

Fifty Years of the Teaching/Learning of French as a Foreign Language in Kenya: Challenges for Teachers and Learners

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Abstract

Innovation in classroom practices is the engine that drives the process of language learning. In the fifty years that French has been taught in Kenya, there has been a proliferation of methods and approaches, from the traditional to the action based approach which reaffirms and consolidates the communicative approach. This article seeks to give a historical perspective of the teaching of French in Kenya: its expansion, challenges faced by both learners and teachers. In spite of the remarkable expansion (from less than ten schools in 1964 to about 400 in 2012), the planning for French within the school curriculum has been done with no proper policy resulting in no substantial time being allocated to its learning activities. The fact that it was introduced into a linguistically crowded context was never given the attention it deserved, more so after the change in the education system in 1985. The entire exercise of planning seems to have been left in the hands of the teacher who must find a way of getting through the content in the time given, at the expense of communicative competence on the part of the learners. Taking into account that the same teacher may not have had sufficient training in classroom practices, it is no wonder that even in the presence of so many new tools, many challenges persist.

Keywords: Methods, Approaches, Communicative approach, teaching strategies, Learning strategies, Language policy, foreign language

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