

## The Nigeria French Language Village's Postgraduate Diploma in Translation and Interpretation Program: Context, Content and Comments\*

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### *Abstract*

When, in the early 2000, in response to the dire need and high demand for the training of professional translators and interpreters in the country, the Nigeria French Language Village (NFLV), a federal government owned interuniversity centre for French studies located in Lagos State, Nigeria, took the bull by the horns in mounting a Postgraduate Diploma in Translation and Interpretation program, it was undoubtedly considered by many stakeholders as a step in the right direction. As at that time, the number of institutions offering similar programs in Nigeria was (and still remains) very scanty. Unfortunately, the NFLV program only lasted for a couple of years because in 2013, the authorities of the institution decided to put it on hold due to certain challenges. The plan was to revamp and relaunch the program. Using the NFLV program as a case study and adopting qualitative content analysis as methodological approach, this paper seeks to carry out an appraisal of the impact of such programs on the public they were designed to serve. In doing this, on one hand, we carried out a thematic content analysis of the official document available on the program. On the other hand, a questionnaire was also administered to a sample of graduates of the program in order to understand their view and appreciate their assessment of the program, from their personal experience. Based on the comments emerging from the appraisal and considering international best practices, recommendations are offered on ways to reactivate the program which, from all indications, is still very much needed in the multilingual Nigeria in particular, and the West African sub-region as a whole.

*Key words*

Nigeria, Translation, Interpreting, Training, SWOT analysis.

\*We would like to acknowledge the support given by Dr. Affin Laditan (former Head of the Department of translation and interpretation and current Deputy Director of NFLV) for availing us the opportunity of gaining access to the program document, and for facilitating our contact with some of the former students and graduates of the program through a WhatsApp group he created for that purpose in February 2018.



*Introduction*

Research works focusing on translation activities in Nigeria have been in existence for some decades. While some authors have published extensively on literary translation, that is, critiques or analysis of literary works written in French and translated into English and vice versa, some have been concerned with works translated from foreign languages (English and French especially) into Nigerian languages such as Yoruba and vice versa (See Asobele, 2016). However, works that deal specifically with translators training are so few, while those that seek to evaluate the erstwhile or existing translators training programs in Nigeria are even fewer if not very scarce.

This study serves an ice-breaker in this respect in that it seeks to bring to limelight one of the few programs put in place to train professional translators and interpreters in Nigeria, that is the Nigeria French Language Village (hereafter referred to as NFLV)'s postgraduate diploma in translation and interpretation. Using the NFLV program as a case study and adopting qualitative content analysis as methodological approach, this paper seeks to carry out an appraisal of the impact of such programs on the public they were designed to serve. Therefore, for this study, we formulate the hypothesis that the NFLV's postgraduate diploma in translation and interpretation program (hereafter PGDT&I) was good but not well managed; though it has been suspended, it could and should be restored because there is still need for it. For us to be able to validate or invalidate this position as the case may be, by studying the official document available on the program, we will analyze the context in which the

program has been run so far, as well as the content of its curriculum, with a view to ascertaining if the set objectives are being met or otherwise.

The study is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of graduates or former students of the program with a view to understanding their view and appreciating their assessment of the program, from their personal experience. Based on the comments emerging from the appraisal and considering international best practices, recommendations will be offered on ways to revamp the program which, from all indications, is still very much needed in the multilingual Nigeria in particular, and the West African sub-region as a whole. In a nutshell, the objective of this paper is to provide an overview and an evaluation of the NFLV's PGDT&I program. Meanwhile, it is important to note that our appraisal of the program that is being carried out in this study has no intention of stigmatizing, castigating or condemning neither the institution that has put the program in place nor the officials (both teaching and administrative) that were in charge of its implementation. Rather, our aim, through an objective and unbiased SWOT analysis of the program, is to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, so as to be in a vantage point to proffer suggestions towards its possible restoration and amelioration. Before going further, it will be necessary to have an understanding of the contextual framework of the study which is the Nigeria French language Village.

### *1. Research context: Nigeria French Language Village - origin, vision and mission*

As stated above, the specific context of this study is the Nigeria French Language Village (NFLV), an interuniversity centre for French studies established in December 1991 and placed under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education through the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC). The NFLV is strategically located in Badagry, a border town between Nigeria and Republic of Benin, in Lagos State, south-western geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The vision and mission of the NFLV are as follows:

#### **Vision**

To empower all persons, irrespective of age, culture, creed or sex, with appropriate communication skills in the effective use of French language at both professional and interpersonal levels.

(NFLV's Vision Statement Document)

### **Mission**

To develop an outstanding centre of excellence for the study, research and development of French in Nigeria using skilled and innovative personnel and applying appropriate modern technology and teaching methodology to foster a culture of transnational bilingualism for nation building, regional integration as well as international cooperation and understanding. (NFLV's Mission Statement Document)

It should be mentioned that the primary mandate of the NFLV is to serve as a language immersion program centre where the 300 level undergraduate students of French in Nigerian universities, as well as their 200 level counterparts in the colleges of education converge. These groups of students spend between two and seven months respectively, for the mandatory Equivalent Year Abroad Program (EYAP) in the NFLV (see Afolabi, 2013; Olayiwola, 2017). We recall that this program used to take place in France, and later on in the neighbouring francophone countries prior to the economic crisis of the early 1980s. The inability of students' parents and the federal government to respectively pay and subsidize the huge foreign exchange required for the year abroad program inspired the then Nigerian government to think outside the box, by establishing a structure where the immersion experience can be simulated, rather than allowing French studies to suffer a natural extinction in Nigerian tertiary institutions. As a child of circumstances, the establishment of NFLV was a novel and noble idea that was conceived, birthed and nurtured into maturity by Prof. Samuel Ade Ojo, then of the University of Lagos, who later became the pioneer Director of the institution and served from 1991 to 2003 (see Adesola, 2004).

In addition to her primary clientele mentioned above, the NFLV also caters for other categories of Nigerians and foreigners who are desirous of learning French either as a way of boosting their professional productivity or as a gateway to further studies. This second mandate is jointly carried out by the Department of French for Special Purposes (FSP) and the Consultancy Services Unit of the institution.

### *2. Creation of the postgraduate diploma in translation and interpretation*

Although right from its inception, pedagogical translation courses (theme and version) have always been part of the syllabus of the NFLV for the 300 level

undergraduate students of French (see NFLV Brochure, 1992), specific training in professional translation and interpretation was not accorded any special place in the institution initially. In 2003, however, the authorities of the institution, obviously, in full realization of the dire need for trained professional translators and interpreters in Nigeria and the non-availability of training programs to meet the huge needs, decided to take the bold step of creating the very first stand-alone department of translation and interpretation in the history of university education in Nigeria. This also led to the creation of the PGDT&I program. The first set of students, six in number, started receiving lectures in January 2005. The program, which started so well with a lot of enthusiasm and hope, however, did not last for so long. After the first eight sets of students enrolled in the program from 2005 to 2012, certain anomalies were observed which led the NFLV management into deciding to suspend the PGDT&I program, with a view to assessing, revamping, repackaging and relaunching it in such a way that the set objectives for such a high level professional training program could be achieved. In this paper, we shall critically examine the context as well as the content of the program. Comments about it, as were gathered through a survey conducted with graduates or former students of the program will also be discussed, with a view to determining what went wrong and suggesting how to right the wrong.

### *3. Methods of data collection and analysis*

In order to validate or reject the hypothesis formulated in the introduction, the methodology employed in conducting this study is in two parts. In the first part, relevant data was collected through program document study, while for the second part which concerns the students' perception of the program under study, the instrument used for collecting the required data was a questionnaire. Details of the two phases of data collection and the procedures we followed shall be discussed in the following lines.

#### *3.1. Methodology phase A - Study and analysis of the official document on the program*

To start with, being a qualitative research, part of the data for analysis was gathered through the study of the official document available on the program under analysis. Specifically, we collected and analyzed the information contained

in the official document that describes the NFLV's PGDT&I program. The document was made available to us by a former head of the department of translation and interpretation in the institution. Seven main variables namely: statement of objectives, duration, admission criteria, graduation requirements, curriculum/course content, teaching staff and available resources as they relate to the program were sought for and analyzed as follows.

#### 1. Statement of program's objective

The available official document did not clearly state any objective that the program aims to pursue and achieve. We consider this as a grave omission because if the objective of any training program is not clearly stated and documented for all to see, its purpose will be easily defeated. Going by international best practices, similar programs in order parts of the world are known to always have their set objectives clearly stated, and this allows prospective candidates to have an idea of what they are putting in for.

#### 2. Duration of the program

The program used to run over a period of one academic year, that is two semesters of about seven months. The first semester was from January to April after which there is a two to three week inter semester break. The second semester was from April to July. Considering similar programs around the world, this duration appears to be rather too short, especially for a program that combines both translator and interpreter training into one.

#### 3. Admission criteria

To be eligible for admission into the program, interested candidates were required to be holders of BA in French or in English with a good knowledge of the second language. No formal entrance examination was required. This again represents a serious missing link as far as the program under study is concerned. Several studies, for example, Ezeafulukwe (2017: 109), have pointed out the importance of entrance examination in any worthwhile translators and interpreters training programs.

#### 4. Graduation requirements

In order for registered students to graduate and be issued the diploma, they were required to have passed all the courses, written and submitted a project, and undertaken an internship of at least three-month duration in a recognized international organization or a translation/interpreting firm. These conditions are good and in tandem with what is obtainable in reputable translation and interpretation training programs around the globe.

#### 5. Curriculum/Course content

Table 1 below presents a total number of fifteen courses and one project comprising of forty-four credits that were covered in the program<sup>1</sup>. As it can be observed, a greater number (seven) of the courses offered was geared towards the acquisition of communication or language skills, two courses focused on translation skills while two courses were dedicated mainly to interpreting. There were two practical courses. There was also a dose of computer related course as well as a third language component course. From this analysis, it is obvious that more attention would need to be given to translation and interpreting skills related courses.

Code	Course Title	Credits
	<b>1st semester</b>	
PGT 511	Language and Communication/Technique of Language 1	2
PGT 512	Semantics 1	2
PGT 513	Types of texts 1	2
PGT 514	Translation 1	3
PGT 515	Phonetics/Phonology	2
PGT 516	Practical 1	3
PGT 517	Interpretation 1	3
	<b>2nd semester</b>	
PGT 521	Language and Communication/Technique of Language 2	2
PGT 522	Semantics II	2
PGT 523	Types of texts II	2
PGT 524	Translation II	3
PGT 526	Practical II	3

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for full description of each of the courses.

PGT 527	Interpretation II	3
PGT 525	Computer in Translation and Interpretation	2
PGT 526	Project	6
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> semesters elective courses - Choose one course only from:</b>	
PGT 518 & 528	Spanish as 2 <sup>nd</sup> foreign language	4
PGT 519 & 529	Portuguese as 2 <sup>nd</sup> foreign language	4
PGT 520 & 530	Yoruba or Igbo or Hausa	4

Table 1. Courses' codes, titles and credits  
Source: *NFLV's PGDT&I program document* (2012)

#### 6. Teaching staff

Lecturers who handled the courses were specialists of languages, linguistics or translation. Most of them were practicing translators or interpreters and members of the Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (NITI). This allowed the students to get exposed to and acquire not only the theoretical knowledge, but also the hands-on practical experiences and best practices of the profession. It is worthy of note that one of the pioneer lecturers in the program was Prof. Ekundayo Simpson who is popularly regarded as the doyen of translation and interpretation in Nigeria as well as the pioneer president NITI. From all indication, his involvement was a great boost to the program.

#### 7. Available pedagogical resources

In addition to a well-furnished standard library and computer laboratories, the NFLV's PGDT&I program could also boast of an interpretation room equipped with modern state-of-the-art conference simultaneous interpretation booth and equipment where students were trained. The equipment also used to be put on hire and made available to conference organizers during which trainee interpreters were allowed to observe and sometimes, practice within short sessions. The available resources constituted a huge asset for the program. However, other essential resources such as a functional website for the program as well as uninterrupted internet connection for online research or consultation were lacking. Indeed, the program document used for our analysis was not



available online or in public domain, it was rather filed-away in the departmental secretariat from where it was sourced for our use.

### *3.2. Methodology phase B - Questionnaire administered to former students and graduates<sup>2</sup> of the program*

For this phase of the study, we administered an online questionnaire via SurveyMonkey<sup>3</sup> platform. A sample of former students and graduates of the NFLV's PGDT&I were surveyed with a view to understanding their perception and appreciating their assessment of the program. According to the information gathered from the academic planning unit of the institution, between 2005 and 2012, a total of sixty students registered for the program (see Table 2 below for year by year distribution of students' enrolment).

Year	Number of students admitted
2005	6
2006	3
2007	11
2008	11
2009	6
2010	6
2011	11
2012	6
TOTAL	60

Table 2: Students' enrolment from 2005–2012

Source: Agbetan (2012): *Academic Planning Report of the Nigeria French Language Village*

Our target was to reach as many former students or graduates of the program as possible with the research questionnaire. To achieve this, in addition to contacting the current deputy director of NFLV who had also served as head of the department of translation and interpretation, asking him for assistance in getting the contact addresses of former students of the program, we also

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term 'former students and graduates' here because some of the respondents were yet to successfully complete or become certificated graduates of the program as at the time of this research.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2 or <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7BGZQKV> for copy of the questionnaire.

explored the avenue of the social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn to contact some former students that we know personally. At the end, we were only able to reach out to twenty-three out of the sixty registered students and solicited their participation. However, only twenty persons finally responded by turning in their questionnaires. The twenty respondents consisted of nine females and eleven males. The questionnaire which was administered between 1<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2018 consisted of twenty-four questions that could be easily answered within a timeframe of twenty to twenty-five minutes. The following are the analysis of the themes covered by the questionnaire as well as the responses obtained.

### 1. Respondents' biodata

The answers supplied here include respondents' names and contact addresses. As such, they are meant to remain confidential in line with research ethics' condition of anonymity. For reference and identification purposes, however, rather than mentioning their names, all respondents are attributed codes ranging from numbers 1 to 20. Hence, the codes 'Respondent 1', 'Respondent 2', 'Respondent 3' etc. are used to refer to the first, second and third respondents respectively and as the case may be.

### 2. Year of enrolment in the program

Respondents' years of enrolment in the program varied and are distributed thus:

2007 – 2 respondents  
2008 – 4 respondents  
2009 – 2 respondents  
2010 – 5 respondents  
2012 – 7 respondents

From the above, we can see that our respondents consisted mainly of the last five years (2007 to 2012) out of the eight-year (2005 to 2012) short lifespan of the program. We are therefore of the opinion that this gives a fairly good representation, if it is believed that a professional training program such as that of translators and interpreters is expected to be improved upon as it grows in years.

### 3. Highest educational qualification before registering for the program

All the twenty respondents had a minimum of bachelor's degree, that is BA or B.A.Ed. in French language while three of them were holders of master's degree in public administration, international diplomacy and law, as at the time they were given admission into the PGDT&I program. Thus, it goes without saying that an important requirement of admission into a postgraduate programme is being adhered to for the NFLV's program.

#### 4. Objective for enrolling in the program

Generally, from their responses, the reason why all the respondents enrolled in the program was to get trained in the art of professional translation and interpreting. Below are some of the specific responses obtained that attest to this:

To receive practical and theoretical knowledge in the field of translation and interpretation. To obtain additional qualification... Equip myself technically and professionally. (Respondent 3)

I was attracted to a career that would enable me to work with languages. I've heard about conference interpreting, but I was not sure exactly what it involves, what studies to pursue, or what opportunities may be available. In summary to be a good interpreter and translator. (Respondent 7)

As an undergraduate in the university, I developed a passion for translation and interpretation. I found the translation courses we took during my language immersion year both in NFLV, Badagry and UFBA, Brazil to be quite interesting and so I was looking forward to taking more translation courses in my final year. As my love for translation and interpretation continued to grow in my final year in the university, I was seriously considering furthering my studies in that line and that was what led to my participation in the NFLV PGD T&I. (Respondent 17)

#### 5. Set objective achieved or not

Responding to the question of whether or not their set objective for enrolling in the program was achieved, fourteen respondents (77.78%) answered 'YES', five (27.78%) responded with a 'NO', while one respondent skipped the question. From these responses, it is clear that not all graduates or former students of the program were satisfied or had their set objectives met.

6. Participation in entrance examination prior to gaining admission into the program

From the responses obtained, eighteen respondents (90%) said they did not participate in any kind of entrance examination before being offered admission into the program, while only two claimed to have participated in such an examination. Those two later responded to the next question.

7. If yes, description of the form or nature of the entrance examination

In the responses of the two persons who claimed to have taken part in an entrance examination, their description of the nature of the examination was not very clear. It appeared like a casual interaction with some of the officials in charge of the program, hence it could not be considered as a formal or standard entrance examination required of a professional program. Below are their descriptions:

Translation of 3 texts (French-English, English-French) and oral communication in French (Respondent 7)

I was interviewed with French Language (Respondent 11)

For the purpose of our analysis, based on the responses of the majority (eighteen respondents) as well as our personal knowledge of the context of the program being an insider, therefore, we can safely conclude that no formal entrance examination was ever organized as a criterion for gaining admission into the NFLV's PGDT&I program while it lasted.

8. Participation in internship at the end of the program

Fourteen (70%) of the respondents confirmed that they participated in an internship as part of the program while the remaining six (30%) claimed they did not.

9. If yes, comments on experience during the internship. Place and duration of the exercise

For the respondents who did, the comments on their experiences during the internship were quite revealing. Below are some of their responses:

During the program my internship was more of interpretation than translation. I was part of teams at some conferences to translates some documents My 3-

month internship took place at Port Management Association of West Africa (PMAWCA) in Lagos, Nigeria. The program was exclusively on translation. Though, I so much wanted it, I did not have the opportunity to practice in interpretation. (Respondent 2)

I did internship at the end of the program with Oando Togo SA (now OVH Energy Togo SA). I translated and interpreted for the company. I did internship for 10 months. (Respondent 11)

I did my internship at ECOWAS commission headquarters Abuja, for the period of 3 months. I had a nice experience at Language Division of ECOWAS, I learnt more on interpretation. (Respondent 12)

Translating a variety of documents at the ECOWAS Commission, Language Unit, under a Senior Translator and the Language Coordinator. Also interpreted in consecutive mode during international meetings and conferences. (Respondent 18)

My experience was very rewarding as I gained linguistically & technically through visits to the ports & other shipping facilities. Dr. Fagboun invited me to events he covered. I was at the Conseil National Des Chargeurs Du Bénin for 3 months. (Respondent 19)

Interactive and interesting. The Nigeria delegation in UNESCO, Paris. (Respondent 20)

From the above responses, it is obvious that internship is an integral part of the NFLV's PGDT&I program and that it was very beneficial to the students who took part in it.

#### 10. Writing and submission of project at the end of the program

Thirteen respondents (68.42%) confirmed that they wrote and submitted a project at the end of their program, six (31.58%) said they did not, while one person did not provide any answer. It shows that project writing and submission, as stated in the curriculum, was an integral part of the NFLV's program, although not all the students really fulfilled this requirement.

11. If yes, state the title of the project

The projects written and submitted by some of our respondents whose project titles are listed below are quite fascinating and appear to be very original. They treated very important and current aspects of translation and interpretation practice in the context of Nigeria and Africa as a whole. It should be noted that francophone students on the program were asked to write their projects in French language while their anglophone counterparts did theirs in English language. For instance, if a book were to be translated, it must be done in that direction. This, obviously, is in strict adherence to the belief that as a professional rule, translators and interpreters should work into their B language, that is the language that they master most.

Examples of topics treated by our respondents in their projects are:

*Translation from English to French of 'Can our culture and traditions overcome corruption?' by Ishola Williams (Respondent 2)*

*De la Théorie à la Pratique du Couple Écoute et Compréhension dans la Communication orale : Cas de l'Interprétation. Respondent (7)*

*Défis de l'interprète et du traducteur à l'ère de la mondialisation (Respondent 9)*

*L'interprétation judiciaire lors des procès internationaux (Respondent 15)*

*Typologie de la traduction et typologie de l'interprétation : présentation critique et réflexion sur les rapports traduction-interprétation. (Respondent 18)*

*La tournure descriptive dans l'interprétation et la tradition. (The research was on French, English, Egun, hausa, igbo and Yoruba). (Respondent 20)*

12. Level of satisfaction with the program

The twenty respondents were asked to describe the level of their satisfaction with the program that they invested precious time and resources into. The following are the five item-options (disappointed, not satisfactory, fairly satisfactory, satisfactory and very satisfactory) and the responses obtained:

Item	Number of response	Percentage
Disappointed	1	5%
Not satisfactory	3	15%

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Fairly satisfactory	9	45%
Satisfactory	5	25%
Very satisfactory	2	10%

Table 3. Respondents' level of satisfaction

From the above, it can be deduced that only few of the twenty respondents were very satisfied with the NFLV'S PGDT&I program in which they decided to take part. We are therefore of the opinion that this should really be a cause for concern.

13. Aspect(s) of the program considered to be the most relevant

Probing further on the reason for their varying degree of satisfaction with the program, respondents were asked to specify the aspects of the program that they considered to be the most relevant, based on their experience. The aspects identified by most of the respondents are:

- Practical translation and interpretation courses
- Language laboratory course
- Theoretical aspects

14. Aspect(s) of the program considered to be the least relevant

On the other hand, when asked to identify the aspects of the program they considered to be the least relevant, majority of the respondents (thirteen out of twenty) said there was none, two respondents said there were, but they could not remember. Only one person identified linguistic course as the least relevant in his opinion, while the remaining four did not provide any answer whatsoever.

15. General assessment of the course content

The respondents' general assessment of the course content gave a picture of a mixed impression. While to some, the content was 'impressive' (two respondents), 'well packaged' (one respondent), 'intensive' (one respondent), 'very good' (four respondents), 'good' (five respondents), 'fair' (three respondents), 'fairly satisfactory' (one respondent); to others, the content was 'not adequate' (one respondent), 'not superb' (one respondent) and 'below average' (one respondent). Based on the foregoing, one could deduce that, on the average, the general assessment of the course content is good. However, one striking comment by Respondent 19 deserves special mention here. According

to her, “the content was very good but was **not purposefully pursued.**” (Emphasis mine).

#### 16. Assessment of the teaching staff that handled the program

According to Kelly (2008: 124), “there are two sets of participants in the teaching and learning process, both of whom are essential for its success: students or trainees, and teachers or trainers.” The same position is echoed by Fiola (2003: 301) who posits that “il est impossible de dissocier les formateurs de la formation.” “It is impossible to separate trainers from training.” (Our translation). Hence, we deemed it fit to ask the students for their assessment of the trainers they had in the course of their program.

In responding to this question, the subjects were almost unanimous to submit that they had very good and quality lecturers. Some of the positive comments were: ‘very good’, ‘very capable’, ‘seasoned and ready to impart knowledge’, ‘seasoned and capable’, ‘competent’, etc. However, some not too positive comments like the followings also emerged:

The teaching staff were very experienced and sought after globally. This had some adverse effects on students who had to bear the brunt of frequent absenteeism by a number of lecturers. (Respondent 3)

The teaching staff are very good but few of them needed to be more friendly. Lecturers for some core courses resumed very late for the course. (Respondent 9)

Some lectures held as at when due. Some were rushed due to absenteeism on the part of lecturers, so it became like a crash program. (Respondent 19)

#### 17. Issuance of diploma upon successful completion of the program

Out of the twenty respondents, only eight (42.11%) confirmed that they have been issued their end-of-program diploma, while the majority being eleven (57.89%) claimed they have not yet been issued their diploma certificate. One person did not give any answer. Although, two out of those who were yet to be issued the diploma said they have not completed their projects, the remaining nine have satisfied all the requirements for the obtainment of the diploma but bureaucratic bottlenecks are majorly the factors responsible for the non-issuance of the diplomas. For instance, we were reliably informed that the authorities of the NFLV were having a nightmare in getting students results from a particular



lecturer. From every indication, timely issuance of certificate was a big issue with the NFLV's PGDT&I program.

#### 18. Ability to get employed with the diploma

The question about the ability of the respondents to gain employment with the diploma of the NFLV's PGDT&I program was intended to know the impact that the program is making on the translation and interpretation market in Nigeria or internationally. Sadly, out of the seventeen responses received for this question, only four (23.53%) claimed to have been able to secure an employment with the diploma, while thirteen (76.47%) are still trying to enter the labour market as professional translators and interpreters.

The statistics above appear disturbing as it shows that not many products of the NFLV'S PGDT&I program are found to be actively engaged in the labour market presently. The issue of employability is very paramount in the curriculum design for any higher education program in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and professional translator-interpreter training program is not an exemption. As Sanchez (2017: 85) rightly argues:

The branch of Applied Translation Studies that incorporates the teaching and learning taking place in university departments that train future translators has a brilliant future if 'employability' really means that there has been full integration of classroom activity with the 'real world' by the time students leave university and join a world already familiar to them.

For the respondents who claimed to have been able to gain an employment with the NFLV's PGDT&I program certificate, the next question for them was to specify the type of employment they got.

#### 19. If yes, name of the employer and status of employment

Only three out of the four respondents who claimed to have been gainfully employed with the NFLV's PGDT&I certificate are presently working as translators/interpreters with reputable international organisations. The fourth person works as an English teacher.

#### 20. SWOT analysis of the program

There are four questions (**questions 20 to 23**) that are embedded in one here. The four questions requested the respondents to undertake a quick SWOT analysis of the NFLV's PGDT&I program.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online<sup>4</sup> defines SWOT analysis, a concept commonly used in business administration and management, as "a study done by an organization in order to find its strengths and weaknesses, and what problems or opportunities it should deal with." The acronym SWOT is formed from the initial letters of 'strengths', 'weaknesses', 'opportunities' and 'threats'. Although SWOT analysis is an entirely extensive study on its own, our intention here is not to go deeply into it. Thus, our respondents were simply asked to identify what they considered to be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the program under study. The answers given are highly revelatory and insightful.

As can be observed, the weaknesses identified with the program far outweigh its strength, but the opportunities are more or less as many as the threats. Below are our explanations and comments on the outcome of the SWOT analysis summarized in Table 4.

### **Strengths**

Some factors that constituted significant strength for the NFLV's PGDT&I program include its comprehensive curriculum. From the students' perspective, the course content is good as it were. However, going by our own analysis of the curriculum, we are of the opinion that it could be improved upon. For example, just two courses each on translation and interpreting skills will not in any way be sufficient to produce a professional translator or interpreter within the space of seven months.

The surveyed subjects also identified the quality of the lecturers who handled the courses as one of its strength. We are in agreement with this observation, although, it should be noted that not all the lecturers were actually practicing professional translators or interpreters but a good number of them were. Finally, most of the respondents mentioned conducive learning environment as another strength of the program. This is actually true of the Nigeria French Language Village which is located in the calm and serene city of Badagry, a suburb of Lagos

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/swot-analysis>

State. The nearness of the institution to the neighboring Cotonou, a major commercial city in the Republic of Benin, also allowed for the contact with the French language which was a major language in the program.

### **Weaknesses**

One of the major weaknesses identified with the program was the fact it was not accredited by the Nigerian government. By this, the respondents meant that the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) which is the regulatory body for all programs offered in the Nigerian university system did not at any time endorse the NFLV's PGDT&I program. The implication of this is that employers may chose not to recognize the certificate tendered by graduates of the program for lack of accreditation. In view of this, it is important that the NFLV's authorities seek the official endorsement and accreditation by the regulatory body before the program is relaunched. The endorsement by a professional body such as NITI will also go a long way in boosting the image of the program and enhance the employability of its graduates. Another weakness of the program, according to the surveyed subjects, is the absence of entrance examination which made it difficult to ascertain the level of students enrolled. The result of this is that the level of some students was discovered to be too low for the standard of the instructions in the courses. The program was also said to be lacking in proper coordination. For example, apart from the head of department who oversees both the undergraduate and postgraduate programs that relate to translation in the institution, there was no specifically designated official in charge of the PGDT&I program. This, we observed, is contrary to the practice in other institutions where such programs are offered. Ideally, there should always be a program coordinator who will be saddled with the responsibility of managing all that has to do with the program such as publicity, admission, allocation of courses, examination, collation of results, facilitation of internship placement etc., up till graduation and certification of students. Other weaknesses identified with regard to the program are constant absenteeism of some lecturers, lack of support or assistance in getting internship placement for students, lack of access to internet connection and unstable electricity.

### **Opportunities**

Despite the many weaknesses identified with the program as summarized above, our respondents were of the view that the NFLV's PGDT&I had a lot of opportunities that justified its *raison d'être*. First, there was (and there continues to be) a growing need to acquire professional skills in translation and interpretation by Nigerians who wish to be trained and certified in the profession. Since not many institutions offer such training in Nigeria presently, this constitutes an immense opportunity for the program under study. Secondly, the presence of many international organizations within and around Nigeria provides huge employment opportunities to graduates of the NFLV's PGDT&I program. For example, the Commission, the Parliament and the Court of justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), among other international organizations and multinational outfits where translation and international services are required on daily basis, are all situated in Nigeria. Those are the opportunities that the program could have leveraged on.

### **Threats**

According to our respondents, among the major identified threats to the NFLV's PGDT&I program was the poor visibility of the program due to poor publicity. In other words, despite the huge benefits and opportunities that the program portrayed, not many people were aware it existed. This may partly explain the low and dwindling enrolment figures as shown in Table 2 (section 3, 2). Again, the fact that the program did not enjoy due recognition and accreditation by the Nigerian government through the NUC could have deprived it of some potential candidates. Another major threat to the program is the availability of similar programs in neighboring countries such as the Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation (PAMCIT) programs being offered in Ghana, Senegal and in Cameroun.

The Nigeria French Language Village's Postgraduate Diploma in T&I

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive curriculum</li> <li>• Sound, qualified, professional and experienced lecturers</li> <li>• Conducive environment for learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program yet to be accredited by the Nigerian government</li> <li>• Lack of proper management or coordination</li> <li>• Too short duration</li> <li>• Absence of entrance examination</li> <li>• Too low level of language skills of many students on the program</li> <li>• Lack of access to internet connection and unstable power supply</li> <li>• Delay in issuance of diploma</li> <li>• Lack of support in terms of internship placements</li> <li>• Frequent absenteeism by some lecturers</li> <li>• Less emphasis on C language</li> <li>• Insufficient number of lecturers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing need to acquire professional skills in translation and interpretation</li> <li>• Presence of many international organizations within and around Nigeria</li> <li>• Employment opportunities for graduates of the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor visibility due to poor publicity</li> <li>• Lack of recognition by government and potential employers due to poor organization</li> <li>• Availability of similar programs at master's level in neighboring countries such as Ghana and Senegal</li> </ul>

Table 4. SWOT analysis of NFLV's PGDT&I program by our respondents

## 21. Suggestions towards revamping the program

In view of all the answers supplied by our respondents and analyzed above, we asked that they also provide suggestions on how they think the program could be improved upon if and when it is restored. Due to time and space constraints, all that the respondents suggested could not be reproduced here but below are some of the very apt and useful suggestions gathered.

There should be more awareness in respect of the program in Nigeria and in neighbouring countries because the need is there, but few people are aware that French Village offered such program [...] There should be strict adherence to the requirements of entrance qualification. Students that failed to meet up with a time limit of submission of their project should be made to face the consequences. Any lecturer found wanting in carrying out his responsibility should be dealt with and timely [...] Results should be released promptly immediately after each semester. (Respondent 2)

Learning environment should be made conducive, both academic block and hostel. Learning Resources should be made available. Students should have access to free internet Wi-Fi. Time of the program can be extended, to be able to cover more and really achieve the objectives of the program. There should be standby generators meant mainly for the program. Arrangement can be made with companies in a way that at the end each program students can be sent there for Internship since that is the part of the program. (Respondent 9)

Review the appellation of the certificate to masters. Let it have national and international recognition. (Respondent 10)

There should be proper publicity given to the program nationwide (especially in French departments of Universities in Nigeria). There should be more practical sessions. Results should be published after every semester. There should be an entrance examination for intending students. The diploma certificate should be personally signed by the DG. (Respondent 11)

It is urgent to restart the program because of the need. The program must be conducted by international professional lecturers (From English-speaking countries and French-speaking countries) [...] Plus, a Portuguese lecturer. (Respondent 15)

Collaboration with external organizations, excursions, immersion into relevant associations, internship, continuity, motivation to excel. (Respondent 17)

NFLV needs to think out of the box and run the programme not in line with Nigerian standards. There should be more commitment. (Respondent 19)

Only those with first degree should be allowed to pursue the program, it should be accredited by the Federal Government. (Respondent 20)

#### *4. Discussion of results*

At this juncture, we shall attempt to draw a parallel between all the analyses presented so far. It goes without saying that the creation of NFLV's PGDT&I was a gain while its sudden disappearance could be described as nothing but a colossal loss to the field of translation and interpretation in Nigeria in particular and Africa at large. This is because at a period when very few translator and interpreter training programs or schools are available on the continent of Africa, suspending any of those few ones cannot but be regrettable. However, the suspension of the NFLV's program under study can at the same time be considered as a blessing in disguise, if it will amount to reviewing and assessing the program (as we have done in this study), with a view to injecting fresh blood into it and bringing it back to life. The need to restore the erstwhile program has been orchestrated by most of our respondents and we cannot but add our voice to theirs. That, of course, is the ultimate goal of this research: bringing back the NFLV's PGDT&I program and even creating more of such, especially at the master's level. In the next section, we shall proffer recommendations towards revamping the program under study which will in turn help in optimizing professional translators and interpreters training programs generally in Nigeria. Finally, in view of the analysis carried out and the results that emerged therefrom, it could be said that our research hypothesis as stated in the introduction is largely validated.

#### *5. Recommendations*

For the NFLV's PGDT&I program to be restored and enhanced, the followings are what we recommend:

1. Setting up of a high-level strategic think tank comprising of experts within and outside the NFLV, with a mandate to carry out a

comprehensive needs analysis towards relaunching the program as soon as possible.

2. Upgrading the NFLV's PGDT&I to the status of a master's program where translation and interpretation are handled separately. This could be done in affiliation with a reputable conventional university in Nigeria or abroad. The program could also seek adherence to the Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation (PAMCIT), a project initiated and strongly supported by the European Commission's Directorate generals of interpretation and translation.
3. Increasing the duration of the program to two years (four semesters) and reviewing the program curriculum to include more of core practical, translation/interpretation skills, computer tools and professional ethics-oriented courses. Current and possible future market needs should also be put into consideration in the program's curriculum review so as to guarantee employability of graduates.
4. Making a standard and rigorous entrance examination (both written and oral) a *condition sine qua non* for every candidate seeking admission into the program and ensuring that those who fall below acceptable standard are not considered at all. This will ensure a kind of homogeneity of entrance skills level of students, thus preventing a situation whereby some students are drawing others back during lectures and practicals.
5. Taking into consideration the outcomes of the SWOT analysis as well as the suggestions provided by our respondents who are former students, hence active participants and stakeholders in the program, as contained in this study.

### *Conclusions*

In this descriptive and exploratory study, we have attempted to carry out an X-ray of the sadly defunct Postgraduate Diploma in Translation and Interpretation program run by the Nigeria French Village in Badagry-Lagos between 2005 and 2012. Through two instruments of data collection which are document study and questionnaires, we gathered and analyzed information concerning virtually every aspect of the program. The study shows that it was good enough that the program was suspended in order to address the many issues that plagued its successful implementation, but that it is also necessary to bring it back to life, due to the growing needs for and the dearth of professional translators and



interpreters training programs in Nigeria, and indeed in Africa as a whole. Useful suggestions were therefore offered based on our findings, towards revamping the program and making it worth the while.

In conclusion, it is our candid opinion that if the results of this study are taken into consideration for implementation by the concerned authorities, the NFLV's PGDT&I program will be able to lurch back with vigour and rigour. It can then regain its pride of place as a flagship program for training translators and interpreters in Nigeria, where, as Amosu (2010: 70) succinctly puts it referring to professional translators and interpreters, there is "[...] need to activate a back-up plan, for the replacement of our seasoned professionals who are no longer as young as they were when they began their careers some thirty years ago." By and large, we believe that the NFLV's PGDT&I program, if and when better structured and nurtured, can grow to be a true model to be emulated in setting up similar programs across the West African sub-region and Africa as a whole.

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*Appendix 1*

Course by course description of the Nigeria French Language Village's Postgraduate Diploma in Translation Interpretation (PGDT&I)

**PGT 511 & PGT 521 – Language and Communication/Technique of Language – 4 credits**

Particular emphasis will be laid on principles of communication, functions of language, language and channels of communication, relationship between code, language and text: this relationship between the linguistic sign and meaning with reference to polysemy and homophony will be closely studied.

**PGT 512 & PGT 522 – Semantics I & II – 4 credits**

Starting from the elementary structure of meaning, this course will lay emphasis on meaning, meaning variation, correspondence and semantic equivalence in the attempt to attribute meaning. Efforts will be made to introduce the process of word formation and vocabulary expansion in the target languages.

**PGT 513 & PGT 523 – Types of Texts I & II – 4 credits**

Students will be introduced to the nature and characteristic traits of texts, the cleavage between discourse, statements and texts; focalization and prospective. Emphasis will be laid on literary, scientific/technical as well as commercial texts.

**PGT 514 & PGT 524 – Translation I & II – 6 credits**

Starting from the origin and reasons for translation, this course shall focus on types and methods of translation. Emphases (sic) will be laid on linguistic devices in translation, bilingual glossary word compilation as well as resources available to the translators.

**PGT 515 – Phonetics/Phonology – 2 credits**

Mastery of speech patterns in English and French will be brought to fore in the construction of words. Emphases (sic) will be laid on production of sound patterns in the target languages for clear and audible rendition of intended message.

**PGT 516 & PGT 526 – Practical I & II – 6 credits**

This course provides students with the opportunity to practise and learn in the Laboratory environment the technique of translation as well as conference-simulated situations in the acquisition of knowledge in consecutive and simultaneous interpretations.

**PGT 517 & 527 – Interpretation I & II – 6 credits**

This course will introduce students to the rudiments of interpretation. Starting from theories of interpretation, emphases (sic) will be laid on deserialization, transcoding, etc. and professional ethics in interpretation.

**PGT 525 – Computer in Translation and Interpretation – 2 credits**

This course will explore the role of computer in all aspects of translation, automotive word search as well as other areas of computer applications to professional translator and interpreter.

**1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semesters' elective courses (Choose one course only) \***

PGT 518 & PGT 528 – Spanish as 2<sup>nd</sup> foreign language – 2 credits

PGT 519 & PGT 529 – Portuguese as 2<sup>nd</sup> foreign language – 2 credits

PGT 520 & PGT 530 – Yoruba/Igbo/Hausa – 2 credits

PGT 526 – Project – 6 credits

\*Details of these courses are not available in the program document.

*Appendix 2*

SurveyMonkey online questionnaire administered to former students/graduates of NFLV's PGDT&I program

Nigeria French Language Village's PGDT&I Program:  
Context, Content and Comments

Dear respondent,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this opinion poll which is an important part of our on-going research on the subject above. The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive students' needs analysis of the NFLV PGDT&I program with a view to coming up with strategies to help revamp the program which, despite the huge need for it in the present-day Nigeria, has been put on hold since 2013. We therefore invite you to kindly answer all the questions with all sense of objectivity and honesty. Kindly note that respondents' anonymity is highly guaranteed and that the answers provided shall be used for the purpose of this research only.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Segun Afolabi,  
Université Laval, Québec, Canada  
(Researcher)

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1. Please supply the following bio-data:

Company

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

Email Address

Phone Number

2. What year did you take part in the NFLV PGDT&I program?

3. What was your highest qualification before registering for the PGDT&I program?
4. What was your objective while enrolling for the program?
5. Would you say that this objective was achieved at the end of the program?  
Yes  
No
6. Did you take part in any entrance exam before being offered admission for the program?  
Yes  
No
7. If yes, please describe briefly the nature of the examination that you took part in.
8. Did you take part in any internship during or after the program?  
Yes  
No
9. If yes, briefly describe your experience during the internship. Mention the place and duration.
10. Did you write any project at the end of program?  
Yes  
No
11. If yes, please state the title of your project and briefly describe its content.
12. How would you describe your level of satisfaction of the program?  
**Disappointed Not satisfactory Fairly satisfactory Satisfactory Very satisfactory**
13. What aspect of the program did you find to be most relevant to your expectation?
14. What aspect of the program did you find to be least relevant?
15. How would you assess the course content generally?
16. How would you assess the teaching staff who handled the program?
17. Have you been issued your diploma?  
Yes  
No
18. Have you been able to get an employment with the NFLV diploma?  
Yes  
No
19. If yes, what is the name of your employer and what is your status there?
20. In your opinion, what are the strengths of the program?
21. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of the program?
22. In your opinion, what are the opportunities offered by the program?
23. In your opinion, what are the threats to (that is, factors militating against the success of) the program?
24. Finally, what suggestions do you have towards revamping the program?