

Implementation of National Languages through Official Curriculum in Cameroon

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This paper presents the linguistic complexity of Cameroon, briefly outlines the historical circumstances which lead to that complexity, describes the language families present in Cameroon and attempts to evaluate how they relate to distinct or overlapping social contexts and interactions, highlights the challenges this situation brings and finally, gives a brief account of the official policies and practices put in place to respond to these challenges.

Cameroon has a very complex history. Its languages and cultures go beyond its administrative and geographic borders. Cameroon is a mosaic of cultures and therefore of languages. The classification of Cameroonian languages is problematic for linguistic and sociological reasons.

This complexity brings important challenges such as the selection of national languages to be included in the curriculum. Following are some criteria to be considered:

- the languages must have already been taught at the primary and secondary level;
- the necessary material to start and to experiment is available;
- the human resources allowing for the subsequent development of both the teaching material and the formation of teachers exist;
- the support of the community through a recognized awareness and participation exists;
- the languages to be taught are selected in all the administrative regions of the country.

In Cameroon, certain associations and institutions such as NACALCO, the PROPELCA project, have made important steps to promote and develop national languages. From the year 2007, the Ministry of Secondary Education has put in place a project to teach national languages in schools under its control. So far, the program is implemented in 07 pilot schools. It aims at teaching Applied Phonetics and Grammar in Forms One and Two. In the remaining classes, specific languages are selected according to above mentioned criteria. A Department for the training of National Languages and Cultures teachers has been created in the Yaoundé Higher Teacher Training College. However, to see a real, measurable and widely recognize progress in the learning /teaching of Cameroonian Languages, there needs be, in educational institutions, a specific status given to National languages, a strategy of implementation, didactic materials and assessment instruments which would put the selected languages in the sphere of recognized knowledge.