can lead the youth to take either a favourable or unfavourable decision about vocational education.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance and relevance of French in the teaching of vocational studies in the Francophone countries have been emphasised in this paper. The study has also brought to the fore the negative and discouraging perception of Francophone people to vocational education. An average Francophone man does not see anything beneficial in vocational education until 1983/84 when the Vocational Baccalauréat was introduced as a source of relief to the less academically endowed students who have hitherto

been looked down upon or humiliated by their clever colleagues who are able to excel in the General Baccalauréate at the end of secondary school. The introduction of Vocational Baccalauréate therefore enabled these disfavoured students to not only write Vocational Baccalauréate but also pursue their vocational education to the tertiary institution. We have also revealed the working relationship between the lycée where vocational education students are produced and the major industries where the students visit to demonstrate and put to use the skills acquired in the school. The paper had also afforded us the opportunity of showing the essential role being played by vocational education in reducing drastically the unemployment rate in France. The working relationship between vocational colleges and major industries makes it easy for the graduates to be absorbed as soon as they leave school. The French government has been able to ensure cross-border patronage for their citizens who engage in vocational education as most European countries are ready to employ them as a result of their hands-on skills and practical endowment. Contemporary French vocational institutions are moving with time and always updating their curriculum so as to be relevant to the market needs.

The main essence of academic paper is to broaden and share knowledge across different geographical areas so as to enable other regions or countries to benefit from evolving discoveries. Consequently, Nigeria has a lot to gain from this paper given the revelations made about the diverse benefits that France had gained from vocational education. We recommend strongly for the government to initiate urgent plans and strategies that can change the public perception about vocational education. This becomes inevitable so as to disabuse the minds of majority secondary school students who view vocational studies as not too prestigious. It is also suggested that the government should review the secondary school curriculum towards the development and growth of vocational education. It is not out of place if an equivalent of SSCE is created, just like it is done in France, so that the interested students can sit for the vocational subjects of his choice and also pursue it to the tertiary institution. The recent change of curriculum announced by the Federal Government is quite commendable because it is geared towards the growth of practical and hands-on skills acquisition in our secondary schools. The last paragraph of the letter titled *'FG Unveils Future-Ready Curriculum for Basic Senior Secondary and Technical Education'*, was dated 29th August, 2025. The author, Professor Ahmad emphasised that the revised curriculum will reduce content overload and create more learning time for students. She noted that this step reflects the government's commitment to delivering quality education that is relevant, practical and responsive to the needs of learners in today's rapidly changing world. The paragraph undoubtedly highlights the need for vocational education because the former curriculum appeared to have laid undue emphasis on theories and

abstracts teaching and learning against hands-on skills which can afford young Nigerians to live on their own without depending on the government for white collar jobs. To this end, the government should initiate a collaboration plan between our technical colleges, polytechnics, with major industries and corporations so that the training in vocational education will be geared towards the needs of the companies. We must also suggest to the government to reduce the rate at which polytechnics are being converted to conventional universities, thereby eroding public confidence in technical education being offered in the polytechnics. The polytechnic education should be vigorously pursued instead of being cancelled. It is also assumed that the government should relate with our Francophone neighbours so as to know their areas of personnel needs. In actualising this collaborative efforts, the government should pay more attention to the development of teaching and learning of French language and also introduce it perhaps as a general study course in the technical colleges and polytechnics so that Nigerian vocational education graduates can enjoy cross-border patronage after their studies. The development of the teaching and learning of French will also ensure technological transfer between France and Nigeria. Our country has a lot to gain from France in terms of advanced technology and one of the ways of achieving this is through French language. It is remarkable to note that some prominent Nigerians have lost the opportunity of lucrative foreign appointments as a result of poor knowledge of French language. (Adebisi, 2015) affirms that it is equally believed that the linguistic deficiencies of Nigerians made them to be in constricted situations at different foreign conferences, such as the humiliation experienced by Nigerians scholars when they intermingle with their Francophone colleagues at foreign conventions and seminars where the latter demonstrate good command of English but where the Nigerians appear vulnerable in French. The Federal Government should also compel the different states in the country to pay more attention to the development of vocational education so as to reduce the unbearable level of unemployment in the country.

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