

Effects of Bilingualism in the Private Higher educational sector in Cameroon during the Post-Colonial Period: Strategies, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: Official Bilingualism in Cameroon started after its independence in 1961 with the objective of being implemented till the tertiary level. The higher educational reforms of 1993 instituted bilingualism in the higher educational system and the use of English and French in all public and private universities. There is a remark that the practice of bilingualism in the private higher educational sector has been progressively effective even though there exist some challenges. This article aims to examine the outcome of bilingual education in private universities in Cameroon, their teaching-learning methods and approaches of (in) French and English languages in those institutes, their challenges, prospects and way forward towards the promotion of Bilingualism. The study was guided by historical linguistics and psychological approaches, and Gardner's Motivation theory. The data analysed were elicited through observation and questionnaires administered to 95 students of the private higher institutes and five language teachers; nine administrative staff members were interviewed randomly. The findings reveal that the practice of bilingualism policy is effective in the Institutes of study since, even if some are not bilingual in structure, they make sure that the policy is practised in the classroom during lectures and assessment, in all administrative documents. Yet, the problem lies on the curriculum that is not well defined and specialised to the students' field of study; and on the lack of many well-trained bilingual lecturers, able to teach partially or fully in the second official language. The article concludes by making some recommendations for the effective implementing official bilingualism in tertiary education in Cameroon.

Keywords: Bilingualism Policy, Cameroon, Private Higher Education, Curriculum.

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1. Introduction

Since the adoption of French –English bilingualism policy in Cameroonian Education in 1961, both the basic, secondary and tertiary levels of education have been striving in one way or another to implement and promote the vision of social and political integration and national cohesion. With the creation of Federal University of Cameroon in July 1962, students were facing difficulties in assimilating lectures due to the fact that, they were taught at times by pure French-speaking lecturers and pure English-speaking lecturers. The stakeholders later prompted the institution on bilingual education in all universities to facilitate full oral and written participation of all the students during lectures (Safotso 2016). The aim of this study is to analyse and evaluate the

outcome of bilingualism in higher private universities from independence till present. The work focuses on private institutes with regards to their diachronic usage of bilingualism.

The study is conducted from a historical perspective and seeks to discuss the effectiveness and realisation of bilingualism in private higher institutes; checks when they started implementing it and what is the present situation of this policy. Thus, three theories permitted us to analyse data collected. Firstly, historical linguistics which studies how languages change over time, subsumes both the general study of language change and the history of specific languages and language family. Secondly, psychological approach which will help the researcher to understand why students in the private higher section act the way they do. The focus here will be based on observing the behaviours. Lastly, Gardner's Motivation

Theory (2005) which claims that the learner's motivation and ability are linked directly to his achievement in the language learning context and his anxiety to learn L2 related to two variables: integrativeness which refers to the individual's openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group; and Attitudes to Learning Situation which includes teaching, instructions, curriculum, lessons' plan and evaluation processes.

2. Background of the study

This part of the work examines how private higher education institutions in Cameroon navigate bilingualism, analysing their approaches obstacles and opportunities for improvement in post-colonial context.

2.1. Background to teaching of bilingual training in Cameroonian universities

As far as the Teaching of Bilingual Training in Cameroon is concerned, in 1964, the English-speaking students began to gain admission in the Federal University of Cameroon and they had difficulties in following the lectures in French language (Safotso, 2021). With the help of UNESCO to Cameroon Government, a chair of language teaching in Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) was created in Yaounde. Here, experts organised French courses for Anglophones and English courses for Francophones following the Decree No.62-DF-189 of July 1962 that aimed to propose French courses to Anglophone students and English to Francophone students (Echu 1999:192). This was to enable both Francophone and Anglophone students to follow courses in their various second official languages without difficulties. This programme also aimed at fostering national integration between Anglophones and Francophone citizens (Safotso 2021:164).

2.2 The background of Cameroon Higher Education

In 1995, the gross enrolment rate for higher education in Cameroon was only four (4) percent (%) with significant gender disparities: 7% of males and 1% of females of higher education age were enrolled in tertiary level education and training programs (Njeuma et al. 1999; UNESCO, 2000). By 1998, enrolments had increased and were almost equivalent to what they had been before the higher education budget was trimmed in 1993 (Ministry of Higher Education, 1998). At the beginning of the new millennium, Cameroon had six publicly supported Universities including the Universities of Yaounde I and II, Buea, Douala, Dschang and Ngaoundéré aside the main private University in the country which was the Catholic University (established in 1990) and others (Foko, 2005).

2.3. Language policy in the higher education of Cameroon

The main core of Cameroon's language policy is constituted by the policy of official French-English bilingualism. Bilingualism policy makers were governed by the principles of national unity, reason why they imposed English and French as compulsory languages of instruction for all. This is linked to the nature of the 1961 Fouban 'Constitutional' Talks between the former British Southern Cameroons and République du Cameroun, two separate UN Trust Territories of different colonial and cultural backgrounds (Benjamin, 1972). Cameroon at the national level considered French and English as the best linguistic vehicle through which national cohesion and national unitary State because they were unable to adopt any of the Cameroonian indigenous languages.

National unity became an internal policy in Cameroun after the reunification in 1961 under President Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The Fouban conference of 17-21 July 1961 came out with the proposal that English and French should be used as official languages. It was also agreed that English would be the working and business language of West Cameroon and French would be that of East Cameroon. It was agreed that primary and secondary educations would be handled by respective States while the fate of higher education (university) remained in the hand of the federal government (Suh Sama 2018: 112-115).

2.4. The history of private higher educational institutions in Cameroon

The first private higher educational institutions in Cameroon were set up in the 1960s. They were created by religious groups that essentially focused on theology and functioned as associations. Post-secondary Institutions set up by lay persons' date as far back as the 1960s and are extensions of the private secondary schools (Fonkeng, 2007).

Post-secondary institutions were almost inexistent in Cameroon up till the early 1990s. according to Njeuma et al., 1999, this was as a result of certain factors; the most important of which was the absence of a state policy and regulatory framework to guide the establishment and operations of private higher education in the country. The decentralisation of the University of Yaounde and higher education reforms in 1993 gave credence to social entrepreneurial ventures that were in gestation waiting for the enabling conditions to be released as stated in Law No. 93/035 of January 1993 on Higher Education. This was specifically the case of the project sustained by Dr. John Ngu Foncha who among others piloted the venture that culminated in the founding of BUST, in 1994 which was the first private higher education to be created in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. As a pioneer initiative, the institution took part in different reflection forums that produced the framework to guide the functioning of lay private higher education institutions in Cameroon. After BUST was created, different professionally oriented higher education institutions emerged that were promoted mainly by private social entrepreneurs and christian religious organisations (Fonkeng, 2007).

3. Literature review

Lots of works have been done concerning bilingual education in Cameroon in the context of official bilingualism, bilingualism and its weaknesses at the tertiary level in Cameroon specifically in public universities but not much has been written on bilingual education in private higher education in Cameroon.

World bank analysts (1997) note that a number of factors contributed to the serious deficiencies in many higher education institutions in Cameroon in the 1990s. Most importantly, technical schools "did not provide meaningful, vocationally oriented, practical training because of unmotivated teachers, poor subject planning, limited resources, and a complete separation of universities from the world of work." Furthermore, management deficiencies coupled with an overly centralized decision-making process often made it difficult for schools to respond to local conditions and the needs and preferences of students or teachers. These analysts note that at the turn of the century, when the Cameroonian government and external actors sought to address

these problems, both seemed acutely aware of the need for major reforms.3.2. Weaknesses of Bilingualism at tertiary level

Kouega (1999) analysed the nature of bilingual education in French and English in Cameroonian higher education. From a sociolinguistic point of view, observations and interviews showed that 80% of the courses at this level of education are taught in French, as there are fewer English-speaking lecturers than French-speaking ones. Therefore, English-speaking students are less privileged and have to make a lot of efforts to succeed (Usman 1993).

In their 1998 project evaluation report, World Bank analysts reviewed the conditions that inspired this higher education project in Cameroon, while also pointing out important problems in Cameroon's higher education system that could be solved through a public-private partnership training model. According to the analysts (World Bank 1997):

- i) The higher education in Cameroon has its root in the traditional francophone African model with almost all students in full degree courses.
- ii) Few courses in the higher education in Cameroon link to labour market;
- iii) There is no involvement of the private sector in programme selection and curriculum content;

- iv) Virtually, all financing (apart from small student fees introduced in 1993) was provided and enrolled by the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MINEFI).

Nguepi (2022) brought out the positive and negative effects of bilingualism in private higher education.

4. Methodology

4.1. Setting of the study

The research was carried out in four private higher institutes located in the west region of Cameroon; the names and academic ladder are disclosed in the table below. What motivated us to evaluate the effect of bilingualism in the private higher educational sector: case of UdM Bangangté, ISSTN Dschang, IESF Dschang and THIB Bafoussam, is the fact that these higher institutes offer bilingual teaching programmes to their students by teaching in French and English; and also making sure that all administrative documents and certificates are written in both official languages. By doing this, they are implementing bilingualism in their various institutes. The targeted population of the study is the students of the various chosen private Higher Institute. The research population for this study is made up of level 100 to 300 students. The detailed description of the Institutes under which we carried our study is described below.

Table 1: The Academic ladder of the chosen Private Higher Institutes

Name of the Institute	Types of institution	Date of creation	Duration (years)	Certificate obtained
THIB	PRIVATE	29th Jan 2018	4	HND, BTS, HPD, BACHELOR
IESF	Private and Public	18th Sept 2015	7	HND, DESP
ISSTN	Private and Public	12 Jan 2005	17	BTS and Licence Professionnelle
UdM	Private University	Founded in 1994 then established in October 2000	28	Professional Bachelor, Master and Ph.D

Source: Sample elicited from each Institute's website Pages.

4.2. Informants

For the survey, three sets of people were contacted: students, second language facilitators and administrative staff members in

charge of academic affairs. The first two groups received questionnaires while the last group was interviewed.

From each institute, students were randomly selected, and they all filled on their various campuses. table 2 below shows the sample collected from the four various institutes.

Table 2: student population sample from the four private higher institutes

Background of study	Gender	Université des Montagnes	Higher Institute of Science and Technology Nanfah	Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur Foyaguem	Tchonang Higher Institute of Baféoussam (THIB) Campus A & B
Francophone	Male	/	21	4	15
	female	2	7	17	17
Anglophone	Male	/	1	6	20
	female	3	1	3	8
Total		5	30	30	60

Source: Sample from compiled information in section A of Students' questionnaire

The second set were second language facilitators that teach either French to English-speaking students or Anglais to French-speaking students. Overall, five of the teachers (T) were administered questionnaires filled through WhatsApp Application. From compiled information in section A of Teachers' question, T1, T2 and T5 had 5 years of experience in the field with Masters Degrees. T3 had 30 years of experience with a Ph.D and T4 had 10 years in the field with a Bachelor's Degree. T3 & T5 lectured French language to English-speaking students and the rest taught English language to French-speaking students.

Lastly, compiled information collected from informants' interview revealed that nine administrative staff members in charge of academic affairs were interviewed and it permitted the researcher to have first-hand data resources. The Vice-President in charge of Teaching and Research and the Cabinet Direction in Charge of Ethic Committees, the person in charge of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance in Mountain University were first interviewed. In ISSTN, IESF and THIB, both the Directors of the institute and those in charge of Academic Affairs were later interviewed respectively; making a total number of nine informants.

Overall, from the aforementioned, one can observe that informants for this study are made up of 109 people in whom there are 95 students, three English language facilitators, two French language facilitators, three Institute Directors, one Vice-President in Charge of Teaching and Research, one President's Cabinet Direction in Charge of Ethic Committees and quality assurance and four administrative staff Members in charge of Academic Affairs.

4.3. Research instruments and method of data analysis

This part describes in detail the research instruments used to collect data aimed at answering the research questions. Research instruments used in this work were made up of observations, two types of questionnaires, nine interviews.

For this research, campus' premises and classroom observation aimed at checking whether the institutes have one or two sections such as Francophone and/or anglophone sections ; looking at the languages in which pasted administrative documents and assessments' papers are written; and lastly observe languages used in teaching other speciality courses.

Two types of questionnaires were conceived: one for some teachers and the other for the students. On one hand, the teachers' questionnaire was conceived with the aim to check whether the facilitators received a training to teach French or Anglais. It also addressed the skills taught in class. Additionally, it examined the teaching and learning materials used in the teaching process. Furthermore, it evaluated the success of the bilingual communicative approach in meeting the objectives of the programme as well as investigated the teaching approaches recommended for the effective implementation of bilingualism. Finally, it sought possible suggestions to improve bilingual education. Five questionnaires were administered to the language teachers. On the other hand, the students' questionnaire was made up of four parts. First and foremost, section A targeted demographic information on the students. Secondly, section B brings out the didactic methods and techniques employed in learning the official language of education. Thirdly, section C focuses on the learning materials, and the last section brings out the reason why those students choose to study in the private sector of education.

When the questionnaire designed for teachers was not given physically, interviews through phone calls replaced the questionnaire. Interviews questions were then addressed to some teachers and all administrative staff members in response to the research questions. They had different points of view about the outcome of bilingualism in their respective institutes. This is because in the private higher Institutes of the study, at a certain moment, it is not easy to meet the second languages' teachers on campus. Then, their numbers were given to the student researcher to call and either interview them or send the E-copy of the Teacher's questionnaire. The interview with the administrative Staff members in charge of academic affairs focused on when their Institute started practicing or implementing bilingual education; how this bilingualism Implemented and strategies employed as well as the difficulties faced when implementing English-French bilingualism since their Institutes regroups both Francophones and Anglophones students; and their efforts made or proposed solutions to overcome those challenges.

5. Analysis of collected data

This part focuses on data collected by laying emphases on the enrolment procedure, the syllabus, the teaching Materials, teachers' qualification and how assessments take place.

5.1. Enrolment procedure

In these private higher educational institutions, students need to have General Certificate of Education-Advanced Level or Baccalauréat to enrol there. This means that, whether you followed the French sub-system of education or the English sub-system of education, you can apply in those Institutes.

5.2. The syllabus

In the Francophone section, English language is taught for 50 hours yearly and 5 hours per week. The subject comprises five components: Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, Writing and Translation. The last component permits the teacher to evaluate the bilingual competences of the learners in navigating between their first and second language of study.

On the other hand, French language subject is taught for 40 hours per semester and 4 hours per week in the Anglophone section. Subject's components are Vocabulaire, Grammaire, Conjugaison, Expression Orale and Rédaction. Emphasis is laid on "Expression Orale" whereby, some teachers employ words, notions and expressions that belong to the students' field of study during lectures.

5.3. The teaching Materials

The materials used to teach second languages as subjects are didactic materials conceived by the class facilitators. Research shows that there is no book, document or manual that follows the Higher educational curriculum used to teach French and/or English languages in their Institutes. Each teacher that designs his/her programme based on the need of students. They conceive the handout themselves, use variant documents to teach.

5.4. The teachers' qualification

The second language facilitators in the Institutes of study are post-graduates from the University. While some have Master's Degree, some are Ph.D. students or holders of Ph.D. Degree with the exception of one who is also a secondary school teacher who went through Higher Teacher Training College in Cameroon.

5.5. Assessment

Unlike the Public Universities' programmes, private higher Institutes have two semesters. They go for internship after theoretical class work to put in practice what have been taught in class during specialties courses. On one part, second language test paper includes the various components aforementioned. On the other hand, for speciality courses, class tests are in both official languages since in each class there are students who followed the French Sub-System of education and those who followed the English Sub-System of education. Then, it is up to the students to answer in the language that best suit him or her. Also, in Mountain University, most assessments' papers are in two languages each; the first part of the test paper might be in French, and the second part might be in English and vice-versa.

6. Discussion of the findings

6.1. The challenges of implementing bilingual education

This part of the chapter attempts answers to Interview Question 4: "Taken into consideration that your Institute regroups both Francophones and Anglophones, what are the difficulties faced when implementing English-French bilingualism?" The researcher observed that the private Higher Institutes face some problems related to the structure and administration in general.

6.1.1. Challenges encountered by the Administration

The Vice-President in charge of Teaching and Research in the UdM responded that the difficulty they really face in their Institution is the few numbers of bilingual lecturers able to teach both in French and in English. According to him, at the beginning of the implementation of the Text Project explained in the former chapter, the rate of using English language during lectures will be minimal. He further noted that since the student's majority is French-speaking, if a lecturer teaches entirely in English language, a good number of francophone students will face difficulties in following lectures.

According to the Director of IESF, the Institute faces challenges first of all at the level of:

- i. Programming: teachers of the IESF are mostly part-timers and came from Public Universities for some and University Post-graduates. At times, teachers are programmed and they do not come because they are teaching elsewhere. Those of the second language teaching did not really go through a teaching school programme; after their Bachelor Degree (BA) and/or Master Degree (MA), they apply to teach French and English as part-timers. Since they further their studies in the public sector, they do not come on time when they are programmed.
- ii. The number of students: the students' effective is not really much because of the Institute's location and the state of the road. The road has too much pot-holes that discourages a lot of students to apply in IESF and the Institute is a bit hidden and cannot be quickly viewed and admired by passers-by.
- iii. Certification of administrative documents and degrees: between the years 2015/2016 to 2020/2021 in IESF, official certified documents were done in just one language, French whereby, English-speaking students were not satisfied since their degree Attestation were written in French language.

According, the Director in charge of Academic Affairs in Nanfah Higher Institute of Sciences and Technology, the Institute is

dominantly French-speaking but both French and English-Speaking students are admitted. So, when Anglophone students before applying are conscious of where they are going to study and prepare themselves psychologically; before their second year, they are adapted to the system. The real challenge French-speaking and English-speaking students face is language. While English-speaking Students at the beginning assimilates courses slowly, French-speaking have difficulties in reading some English specialized books.

6.1.2. Challenges encountered by the language teachers

The practice of bilingual teaching in the Private Higher Institutes of the study faces challenges at the level of the content and the context of study. In total, five teachers responded to the interview question: "What are the difficulties you face in teaching the second language?". At the level of the content, according to all the teachers, there are no didactic materials adapted to the students' educational programme and even if there are, they are rare. The educational curriculum's content does reflect the various student's field of study. According to T1, the MINEDUC came up with a programme that lecturers have to follow the competency-based approach that will permit the learners to apply what is taught in class in the society too; but in educational ground there is no appropriate manual having terms and notions related to a specific field. For example, when teaching French language to Banking and Finance students, the teacher needs teach using the business jargon; for the health students, the teacher ought to use the medical jargon, etc.

At the level of the linguistic context, two teachers of French language complained that most English-speaking students come from a pure Anglophone zone and the lecturer is obliged to make the students understand the lessons. The teacher needs to follow each student up for him/her to assimilate French language. Three teachers of English language said that most francophone students put less interest in learning English language and face a lot of difficulties since they were neglecting Anglais in the secondary level. They lack basics in English and this makes the teacher to go to square one notion for them to retain something at the end of the academic year.

6.1.3. Challenges encountered by students

Studying in a second language is never easy, especially French and English learners in African countries to whom those languages are not native language to them. Just as there are challenges faced in learning a foreign language, there are also problems faced in learning in the second foreign language of the student. Observations done by the researcher in the various Institutes of the study came out that, most students face a lot of difficulty in understanding lectures in their second language of education. From the data gotten from the field, the researcher remarked that:

- i. Limited Learning Environment: on one hand, all the students responded that there are no or limited appropriate didactic materials that facilitate French and English as second official languages. On the other hand, what happen outside classrooms in communication matters most. This is because students only make an effort to speak French and English correctly in class under the supervision of a lecturer. 57.89 % of both French and English-speaking students said that they prefer to interact in Camfranglais (Boko language) because they will not respect any grammatical and syntactical language norms of French and English. While 26.31 % of

English-speaking students they use French outside classrooms often because they are from francophone families, 10.52 % of the English-speaking students only manage to receive and understand lectures they are from a purely Anglophone zone where French language is less considered not only by students but also by the community. Meanwhile, 5.26 % of French-speaking students said that they are willing to learn English because it is one of the most spoken language, but the number of hours allocated to language course is not enough for them to learn and speak it fluently and more to that, they are in a complete francophone zone and it is not easy to see someone with whom they can practice English after classes.

- ii. Students do not take second language classes seriously: the researcher observed that students think that, the same English or French they speak after classes is the same they will write in their exams; they are not committed to language learning. Students of the Institutes of the study do not study French and English as much as they study other subjects. 90 (94.73 %) of student population affirmed that they usually drop their language books after class and wait for the next class. T3 emphasises on the fact that, students do not study pronunciation and learn new words; little problem that they could check in the dictionary or Google research, they bring it to him during classes. T2 on his side said that when some of his students make mistakes and are corrected either by the teacher or classmate (s), they often reply that "It is not my language and it will not stop me from doing well in my professional courses."
- iii. For bilingual students, they face several challenges in learning because they are tempted to mixt French and English Words when conversing and navigating from L1 to L2 is at time challenging because of language interference.
- iv. Also 47.61 % Anglophones from the Institutes of the Study said that it is difficult for them to cope as Anglophones in a Francophone Institutes because they need to do a lot of effort in order to adapt to the system and be at the same level with their French-speaking classmates.

6.2. The way forward and prospects

This part of study brings out some efforts made by the Administration, the teachers and the students in order to overcome the challenges they face years back and daily in implementing Bilingual policy and obtain good success in Exams.

In UdM, the President has been making sure that the person in charge of promoting Bilingualism Policy within and across University should review and sensitize bilingual lecturers so that they will officially establish The Text Project on Bilingualism policy in UdM, they will be enough lecturers to promote that policy by teaching completely or partially in English language also. According to the Vice-President in Charge of Teaching and Research, over twenty (20) English-speaking students having difficulties in following lectures in class have been pinpointed with the aim to help them by organizing catch-up classes, so that, they will not feel left out on their own. He ends up by proposing that the lecturers should take their time to do things in the simplest possible manner; in some cases, the lecturer is call upon to translate some notions.

The Director in charge of Academic Affairs of ISSTN said that the efforts they make for English-Speaking students not to be left out

in class is to send Bilingual Teachers to follow-up students so that they can well understand what were taught in French language. Also, T4 said that at the beginning, French language is a problem for Anglophone students but in a long run, they adapt themselves. He said that he usually employs some English notions and uses Yemba to explain at time since most students are from the Menoua Division.

At the level of teachers' absences, when they are programmed, the Director of IESF proposed that in years to come, they will look for a doublet for each teacher so that when they are occupied with other activities in other Institutions, the students will not be left untaught. Also, he said that to increase students effective especially the English-speaking ones, they need to advertise the Institute's Strength and qualities.

7. Conclusion

The primary interest of this paper was to examine the outcome of bilingual education in private universities in Cameroon. Data collected revealed that the private higher institutes of study implement bilingualism policy by creating bilingual structures that enable their various students to not only undergo quality bilingual education but also to interact in and out of the campus without linguistic background. Furthermore, findings showed that these private universities strategies of implementing bilingualism vary and it equally depends on the lecturer's methods and approaches. They also looked forward to implementing bilingualism policy by recruiting Bilingual lecturers with abilities to teach in both French and English languages.

Recommendations

In order for the Cameroonian government to achieve its goal of developing bilingual citizens, the bilingual policy should start from basic education. It should also introduce specific language teaching programs tailored to each student's field of study. The Ministry of Higher Education should develop learning aids that support the second language teaching process.

It could also be suggested that MINESUP establish a bilingual teacher training academy to train experienced teachers who can teach French or English or both without language barriers. Private university libraries should also be equipped with language materials, including general and specialized bilingual dictionaries, voice reading programs and documents, and audio language aids that enable learners to hear and pronounce the correct pronunciation of words.

Teachers are required to use rich teaching materials, adopt teaching methods and approaches that are suitable for the learners' situation; focus on the communicative aspect, and always supervise and encourage students. As scholars add new words and word meanings every day, they should also update their notes.

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