

**Multilingual Cameroon**  
**Policy, Practice, Problems and Solutions**

by

**Tove Rosendal**



**UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG**

DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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## Abbreviations

ACDI	Agence Canadienne pour le Développement International. See also CIDA.
ALCAM	Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun
ANACLAC	Association Nationale des Comités de Langues Camerounaises/National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees
BASAL	Basic Standardisation of All African Unwritten Languages Project
CABTAL	The Cameroonian Association for Bible Translation and Literacy/Association Camerounaise pour la Traduction de la Bible et pour l'Alphabétisation
CAPDA	Consortium d'Appui aux Actions pour la Promotion et le Développement de l'Afrique
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency. See ACDI.
CLA	Centre de linguistique appliquée/Centre of Applied Linguistics
CONAL	Communication Network of African Languages
CPE	Cameroon Pidgin English
CRTV	Cameroon Radio Television
IDT/MDG	International Development Targets/ Millennium Declaration Development Goals
L1	First language
LOI	Language of Instruction
LWD	Language of Wider Distribution
MT	Mother tongue
OL	Official language

MINEDUC	Ministry of National Education
NACALCO	see ANACLAC
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PIDC	Programme international pour le développement de la communication
PROPELCA	Projet de recherche operationelle pour l'enseignement des langues au Cameroun / Operational Research Programme for Language Education in Cameroon
RFI	Radio France Internationale
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics/SIL International
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund

## Preface

This essay is based on findings collected in the area of Yaounde in Cameroon in February 2004 as part of a preparatory course in research methodology. It thus reflects the linguistic situation as encountered in 2004. Where possible, language policy issues were further studied from abroad and updated. The field trip to Cameroon was funded by University of Gothenburg, Department of Oriental and African Languages. My profound thanks go to Karsten Legère for invaluable guidance, feedback and support. I am also deeply grateful to Christina Thornell for encouragement and help in settling in Yaounde. I thank especially the former Vice-Chancellor of Yaounde University, Sammy Beban Chumbow, staff members at the Department of African languages and Linguistics, University of Yaounde I as well as Hubert Nkoumou, who assisted me in Cameroon.

Tove Rosendal  
Gothenburg, December 2008



## 1. Introduction

When the British established commercial hegemony in the coastal zone of Cameroon in the early 19th century, the region had since 1472 witnessed contact with Europeans, especially the Portuguese. The first explorers and traders were later replaced by the Germans, who in 1884 proclaimed the coastal area a protectorate and advanced into the interior where an additional area was acquired from the French.

French and British troops occupied the region during World War I. After the war, Cameroon was divided into French and British zones which became League of Nations mandates and later, in 1946, United Nations trust territories. On 1 January 1960, that part of Cameroon which was under French administration was declared independent. The British territory was divided into two administrative zones. In 1961 the northern zone voted for union with Nigeria, the southern for incorporation into Cameroon, which became a federal republic. In 1972 the unitary state of Cameroon was founded.

Situated in the west of Central Africa, Cameroon has ten administrative provinces,<sup>1</sup> of which two so called Anglophone (the Northwest and the Southwest provinces) and the remaining eight Francophone: Adamawa, Centre, East, Far North, Littoral, North, West and South.<sup>2</sup> The estimated population is 16,380,005 inhabitants (CIA 2006) living on a surface area of 475,442 km<sup>2</sup>.

The adult literacy rate<sup>3</sup> is estimated to be 67.9 percent (UNDP 2005). Other sources give a lower rate, e.g. Essono (2001) claims that 40 percent of the population is illiterate in English or in French, a figure which is probably too high. Statistics show a positive development as to literacy (UNDP 2003).<sup>4</sup>

The largest ethnic groups are the Fang (19.6%), the Bamiléké and the Bamum (18.5%), the Douala, the Lumus and the Bassa (14.7%). Other major groups are the Fulani (Peul), the Tikar, the Mandara and the Maka.

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<sup>1</sup> Before 1984 Cameroon had 7 provinces.

<sup>2</sup> The terms Anglophone and Francophone here signify that the official language of the province is either English or French and does not refer to actual linguistic competence or L1.

<sup>3</sup> As education in Cameroon, from class one on, uses French or English (depending on province) both as medium and as subject, literacy here refers to literacy in one of these languages.

<sup>4</sup> Literacy rate 1990: 57.9%. Literacy rate 2001: 72.4%.

There is a strong urbanisation tendency in Cameroon. 49.6% of the population is estimated to live in urban areas (UNDP 2003). The urbanisation is due to population growth coupled with the effect of village impoverishment (Nana Nzepa n.d.). The urban population has doubled over the last three decades.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the rather complex colonial past and foreign domination, two subsystems of education co-exist in Cameroon; one system based on the British model and the other based on the French educational system.

The colonial past has substantially shaped the present day linguistic situation; there are two ex-colonial languages, English and French, as official languages<sup>6</sup> – a rather unique situation in Africa. Cameroon is however in particular interesting due to its multitude of African languages belonging to three of the four language phyla existing in Africa. These languages are called national languages in official documents.<sup>7</sup>

The Cameroonian language policy which takes just English and French into account (hence called a bilingual policy in official documents) is often referred to as a unifying measure (Echu 2003a). This unification policy is said to avoid ethnic rivalry. The idea of unity through the use of the former colonial languages will be discussed. Further on, this paper deals with how decisions and laws are institutionalised, both in status planning and in corpus planning.

The current position and use of the Cameroonian languages is the focus of this paper. To be able to fully understand the present situation it is necessary to outline the basic historic development of the linguistic situation and the colonial history, the latter reflected in policy documents. The purpose is to see whether the official view on the national languages has changed over the years or not. The factors which might have influenced a change in policy are focused on.

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<sup>5</sup> The urbanisation has grown from 26.9% in 1975 to 48.9% in 2000 (Nana Nzepa n.d.). The estimated urbanisation rate for 2015 is 58.9%. The figures are compatible with the Human Development Index (UNDP 2003) which has 49.6% for 2001 and 58.9% as estimated urban settlement in 2015. The International/Millennium Declaration Development Goals country report on Cameroon (IDT/MDG Progress 2001) claims 49.2% for 1999.

<sup>6</sup> I.e. languages with legal status which serve as administrative languages.

<sup>7</sup> The term *national languages* has also been adopted in all official documents in Cameroon referring to all languages of African origin which have been in the country for centuries. To use the term *national languages* in this way was decided at a meeting of the National Council for Cultural Affairs December 18-22, 1974. This term is also used here throughout as an equivalent to Cameroonian African languages.

## 2. Focus, methodology and earlier studies

This paper is a macro-sociolinguistic study.<sup>8</sup> It will give both a historical and a present day overview of the linguistic situation in Cameroon, based on a review of earlier research combined with interviews and findings *in situ* in Cameroon. At the same time, the findings will be related to the political framework which is marked by several laws, by-laws and directives. The theoretical discussion will also be linked to the pragmatic use of the languages in different domains of communication in the Cameroonian society.

The paper is based on findings from a study trip conducted in the area of Yaounde in Cameroon in February 2004. This is supplemented by Internet and library research. Internet sources which are used are found in the reference list. Written material constituted the primary source of the study. Information was also collected through observations and interviews with people working in administration, in the judiciary system, in education on different levels and with university staff working for the promotion of national languages in Cameroon. Even media workers, staff of NGOs and other organisations as well as individuals were contacted. The interviewees were selected with regard to giving additional and more profound information about core issues. It was also a way of verifying information displayed in written sources and thus a method of confirming the relevance of the data. The interviews provided a rather authentic picture of the situation, together with academic papers and other written contributions. The non standardised and non structured interviews, most of them conducted in French, were taped. Notes were additionally taken at place. The data elicited was later compared with other available sources.

Some information in this paper is taken from Internet articles. The use of the Internet may be problematic as the data can frequently not be verified and thus the reliability of the information may be questioned. Sometimes the information is rather fragmentary, incomplete or even misleading.<sup>9</sup> However, as a way of complementing other sources, the electronic material may be of great value. For this country study most Internet sources provided a valuable basic picture of some of the domains that were chosen for further investigation *in situ* in Cameroon.

The terminology which was found in written sources was not free of contradictions and inconsistencies. Most sources, both written and oral, were in French. The French terminology sometimes differs from the terminology used in English. English variants have been chosen, when ever

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<sup>8</sup> As described in general by e.g. Baylon (2002).

<sup>9</sup> A net based newspaper article was e. g. found saying that PROPELCA was implemented in all ten provinces in Cameroon. The ANACLAC annual report, however, says that this is true for only eight provinces.

available. Even if Cameroon is officially a bilingual country, there has been a problem tracing official texts in English. Some laws and decrees which were only available in French had therefore to be translated.

As for terminological clarity, the terms “mother tongue” and “L1” are used in this paper with the same signification. The terms “national language”, “Cameroonian language” or “African language” are all denoting the languages of ancestral origin, the heritage languages. The term “lingua franca” denotes “a language which is used in communication between speakers who have no native language in common” (Trudgill 2003) or to use the SIL International (n.d.) definition: “the language people use to communicate across language and cultural boundaries.”

A lingua franca is understood as a synonym of “language of wider distribution” (LWD).<sup>10</sup> Both terms refer to inter-languages, both European and African. They are therefore used here as synonyms denoting equivalent concepts, i.e. the role of a language which enables speaker of different languages to communicate with each other. The term “language policy” is understood here as the total of choices made by the state or a governmental organ (the political executive management), thus defining the role or the use of one or several languages in society, especially in official and other formal domains. These choices may be either formally stated in documents or reflected in institutionalised language use within formal, state-controlled domains.

Earlier studies such as Stumpf (1979) and Chumbow (1980) outline the pre-independence language policy. The choice of a bilingual language policy was, as stated by Chumbow (1980:289), necessary as a temporary measure. It was both a pragmatic and a political decision, not reflecting active language planning. Both authors describe in particular the initial efforts and initiatives of promoting the national languages in the educational system in Cameroon in the 1960s and early 1970s. Later publications as Chumbow and Bobda (1996; 2000) have discussed language policy in Cameroon. Issues such as possible strategies of development and integration of the national languages in education have been treated by Tadadjeu (1995) and Tabi-Manga (2000). In addition to an analysis of language policy and planning, Bitjaa Kody (2005) has studied the use and vitality of Cameroonian languages in contact with French both in rural and urban areas.

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<sup>10</sup> With the same implications as the French *langues véhiculaires*.

### **3. Language policy in Cameroon – historical overview**

In the following part, the main historical steps prior to the current language policy are summarized. The first sub-section gives an overview of the period before independence, the second section describes the period from 1960 up to today.

#### **3.1 Pre-independence period**

During the German colonial period, German was used as language of administration. Throughout the German colonial rule, African languages were described to have had "a somewhat comfortable position as far as linguistic communication is concerned" (Echu 2003a:3), as German and American missionaries preferred Cameroonian languages as Basaa, Bulu, Duala, Ewondo and Mungaka for evangelism and teaching. Bamum and Fulfulde were used for propagating Muslim faith.

As mandate and trusteeship administrations respectively, Great Britain and France preferred different principles of rule. The British administration practiced indirect rule, which implied the use of indigenous authorities and languages. The French administration applied a policy of assimilation which excluded African languages from most formal domains.

The French language policy of Cameroon is reflected in official documents from the period. Bitjaa Kody (2001a) refers to directives from 1920 and 1924 which sharply prohibit the use of African languages in education. The French rule had, and still has, a major influence on the status and use of the national languages, as shown by Bitjaa Kody (2001a; 2001b; 2005).<sup>11</sup>

#### **3.2 Post-independence period**

In 1960, at independence, French was adopted as the official language in the part of the country that was earlier administered by France. English was given the same status in the former British territory which was re-unified with Cameroon. In 1961 the new federal republic institutionalised bilingualism, ignoring the multilingual reality. Schools were encouraged to offer the official language not used in the province, and bilingual secondary schools were established. The academic results were rather poor; less than fifty per cent enrolled in exams in both languages (Chumbow 1980:291).

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of 1961 and of the United Republic of 1972 had the same spirit as the French policy of the 1920s, but was based on the idea of national unity (Bitjaa Kody 2001a). Bilingualism

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<sup>11</sup> The study will be discussed in part 6.2

was propagated as the solution to nation building. Cameroon thus followed the prevailing idea of the nineteenth century of achieving national integration through a single common language or a foreign language. Due to the rather unique history of Cameroon of being administered by two European powers and the cultural and linguistic impact of the colonial past, both English and French were chosen as a unifying instrument.

Since the early years of independence the national languages have been restricted to informal domains mainly being used at home. Their use in education, which existed in some private schools during the foreign rule in spite of the official French assimilation policy, disappeared almost totally after independence.

From the 1970s on, scholars and language experts have been working in favour of mother tongue education. These early initiatives will be discussed in section 5.4. They will be related to changes in language policy which have taken place and are reflected in laws and decrees that were promulgated during the last decade.

## **4. The languages of Cameroon**

### **4.1 The national languages of Cameroon - an overview**

Cameroon belongs to those sub-Saharan countries which have the highest number of African languages (see Appendix II) and a far-reaching fragmentation. It is hard to state the exact number of languages in Cameroon. “Ethnologue”, the SIL International reference publication (Gordon 2005), lists 279 living languages. Other sources state a lower number. Echu (2003a) refers to 247 languages, claiming that some of the languages in Ethnologue are varieties of the same language. Further, Onguene Essono, linguist and teacher at Ecole Normale Supérieure, University of Yaounde, finds the SIL figures to be too high (pers. comm. 21 February 2004). For him, the number is likely to be around 250 languages instead of nearly 300.

In 1974 the project Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM) was initiated. This resulted in a description as well as a geographic overview of the language groups in Cameroon. The findings of the project were published in 1983 (Dieu and Renaud) and 1991 (Breton and Foutung). The latter list 248 national languages.<sup>12</sup> Bitjaa Kody, Department of African Languages and Linguistics, Yaounde I, claims that the present number of identified national languages is 282 (pers. comm. 13 February 2004). This

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<sup>12</sup> ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983) identifies 239 national languages.

point of view was strongly contested by Jean-Marie Essono, Head of the Department of African Languages and Linguistics in an interview on 16 February 2004. He suggested that there are only 20 different national languages in Cameroon. The rest of the languages were considered inter-comprehensible variants of these twenty different African languages. A large number of glossonyms may thus linguistically be reduced to a reasonable number of dialect clusters.<sup>13</sup>

The most commonly used criterion to distinguish a dialect from a language is mutual intelligibility. The term “variety of a language” is often used when speakers understand other varieties. These varieties may be called dialects which belong to a dialect cluster that frequently is identified with a particular glossonym. The intelligibility as a parameter requires the establishment of some sort of intelligibility threshold. SIL International uses lexico-statistical calculations, questionnaires and intelligibility tests. 70 percent intelligibility distinguishes dialects from languages (Bitjaa Kody pers. comm. 13 February 2004). As a comparison, the intelligibility between French and Italian is 89 percent and 75 percent between French and Spanish (Gordon 2005). The Scandinavian languages would be considered dialects of the same language according to this definition. A social and political feature is frequently added to intelligibility to distinguish a language from a dialect. Trudgill (n.d.) states that whether or not “a variety of a language should be considered a language or a dialect is by no means entirely a linguistic decision. Cultural, social, political and historical factors may be very heavily involved also.” Thus, social and cultural aspects play a prominent role when it comes to language status matters as considered by the speech community, and whether or not a language has an own glossonym. Essono (pers. comm. 16 February 2004) claimed that a language is a “dialecte qui a réussi politiquement, économiquement ou militairement” and is an abstraction which groups inter-comprehensible dialects. A reclassification of the Cameroonian national languages was also claimed to be needed, with the base in Guthrie’s classification but with adjustments of some languages which have wrongly been classified as separate languages.<sup>14</sup> Such a reclassification, however, seems impossible to do without revising the whole classification system.

From a linguistic point of view, the distinction between language and dialect is arbitrary. Obviously, to reduce the number of national languages to twenty has political dimensions. This position is linked to diverging points of view regarding the pragmatic implementation and thus status

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<sup>13</sup> In his book *L’Ewondo langue bantou du Cameroun* (Essono 2000:10), Essono argues, less forcefully, that many of the Cameroonian languages in reality are dialectal variants of the same language.

<sup>14</sup> Thus according to Essono, Sanaga (quoted by Guthrie as A60) does not exist.

planning in the wake of the 1997 Cameroonian constitution and the decrees that were subsequently issued.

#### *4.1.1 The language families of Cameroon*

Despite uncertainty about the exact number of languages in Cameroon, the prevailing opinion is that Cameroon has between 250 and 300 languages represented in three of the four language phyla of Africa - Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo.<sup>15</sup> Only the Khoisan family is not represented at all. Table 1 below shows the number of languages which are said to belong to the three language families.

*Table 1  
Numeric overview of national languages in Cameroon and language phylum<sup>16</sup>*

<b>PHYLUM</b>	<b>NUMBER OF LANGUAGES</b>
Afro-Asiatic	60
Nilo-Saharan	2
Niger- Congo (Niger-Kordofanian)	215
Unclassified (Bung, Luo)	2
<b>Total number</b>	<b>279</b>

Ethnologue claims that there are 38 languages with less than 1000 speakers. 13 of these are considered nearly extinct (Gordon 2005). An overview of the languages in Cameroon and an estimation of the number of speakers are given in table 2 below. The speakers of the languages with less than 1000 speakers are normally bilingual in their mother tongue and French or another Cameroonian language and abandon progressively their mother tongue (Zachée Denis Bitjaa Kody pers. comm. 13 February 2004).

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<sup>15</sup> The term Niger-Kordofanian (Greenberg 1963) is widely used in earlier linguistic references and sources referring to the phylum which for a couple of years has mainly be labelled Niger-Congo.

<sup>16</sup> Compilation made on the basis of Gordon (2005) and Echu (2003b).

**Table 2**

***Number of national languages in Cameroon and number of speakers***<sup>17</sup>

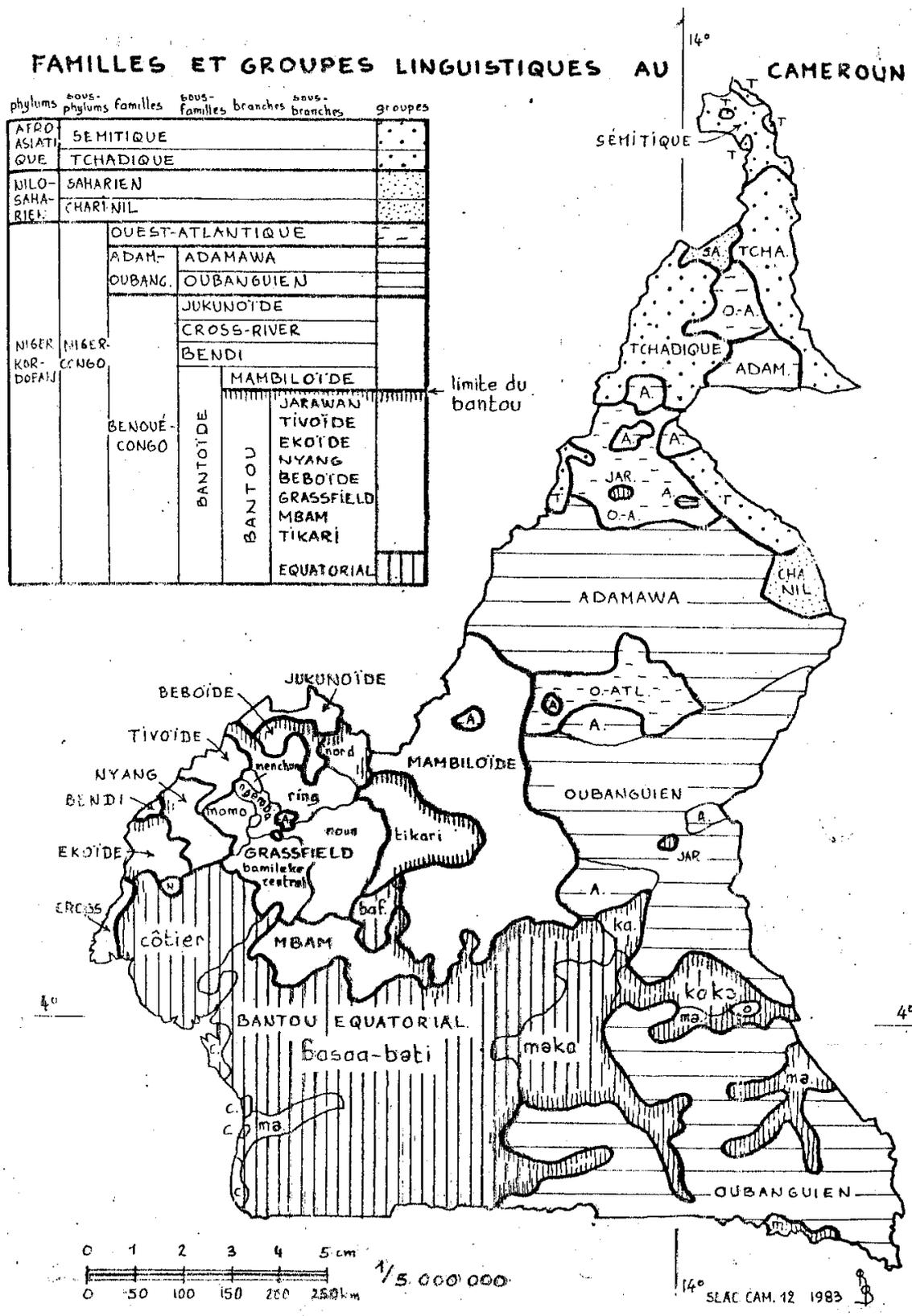
<b>Group</b>	<b>Number of speakers</b>	<b>Number of languages</b>
1	<1.000	38
2	1.000 - 10.000	117
3	10 000 – 100 000	97
4	100.000 – 700.000	16
5	No number given	11
Total		279

To this list French, English and Pidgin English (*Kamtok*) should be added - all languages with more than 2,000,000 second language speakers.

The ALCAM studies identified 9 geographical zones. The classification is based on Greenberg (1963) and Guthrie (1971). The zones are summarized in the overviews below. Figure 1 shows a linguistic map compiled by Dieu and Renaud (1983), which indicates the geographical distribution of different language groups in Cameroon. Table 3 is based on information given by Tabi Manga (2000) and Essono (2001).

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<sup>17</sup> Information extracted from Ethnologue (Gordon 2005).



**Figure 1: Language families and linguistic groups in Cameroon as shown in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983)**

**Table 3**  
**Language zones and language families in Cameroon**<sup>18</sup>

ZONE	PHYLUM	FAMILY
1 and 2	Afro-Asiatic	Shua Arabic  Chadic languages  Chari Nile
	Nilo-Saharan	Saharan
3	Niger-Kordofanian <sup>19</sup>	West Atlantic  Benue-Congo  Adamawa-Ubangi (most)
4	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Guthrie's Bantu language zones:</u>  A90 ( <i>kako</i> group)  A80 ( <i>maka</i> group)  A70 ( <i>beti-fang</i> group)  A50 ( <i>bafia</i> group)  A40 ( <i>basaa</i> group)
5	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Guthrie's Bantu language zone:</u>  A 60 ( <i>sanaga</i> group)
6	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Guthrie's Bantu language zones:</u>  A10 ( <i>lundu</i> group)  A20 ( <i>duala</i> group)  A30 ( <i>bube-benga</i> group)

<sup>18</sup> Based on information in Tabi Manga (2000:71-75) and Essono (2001).

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 15 on the use of the term "Niger-Kordofanian".

7	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Non Bantu Benue-Congo:</u> Jukonoids Cross River Bendi
8	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Non narrow Bantu:</u> Eastern Grassfield
9	Niger-Kordofanian	<u>Non narrow Bantu:</u> Grassfield Tivoids Ekoids Beboids

Tabi Manga (2000) and Bitjaa Kody (2005) are the most recent comprehensive works on the linguistic situation in Cameroon. However, there are some striking omissions in the description of the different languages by Tabi Manga. Guthrie's Bantu language zone A50 is for instance not mentioned at all. According to other sources (e.g. Essono 2001) this group exists in Cameroon. The reason for the omission is not known. Neither does Tabi Manga (2000) mention Nilo-Saharan languages. According to Essono (2001) two Nilo-Saharan languages, i. e. Kanuri and Ngambai, are also spoken in Cameroon. These languages should have been included in zone 1 - 2.

Appendix II gives an overview of the languages existing in Cameroon and their groupings.

#### ***4.1.2 Languages of wider distribution***

As stated above (see 2.) the terms "lingua franca" and "language of wider distribution" (LWD) has a similar definition and denote languages used by speakers with no native language in common.

The need of lingua francas is obvious, considering the substantial number of languages in Cameroon. There are no languages in Cameroon covering the total national territory, with the exception of the official language French, although the latter is a minority language in quantitative terms.

ALCAM identifies 9 national languages which are spoken as LWDs (“langues véhiculaires”) used by different groups living in Cameroon.<sup>20</sup> These LWDs are used at regional or provincial level.

**Table 4**  
***LWDs in different geographical areas<sup>21</sup>***

<b>REGION</b>			
<b>North</b>	<b>Centre, South, East</b>	<b>Littoral</b>	<b>West</b>
Fulfulde <sup>22</sup>	Ewondo	Duala	Pidgin English
Shua Arabic		Basaa	
Hausa			
Kanuri			
Wandala			

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<sup>20</sup> Referred to in Molina (2001) as *ATLAC 1983*. The abbreviation normally used by other sources,(e.g. Maho: Southern Africana Abbreviations,) is ALCAM, referring to *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun*. ALAC (and not ATLAC) is the abbreviation used for *Atlas linguistique de l’Afrique Centrale*. There is thus a certain ambiguity as to which source the article by Molina is referring.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Molina (2001).

<sup>22</sup> The autonym *Fulfulde* has been chosen in the paper referring to the language which often is referred to as *Fulani* (obviously the term for people) in English publications.

# LANGUES VÉHICULAIRES

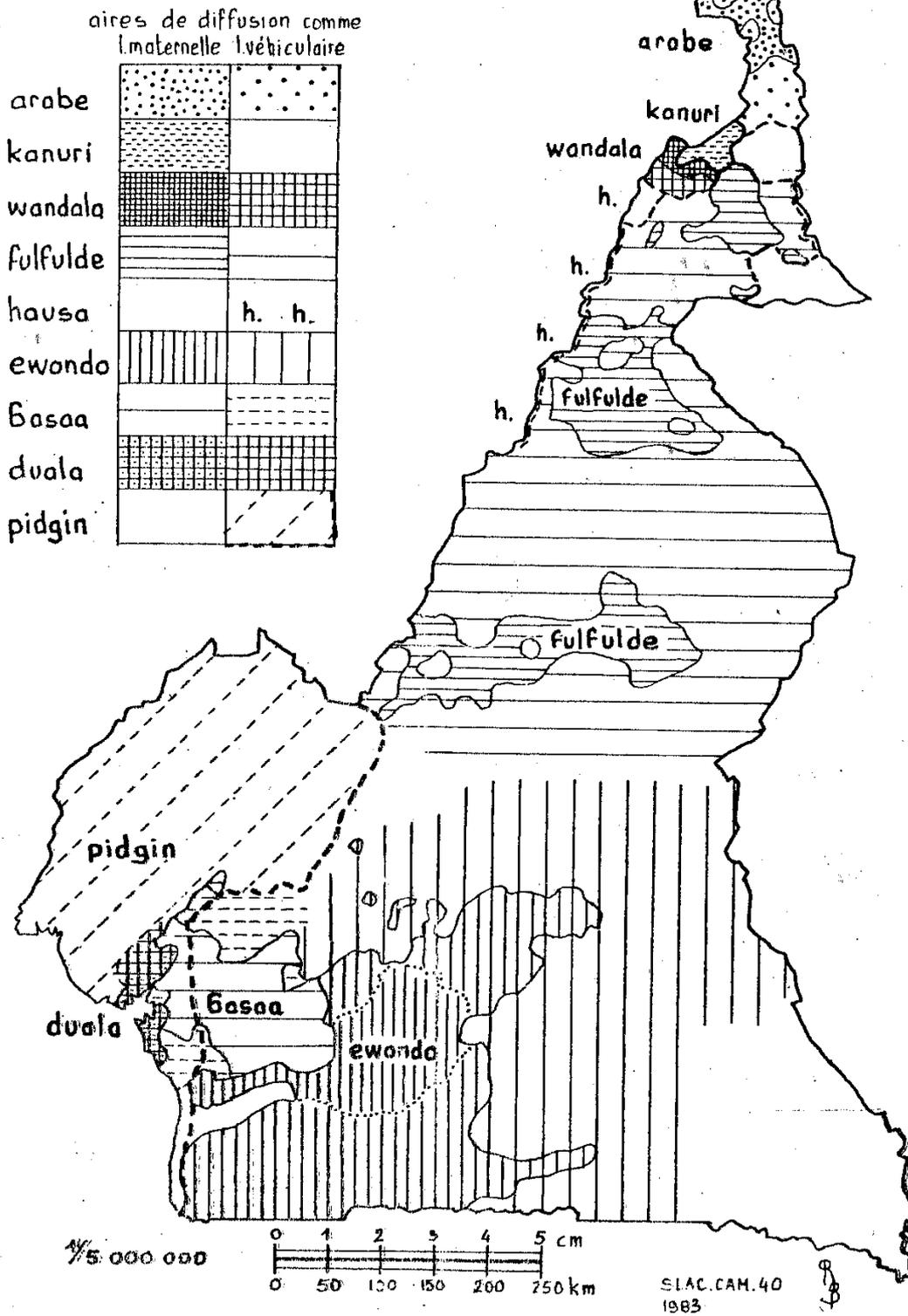


Figure 2: Languages as mother tongue (langue maternelle) and as lingua franca (langue véhiculaire). Source: ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983).

Essono (2001) identifies 13 languages of wider communication used in 5 linguistic zones in the ten provinces of Cameroon. The difference between the ALCAM 1983 overview, as shown in Molina (2001) and Essono (2001) is that according to the latter, Pidgin English is used in a wider area including the Littoral province. Fe'fe' and Gomála are said to be lingua francas in the western provinces. See map of Cameroon, appendix I.

**Table 5**  
***Languages of wider distribution in the provinces of Cameroon<sup>23</sup>***

<b>PROVINCE</b>				
<b>Adamawa North Far North</b>	<b>Littoral</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>Northwest Southwest</b>	<b>East Centre South</b>
Fulfulde	Pidgin English	Gomála	Pidgin English	Beti- Fang <sup>24</sup>
Shua Arabic	Duala	Fe'fe'	Duala	
Hausa	Basaa	Pidgin English	Mungaka <sup>25</sup>	
Kanuri				
Wandala				

Wolf (2001), cited in Echu (2003a) claims that there are three lingua franca zones:

- Fulfulde (Fulani) in the three Northern provinces,
- Pidgin English in the Northwest and Southwest provinces and part of the Littoral and West provinces, and
- a variety of French in the rest of the country.

This seems to be a quite restricted delimitation, only taking into account the most numerous LWDs. It also raises the question of the position of French

<sup>23</sup> Based on information extracted from Essono (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Essono utilises Guthrie's classification of Beti-Fang, but includes the cluster Ewondo, Eton, Bulu and Fang.

<sup>25</sup> Mungaka and Duala were taught and used in schools in the pre-independence period. There is a decline in the usage of these languages as LWDs in these provinces (Sammy Beban Chumbow pers. comm. 2 June 2008).

which simultaneously is one of the two official foreign languages. French plays the role of a language of wider distribution in the Francophone<sup>26</sup> provinces except the three Northern provinces, where Fulfulde is the lingua franca, and the two English-speaking<sup>27</sup> provinces where Pidgin English is the lingua franca.

Echu (2003b) suggests that the role of French, which gradually becomes more important through massive acquisition by Cameroonians, can be traced to the post-independence period. French is now used as a language of wider communication between Anglophones and Francophones, between speakers of Fulfulde and Francophones who do not understand Fulfulde, and among Francophones who do not share a common Cameroonian language (Echu 2003a:3). Similarly Bitjaa Kody (2001b; 2005) argues that French is widely used, especially in urban areas, as a LWD between speakers of different mother tongues, often to the detriment of national languages. The influence of French on the role of the Cameroonian languages will be discussed further in section 6.2.

The Fulfulde lingua franca zone covers the provinces Adamawa, North and Far North. It is spoken as a first language by about 350,000 people and as second language by three million people (Echu 2003b). The number given by Ethnologue is 668,700 (Gordon 2005).

Pidgin English or Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) is not only used in the English speaking provinces, but also as a lingua franca in the Francophone provinces. The number of speakers varies, depending on the source. Hedinger (1987) claims that 75 percent of the population speak it, while Todd (n.d.) suggests that CPE is spoken in some form by at least 50 percent of the population. Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) lists Pidgin English, but has no estimation of the number of speakers. CPE is also called *Kamtok* (from Cameroon Talk).<sup>28</sup> *Kamtok* has several varieties. *Grafi Kamtok* used in the grassfields, liturgical *Kamtok*, Francophone *Kamtok* mainly used in Douala and Yaounde, *Limbe Kamtok* and *Bororo Kamtok*, used by cattle traders. *Kamtok* has been used as a lingua franca in Cameroon since the 1880s. For the last 35 years *Kamtok* has, according to Todd, seen a dramatic change in attitude and, due to more frequent use in churches and media, is accepted for religious purposes and in broadcasting.

In recent years an urban sociolect based on a blend of *Kamtok*, Ewondo, English and French, the Camfranglais or Francamglais, has emerged in Yaounde and Douala, mainly among secondary school students and at the

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<sup>26</sup> This term is used here and subsequently for those provinces or regions that were under French administration before independence, where French is massively promoted.

<sup>27</sup> Analogous to footnote 26 meaning that in these provinces English is prominent as the official language.

<sup>28</sup> As used by Todd (n.d.) in an Internet article on *Kamtok*.

university.<sup>29</sup> It has gained a certain status as a medium of communication between peers (Molina 2001), but is not accepted to the same extent as Pidgin English.

## 4.2 The official languages

As stated in section 3.1 English and French were introduced in Cameroon when British and French administrations followed the German rule. These new powers imposed their languages in administration, as well as in education. The imposition of the two languages succeeded at the detriment of the African languages which were used and promoted by the missionaries. At reunification in 1961, these foreign languages were stipulated as the official languages of Cameroon.

The extent of bilingualism in French and English in Cameroon is hard to estimate. Bilingual proficiency varies from zero to near perfect at the universities, also depending on how semi-bilingualism, functional bilingualism and passive bilingualism are defined. As the main focus of this paper is on the national languages, the use and status of French and English will not be discussed. It is, however, a well known fact that French has a *de facto* popularity over English despite the *de jure* equality as there are no incentives for Francophones to learn English. Francophones get civil servants' jobs without being bilingual whereas the Anglophones learn French because of its dominant status (Chumbow 1980:298, 301). In spite of official bilingualism French is more widely used than English in official and even in formal domains (Echu 2003a:9). The high status of French also influences the use of the national languages, as will be discussed in 6.2.

## 5. Language policy - development and implementation

Language policy deals with decisions about the status and use of one or more languages in society. The policy may be overt, i. e. explicitly stating language rights in legal documents, or covert, i. e. not mentioning any language in documents or otherwise, thus being silent about languages and their role in society. The following overview presents a summary of the language policy of Cameroon as reflected in legal and official documents.

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<sup>29</sup> According to informant Simon Pierre Mani, Yaounde, on 7 February 2004, the use of Camfranglais as a codified language among adolescents started in 1986/87 when he was in grade 6. Probably the use started as early as in the 1970s (Kiessling 2005:57). Camfranglais was and still tends to be prohibited by the school authorities. Students speaking it are punished.

## 5.1 Policy statements and their focus

As stated above, Cameroon adopted English and French as official languages, when the federal republic came into existence in October 1961. Official documents regarding the status of these languages were not altered during nearly four decades. It was only in the aftermath of the 1996 new constitution (approved by the National Assembly in that year) that various laws and decrees regulating the official language policy were adopted:

- The Constitution: Law no. 96-06 of 18 January 1996 / re-edited February 1996
- Law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Ministry of Education
- Decree no. 2002/004 of January 2002, Structure of Ministry of National Education
- Decree no. 98/003 of 8 January 1998, Ministry of Culture
- General instruction No. 2 of 4 June 1998, Organisation of the work of the Government
- Law no. 005 of 16 April 2001 on Secondary education

For the first time in Cameroonian history the national languages were accounted for in 1996 in the Constitution.

The Constitution stipulates the official status of French and English in Cameroon, but adds: “(The state – T.R) shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages” (République du Cameroun 1996: Part 1, art. 1, paragraph 3). This document also guarantees, *inter alia*, the protection of minorities and indigenous people’s rights and the ratification of numerous human rights conventions. In addition, it states that Cameroon is a decentralised state which recognises traditional values (article 1, paragraph 2). See appendix III for the full text of preamble and Part 1.

The Education law passed by the National Assembly in April 1998 gives the guidelines for education in Cameroon. This law states that the “general purpose of education shall be to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and their smooth integration into society bearing in mind prevailing economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors” (République du Cameroun 1998a: Part 1, section 4).

In part 1 (general provisions, section 5), article 4 states that one of the objectives of education is to “promote national languages”. The major part of the law is concerned with the organization of the bilingual education through the two sub-systems: The English-speaking and the French-speaking sub-system, thus “reaffirming the national option for

biculturalism.”<sup>30</sup> (République du Cameroun 1998a: Chapter 1, Section 15, 1). The full text is given in appendix IV.

The constitution of 1996 and the 1998 Education law were supplemented in January 2002, when a decree on the structure of the Ministry of Education was issued. This decree directs the provincial inspections (*Inspections Pédagogiques Provinciales*) to be responsible for the national languages. The national languages are in this paragraph mentioned at the end after a long list of languages of foreign origin: English, French, Latin, Greek, German, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Italian and Portuguese. It states:

Les Inspections Provinciales de Pédagogie sont réparties ainsi qu’il suit: - l’inspection Provinciale de Pédagogie chargée de l’enseignement des lettres et des arts, des langues: français, anglais, latin, grec, allemand, arabe, espagnol, chinois, japonais, italien, portugais, langues nationales (République du Cameroun 2002: Section II, article 107, 3).

This is apparently the only document to date which deals with the national languages of Cameroon where implementation is taken into account.

The fourth decree listed above (No. 98/003) states that the Ministry of Culture is responsible for registration of organisations and institutions working with national languages. It also says that the Ministry of Culture is in charge of “l’étude des stratégies de promotion des langues nationales en milieux scolaires et universitaire, et à travers les médias” (République du Cameroun 1998b: Part VI, chapter II, art. 25). Thus this ministry, through the *Service de langues nationales*, should work with practical promotion and cooperation with other institutions.

## 5.2 The idea of unity in official policy

National unity is a major political objective as formulated by the Cameroonian authorities (Tabi Manga 2000:184). The objective is emphasised in the first section of the constitution:

Le Peuple camerounais, fier de sa diversité linguistique et culturelle, élément de sa personnalité nationale qu’elle contribue à enrichir; **mais profondément conscient de nécessité impérieuse de parfaire son unité**, proclame solennellement qu’il constitue une seule et même nation, .... (République du Cameroun 1996. Emphasis added by author).

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<sup>30</sup> National languages are ignored in this official text, hence the term is constitutionally illegal and irrelevant. If these languages were not ignored, the terms multiculturalism or triculturalism would have been used.

The underlying idea was, as stated previously, to use English and French as a step towards unity from independence on. This is still explicitly stated in official documents as in article three of law no. 98/004 of April 1998 which directs that “The State shall institute bilingualism at all levels of education as a factor of national unity and integration” (République du Cameroun 1998a).

Prior to the 1996 constitution, any focus on national languages was considered as working against the national unity (pers. comm. Etienne Sadembouo 10 February 2004). The constitution of 1996, however, made working with national languages much easier. For the first time the 1996 constitution as well as the laws advocate the protection and promotion of the national languages.

As mentioned in the introduction of the paper the bilingual language policy at independence is regarded by many linguists as a pragmatic choice rather than a political choice. The use of the term “national languages” referring to all heritage languages in Cameroon, however, may possibly be said to reflect the idea of nationality linked to a national language, along with the idea of language-nation-states which developed in the post French revolution era and has continued to influence policy in Francophone Africa. This term further expresses a semantic dualism covering both a geographical meaning (national territory) and an ideological dimension.

In the 1960s and early 70s a number of African states chose to define their ancestral languages as “national”, according to Brann (1994:130) mostly under the influence of communist ideology. Whether or not the Cameroonian choice was influenced by other states as Benin, Ethiopia, Angola or Mozambique is not possible to tell. It is nevertheless interesting to note that the use of this term was decided upon in 1974 (see footnote 7) which was also the year, when Ethiopia identified all Ethiopian languages as “national”.

The choice of foreign languages as official languages was a measure taken by the state by arguing that this step contributes towards avoiding ethnic conflict. There was a genuine fear that speakers or users of Cameroonian languages would revolt if their languages were not selected. In the 1970s this is shown in the suppression of the teaching of national languages such as Basaa, Bulu, Ewondo, Duala, Fulfulde, Medumba, Fe´fe´ and Gomala which had started in the 1960s at the University of Yaounde (Bot Ba Njock, pers. comm. 24 February 2004). This fear might also be linked to the decision in 1974 to use the term “national languages” for all Cameroonian languages, to give the impression of equality in status (Echu 2003a:3).

### 5.3 Implementation of current policy

Statements about languages in official documents are important expressions of political will, but verbal declarations are only one side of a multifaceted problem. Use at grassroot level as well as the implementation and use in selected domains have to be examined.

The bilingual policy implies that official documents and laws are published in both languages. The English–French bilingualism has nevertheless been on a theoretical level. French has since reunification been the dominant language and the only one leading to social mobility and employment in formal domains.

According to officials there have not yet been changes in the educational system with regard to national languages. The languages of instruction are still the official languages English and French. The work with national languages which has been carried out throughout the last thirty years is still based on initiatives of non-governmental organisations in spite of the fact that the National forum on Education (*États généraux de l'éducation*) in 1995 decided to adopt the PROPELCA programme (*Projet de recherche opérationnelle pour l'enseignement des langues au Cameroun /Operational Research Programme for Language Education in Cameroon*)<sup>31</sup> as the model for the implementation of the new laws and policies for education (Sadembouo, pers. comm. 10 February 2004).

The inclusion of the Cameroonian languages into declarations, laws and other official documents, so far, seems to be a lip service. When interviewed in 2004, no official institution had started any implementation of the 1996 constitution.

It is worth noting that the author's search for the governmental office responsible for the new laws revealed that ministries and official institutions were ignorant about the fact that such an office existed. What is even more surprising is that the existence of, for instance, the office of national languages under the Ministry of Culture was unknown to students of linguistics who were engaged in mother tongue promotion activities through co-operation with ANACLAC (*Association Nationale des Comités de Langues Camerounaises*).

The then Minister of Education in his New Year's speech 2004 said that he would issue a government declaration about the national languages and their role in education (Etienne Sadembouo pers. comm. 10 February 2004). If this will be done, Sadembouo considers it likely that the domains of national languages will be fixed and thus, as a consequence, school programs will be worked out. In any case, the regional inspections

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<sup>31</sup> The programmes and work of PROPELCA is described in part 5.4.

(*Inspections provinciales des langues nationales*)<sup>32</sup> are made responsible for national languages in education.

As the official governmental policy has changed during the last years it could be useful to discuss the changes which have taken place in terms of *status planning*. Status planning normally refers to the choice of any language relative to other languages. In defining status planning the government authorizes official institutions to use certain languages. To a certain extent the Cameroonian language policy is advocating a linguistic pluralism, even if the terms used in laws are all about bilingualism. The reality, however, as will be discussed further in part 6, promotes a linguistic assimilation where French is the dominant language to the detriment of national languages (and even English, at least for the time being).

For several decades linguists have worked for the promotion of the national languages, in spite of the lack of an active governmental status planning. The following part will give an account of this work by linguists.

#### **5.4 Research, initiatives and programmes**

Since the early seventies both research and work at the grassroots have been done to make use of the national languages and to set examples of possible practical implementation, mainly in education.

##### **5.4.1 Projects**

National languages have been taught in Cameroon in some private primary and secondary schools for more than 30 years. Since 1981 the programmes have been incorporated in Yaounde University based PROPELCA, which started in 1978.

The objective of the programme is to promote selected national languages through their introduction at primary school level. A bilingual curriculum including mother tongue (MT) and the first official language (OL1) is advocated. According to the PROPELCA ideas, children would learn to read and write in their MT from grade one to three, with a progressive transition from oral practice and writing to mathematics and other subjects. A program including objectives for primary and secondary school levels has been worked out; didactic material has been elaborated. The proposed bilingual teaching is shown in the table below.

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<sup>32</sup> See 5.1 above.

**Table 6**

**The proposed amount of time for mother tongue (MT) education and first official language education (OL1) in primary school, according to PROPELCA<sup>33</sup>**

	<b>MT</b>	<b>OL 1</b>
<b>Class 1</b>	75 %	25 %
<b>Class 2</b>	60 %	40 %
<b>Class 3</b>	40 %	60 %
<b>Class 4 – 7</b>	15 %	85 %

The PROPELCA coordinator Maurice Tadadjeu advocates a trilingual approach, i. e. to master the mother tongue, both orally and in writing, along with English or French, depending on the province the pupil lives in, and finally the other official language or another language of wider distribution, similar to the UNESCO position paper (UNESCO 2003). The PROPELCA programme now includes the following languages:

**Table 7**

***Languages in the PROPELCA programme and geographical areas (provinces)<sup>34</sup>***

<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>PROVINCE</b>
Bafut Babungo Nkwen Meta' Kom Booni Lamnso' Oku Limbum	Northwest province
Ewondo Nugunu	Coast province
Basaa Duala	Coast province
Makaa Kako Koonzime	East province
Fe'fe' Yemba Ghomala' Medumba	West province

<sup>33</sup> Source: National Language Education Programme in Cameroon, PROPELCA (1995).

<sup>34</sup> Extracted from Rapport Annuel 2000-2001. ANACLAC/NACALCO (2001).

Mundani Denya Kenyang Ejagham	Southwest Province
Guidar	North Province
Mafa Mofu-North Mofu-Gudur Podoko Fulfulde	Far North

The PROPELCA language model is referred to as “extensive trilingualism” by Tadadjeu (Echu 2003a), implying the development of all Cameroonian languages. As a result of the PROPELCA work the writing system of most languages above was harmonised in 1979 thus facilitating the standardisation of the selected African languages. In 1995 PROPELCA changed from a purely research project into application. Today more than 35,000 children per year are instructed in the PROPELCA education programme both in private and public schools.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 8**  
***Number of pupils and schools involved in PROPELCA 2000- 2001<sup>36</sup>***

<b>PROVINCES</b>	<b>LANGUAGES</b>	<b>MT as medium of education<sup>37</sup></b>	<b>MT as subject in primary education</b>
8	30	97 schools 9,329 pupils	203 schools 24,791 pupils

A partnership agreement between the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) and ANACLAC in March 2002 opened new avenues for the introduction of the PROPELCA programme in formal education. The results of PROPELCA are reported to have had a certain positive effect on enrolment and results.<sup>38</sup> PROPELCA has also been positively evaluated by

<sup>35</sup> According to a speech given by Maurice Tadadjeu on the UNESCO Mother Tongue Day in Yaounde, 21 February 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Source: ANACLAC/NACALCO (2001).

<sup>37</sup> In reading, writing and calculation.

<sup>38</sup> The “Cameroon Tribune” of 19 November 2002 for instance stated that the evaluations show that the introduction of mother tongues in primary school, especially in rural Cameroon, has had a positive effect with regard to the quality education, and has simultaneously lowered the drop-out rate: “Les évaluations faites démontrent que la

*Agence Canadienne pour le Développement International (ACDI/CIDA)* at the end of the 1980s.

Tabi Manga (2000:100) suggests that the positive experiences of the programme may show politicians a practical way of language policy which really acknowledges the national languages and gives them a natural place in society.

Co-operation between linguists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting the national languages of Cameroon has been established through the PROPELCA programme. ANACLAC (*Association Nationale des Comités de Langues Camerounaises*)<sup>39</sup> is a result of the PROPELCA work and was founded in 1989. ANACLAC is today a federation of 77 language committees.

ANACLAC focuses on the development of national languages, as well as their promotion and teaching. Within ANACLAC a centre of applied linguistics, CLA, is working with corpus development. There are local language committees which deal with corpus development of national languages, with newsletters and rural radio stations. University students in linguistics are often involved in the work of the language committees, as volunteers and field workers (Hubert Nkoumou, pers. comm. 3 February 2004). The main focus of ANACLAC, through the work of the language committees, is now literacy, mainly for adults. In 2000-2001 about 20.000 persons, most of them between 26 and 50 years old and one third women, attended literacy courses in their mother tongues. In 2002-2003 fifty didactic publications, such as primers, grammars and dictionaries, in about forty languages were produced. It is obvious that the major basic work in corpus development makes progress accordingly.

PROPELCA and ANACLAC co-operate widely with other organisations such as SIL International, *l'Association Camerounaise pour la Traduction de la Bible et pour l'Alphabétisation* (CABTAL), UNICEF and ACDI/CIDA, through Wycliffe Canada. On the regional level the organisation also co-operates in projects with organisations as NORAD (in the North) and the Lutheran church. In spite of a recent agreement with the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) most work done by ANACLAC is based on economic support from other organisations. Through its bible translation programme, SIL International has focused on literacy, language classification and translations, as an independent organisation and in co-operation with other organisations. According to the vice president of ANACLAC Etienne Sadembouo (pers. comm. 10 February 2004), the state

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présence de la langue maternelle à l'école, surtout en milieu rural, améliore grandement la qualité d'accès à l'école des jeunes et diminue le taux de déperdition scolaire."

<sup>39</sup> The French abbreviation is used instead of the English abbreviation NACALCO, as the name ANACLAC is the most widely known name due to its location in the Francophone area.

has been passive, but has never obstructed the work of ANACLAC. The passivity mainly depends on lack of resources and political will. As Sadembouo further said, the situation has become clearer after 1996 with the introduction of the national languages in the 1996 constitution, which is the result of moral pressure by linguists and other scholars. Linguists have invited, and still invite, politicians and government officials to seminars and other language related activities.

Since October 2000 ANACLAC has been implementing the Basic Standardisation of All Unwritten African Languages Project (BASAL), a joint project for the development of national languages led by institutions and partners in education, applied linguistics and sustainable development of African communities.

#### ***5.4.2 Language policy models***

As shown above, some research done in Cameroon has had a rather practical focus. Tadadjeu has given the first language planning model by introducing a trilingual approach. This model, which is in consonance with the UNESCO policy<sup>40</sup> (referred to in Legère 2003), should enable the average Cameroonian to be instructed in at least three languages:

- an African language (preferably the mother tongue),
- his or her first official language and
- a language of wider distribution or the second official language (Echu 2003b).

According to Echu the model is realistic as long as mother tongue literacy programs are encouraged (2003:13). Tabi Manga (2000:184 f) advocates a “quadrilingual” language planning model which includes a language of the catchment area in addition to the mother tongue, a LWD and an

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<sup>40</sup> The 2003 UNESCO Education Position Paper (pp 17-18) states: “Bilingual and multilingual education refer to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction. In much of the specialized literature, the two types are subsumed under the term bilingual education. However, UNESCO adapted the term ‘multilingual education’ in 1999 in the General Conference Resolution 12 to refer to the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language in education. The resolution supported the view that the requirements of global and national participation and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities can only be addressed by multilingual education. In regions where the language of the learner is not the official or national language of the country, bilingual and multilingual education can make mother tongue education possible while providing at the same time the acquisition of languages used in larger areas of the country and the world. This additive approach to bilingualism is different from the so-called subtractive bilingualism which aims to move children on to a second language as a language of instruction.”

international language (English/French). Tabi Manga wants a functional status given to be given to six LWDs, i. e. Fulfulde, Beti-Fang, Duala, Basaa, Fe'fe' and Mungaka. This is a more complex model which is rejected by Echu (2003b) who is in favour of the PROPELCA model.

## **6. Language practices in Cameroon**

### **6.1 Formal domains**

Even if a general policy exists this may be both vague and without recommended steps of implementation. What is actually taking place, or not taking place, also constitutes a sort of policy. The following discussion is therefore structured into the main formal domains to investigate official attitudes as well as choices regarding language use.

#### ***6.1.1 The official domains***

##### *Legislation*

The official languages English and French are used in all documents and other written official communication. All oral communication is conducted in the official languages. Regarding verbal practice, the members of parliament may use either of the official languages in the national assembly, but communication is mostly conducted in French as most of the members are Francophone. There is, however, a system of simultaneous translation.

The national languages are thus never officially sanctioned to be used in situations where the state is involved, except in cases where it is considered necessary to reach the masses, as during electoral campaigns (Bitjaa Kody 2001a).

##### *Administration*

The constitution is clear about the bilingual policy at all administrative levels (central, provincial and district). Article 38 of the General instruction no. 2 of 4 June 1998 on the organisation of the work of the government confirms the official bilingualism. The document makes the President's office responsible for the promotion and implementation of bilingualism.

Only well educated Cameroonians master the official languages. This obviously creates communicative problems for citizens in their interaction with the authorities. As the officials are employed by the state, they are forced to using either English or French in their communication with

clients, even if they know the national language spoken by the client. Interviews with civil servants revealed that in local administration, where the proficiency in the official languages is rather low among Cameroonians, a problem in communication exists. People normally come with an interpreter, a relative or a person from the village, to assist in such situations.

At the town hall (outside Yaounde) it is possible to use and be helped in Cameroonian languages. There are thus no restrictions on language use. What limits the communicative interaction is the multilingual competence of the municipal employees. In Mfou, a district east of Yaounde, even papers written in Ewondo are accepted. At municipal meetings interventions in national languages are translated into French, if persons not knowing the particular language are present.

### *Jurisdiction and law enforcement*

The bilingual official policy is stated in the constitution. Article 31, 3 declares: "Laws shall be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic in English and French" (République du Cameroun 1996). The official legal policy is thus clear. Language nevertheless creates considerable practical and legal problems in judiciary matters. Marc Atangana, judge, and Jean-Paul Atangana Kama, lawyer, both working in the central provinces of Cameroon, state that language problems often have to be solved directly, in court. A prosecuted person frequently speaks neither official language. Sometimes a person in the audience volunteers to translate *ad hoc*. This might work, but it is often problematic. Both the lawyer and the judge above witnessed the fact that translations were found incorrect. It is often the audience which detects the errors of the translation. As a lawyer it is impossible to guarantee that the translations are done in a correct manner as no official system of translation exists. The lawyer, however, assists in translating, if he or she knows the languages which are used (Jean-Paul Atangana Kama pers. comm. 18 February 2004). The lawyers also experience problems with Anglophones. Many lawyers do not speak English, in spite of official bilingualism. There is thus a linguistic barrier even with one of the official languages in the field of jurisdiction.

### **6.1.2 Education**

Various sources assert that education quality and enrolment ratios have deteriorated over the last decade to a degree of decline unique of a country not experiencing war or civil strife. Due to budget constraints, the salaries for teachers have been lowered, allocation for material reduced and infrastructures neglected - a situation which has led to a lower educational

quality.<sup>41</sup> The decline in enrolment is from 95.6 percent in 1989/1990 to 81.8 percent in 1998/1999 in primary education. The enrolment in secondary education has fallen to less than 50 percent, with wide disparities between the provinces.

As previously stated, the law guarantees education in either English or French, depending on the linguistic zone, from first grade throughout secondary school. Teaching the second official language starts in grade six. The teachers, as state employees, must use the official languages in communication with the learners. Pupils are prohibited to speak to teachers in a national language. However, the pupils are allowed to communicate in it during the breaks. The use of African languages in the classroom is restricted to private schools and pilot projects as PROPELCA.

National languages are not employed in state financed literacy campaigns. In these projects the official languages are used as media of instruction. NGOs, however, utilize literacy instructional material in the Cameroonian languages. All language committees, for instance, have compiled didactic material in the respective national languages. In addition, the radio stations, which have developed through private initiatives during the last decade, broadcast educational and health programmes in some Cameroonian languages.

### ***6.1.3 Health care***

In health care there are serious linguistic obstacles to overcome. According to a study by Chia (2001: 148) 60 percent of the doctors (mostly Anglophones) were forced by the circumstances to communicate in a language which was their third best. 92 percent of the doctors said that the patients could not describe their conditions well enough to be understood by the doctors because they had to use a language which was only second or third best to them. According to the same study 76 percent of the patients did not understand the doctors when they spoke or asked questions. 10 percent of the patients could not speak either of the official languages French and English. Even in Yaounde, where one finds the highest concentration of Francophones in the country, not everybody spoke and understood French.

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<sup>41</sup> The share of the national budget on primary education has been reduced by 5 percent per year during the last decade. The reduction has affected worst the peripheral regions as the Far North.

#### 6.1.4 Media

French plays a significant role in the media in Cameroon. The position of this language was even further to be consolidated by the co-operation on FM-broadcasts that the state-run radio and its French counterpart, Radio France Internationale, RFI, were planning. The state-run national television and radio company Cameroon Radio Television, CRTV, reflects the official language policy of Cameroon, with programmes uniquely in French and English. Even the state-owned daily newspaper Cameroon Tribune is bilingual and is edited every day in French and once a week in English.

The LWD Camfranglais is spreading and is now used in some news broadcasts on radio as well as in songs (Tabi Manga 2000). Camfranglais is mainly restricted to informal domains, even if the state-run newspaper Cameroon Tribune now has a column, “The man in the street”, in Camfranglais. The Messenger, the newspaper of the opposition, has frequently dialogues in Camfranglais.

The state runs ten provincial radio stations. These encourage the promotion of languages widely spoken in each province. National languages were introduced in radio in 1956, when Ewondo broadcasts began. Subsequently other languages were introduced. In 1961 the office responsible for radio communication, *Office de Coopération Radiophonique*, which planned for education through the media, decided to use languages of wider communication (*langues véhiculaires*) in broadcasts in five regional radio stations which were earlier established.

The decisions about which languages to be used and the number of languages are now agreed upon between CRTV and the ministries in charge of information, communication and culture, according to Tabi Manga (2000). The choice of languages has never been solely based on objectivity and necessity, as is shown by Mimboe Fouda (2000-2001). The subjectivity of the choices was clearly shown in 1968 when the then Minister of Culture, Victor Kanga, who originated from Bafang in the West, decided to replace Bangange with Bafang, his mother tongue. His successor, Fokam Kanga, who also came from the West, introduced Banjun, his mother tongue, but also the language of his wife, Bafia, as a language to be used on radio. This rather haphazard approach to language use for regional radio stations seems to continue. The interview at CRTV Centre in Yaounde with Ms. Mimboe Fouda showed that the radio station recently had a letter from the responsible minister instructing the radio station to broadcast in a minority language. The background was a plea from one of the local chiefs to the minister.

Table 9 below gives an overview of the languages which are used in the provincial radio stations in Cameroon. The compilation is based on Tabi Manga (2000:102-109).

**Table 9**  
***National languages used in provincial radio stations***

<b>Radio station (based in)</b>	<b>National languages/non official language</b>	<b>% of total time of emissions</b>	<b>Hours/ week</b>
Radio provinciale du Centre (Yaounde)	Bafia Basaa Béti (ewondo)	21,94	34
Radio provinciale du Littoral (Douala)	Duala Yabasi Basaa Bakaka Bakoko <sup>42</sup>	8,85	13
Radio provinciale de l'Ouest (Bafoussam)	F'efe' e Ngemba Ghomala Shumom Mbo Tikar Medumba Yemba Mungaka	20,36	23
Radio provinciale du Nord (Garoua)	Fulfulde Shua Arabic Tupari	20	34
Radio provinciale de Ngaoundérére (Ngoundérére)	Dii Mbum Hausa <sup>43</sup>	16,67	19
Radio provinciale de l'Est (Bertoua)	Gbaya Kaka Maka Mpopong	25,55	17
Radio provinciale de l'Extrême Nord (Maroua)	Fulfulde Mousgoum Giziga Mofu Nord Mundang Arabic Wandala Masa Tupari Mafa	27,36	24,5
Radio provinciale du Sud (Ebolowa)	Bulu Ewondo Ngumba Ntumu	11,12	10
Radio provinciale de Sud-Ouest	Bafaw Mungaka Bakossi	7,5	9

<sup>42</sup> According to Mimboe Fouda (2000) even the languages *Bakon* and *Ewodi* are used.

<sup>43</sup> According to Tabi Manga (2000) two additional languages are used. These are however not specified in the book.

(Buéa)	Ngumba Bakweri Ejagham Mundani Fulfulde Kenyang Mbo Wimbam Metta Mungaka	Aso  Olit Aroko		
Radio provinciale du Nord-Ouest (Bamenda)	Lamso Mubako Mendankwé Ngie Oku Mbembe Fulfulde Nkwen Mengaka Pinyin Kom Ngemba Metta Kedjoun	Nsat  Hausa Menka  Yemba Mbili Aghem Linbum Oshié	4,17	5

There are only a few directives from the Minister of Communication regarding language use in the media. In 1986 the minister recommended a maximum of six languages per station and a language choice in accordance with socio-economic factors of the region. In 1987 it was further directed that broadcasting should be in the language of the catchment area of the radio station and not in languages of wider communication. In spite of some general recommendations, it seems that each provincial radio station makes its own language choice. The policy thus lacks coherence (Echu 2003b:12).

The responsibility of using national languages was given to the provincial radio stations in 1978. The stations simultaneously continued to broadcast in the official languages. The table below shows that air time allocated to national languages is only one fourth of the total time of the broadcasts in the central province, run by CRTV Centre. The national languages used by CRTV Centre are Ewondo, Basaa and Bafia. The table is based on Mimboe Fouda (2000-2001).

**Table 10**  
**Radio programmes in the official languages and in national languages, at the regional radio station, in Centre Province (CRTV Centre)**

Language	Weekly airtime of programmes in minutes	Weekly airtime of programmes in percentage
French	3 240	58,70
English	930	16,85
National languages	1 350	24,45
Totally	5 520	100

Of the time allocated to the three national languages (totally 24.5 percent of the weekly broadcasts), Ewondo is given 41.5 percent of the time, followed by 29.9 percent for Basaa and 28.6 percent for Bafia. Ewondo is offered more time, because it is widely spoken, hence strongly supported. In addition, Ewondo covers 7 of the 10 districts (*départements*) of the central region. The amount of airtime given to national languages varies between 4.17 percent (the Northwest provincial station in Bamenda) and 27.36 (Far North provincial station in Maroua) as referred to in Echu (2003b). The radio programmes in Cameroonian languages are mostly live broadcasts.

Ten years after a law on telecommunications was passed by the National Assembly, a decree of implementation was issued. This decree enabled the establishment of private radio stations in 2000. The introduction of private radio stations has not been without problems. Father Jean Marie Bodo, founder of the Catholic radio station Reine, one of the new private radio stations, accused the government of scandalous charges. Radio Reine, as an “educational radio station, helping the state to train the people” cannot pay the state the charges, according to internet news articles (Eya 2000). There have also been other problems for the new private stations. Two private radio stations, RTA and Canal 2, were closed down on 19 February 2003. Probably the private radio stations use the official languages in broadcasting, but this has not been possible to verify.

UNESCO has been engaged in rural radio programmes through “*Programme international pour le développement de la communication*” (PIDC). For instance, in 1999/2000 a community radio station for women was set up in Mbalmayo. According to interviews in August 2000 and in February 2001 by the daily web newspaper Afrik.com<sup>44</sup> with Sophie

<sup>44</sup> This newspaper covers the whole continent.

Bayala, co-ordinator of the project in central Africa, the radio station was supposed to broadcast 80 percent of the time in national languages. The goal was almost achieved, as 70 percent of the programs were in Cameroonian languages. Cameroonian languages are additionally sometimes used to reach the population in campaigns. An article in Cameroon Tribune (internet version) of 12 November 2002 for instance states that “some basic information about AIDS has been translated into local languages and broadcast over community radios”, in a campaign supported by the First Lady, Mrs. Chantal Biya (Morikang 2002).

Etienne Sadembouo of ANACLAC reported that 15 community radio stations are run by UNESCO, all established from 2002 onwards (pers. comm. 10 February 2004). ANACLAC wants to develop programmes which can be used by different organisations working with radio transmissions in mother tongues and is engaged in a rural community based satellite radio project, CONAL (Communication Network of African Languages). The project which is in co-operation with Canadian and Austrian organisations has not yet started.

### ***6.1.5 Language use in other domains***

Local organisations use a Cameroonian language in their communication if everybody understands the language. If there is a person who does not understand the language, French is used (pers. comm. Honorine Belomo 21 February 2004). According to an interview with people working with CAPDA, a NGO in Douala, the national languages Basaa, Douala, Bakoko, Ewondo and Pidgin English are used in the region in communication within the organisation (Gervais Bekwe pers. comm. 22 February 2004). The churches use national languages in their work most of the time. In addition French is used by the Catholic Church in the East of the country (Apollinaire Onanéna pers. comm. 27 February 2004).

## **6.2 Informal domains**

The informal domains of language use refer here to communication at home as well as to interaction at the local level. In the following part the domains are grouped into domestic situations and non formal activities which people organise on a local level.

### ***6.2.1 Domestic life***

Apart from the examples given above, the national languages are mostly reduced to oral usage and may be said to be mainly restricted to family and

village life. They are naturally used to communicate the chores of everyday life, but are also the languages which represent traditional knowledge and heritage. There are changes in the use of the national languages in domestic situations. Bitjaa Kody (2001a; 2001b; 2005) asserts that the national languages of Cameroon are losing ground to the official languages, mainly French. Thus, in the Centre Province of Cameroon the geographical areas of the usage of languages of wider communication, Ewondo and Duala, are shrinking, while French is gradually expanding as a language of wider communication.

Comparative studies of French usage twenty years ago and in 2004 show a loss of the LWDs, which goes along with a loss of Cameroonian languages in urban areas. Bitjaa Kody has further found that the national languages are disappearing even in endogamic households where family members speak the same national language. Francophone adults used French in 42 percent of the domestic communications which were studied, whereas the young (10–17 years old) used French in 70 percent of the communication. In addition 32 percent of the young between ten and seventeen years old interviewed in Yaounde did not know any national language and had French as their L1 (Bitjaa Kody 2001a). There is a clear change in language use from the parent generation to the generation of their children (Bitjaa Kody 2005:95). As a result, there will be even less national language speakers in future, since the future parent generation will not be able to transmit a Cameroonian language to their children.

In addition, the study of inter-generational language transmission showed that 50 percent of endogamic households had a good knowledge of the mother tongue. In exogamic families there was a lack of linguistic transmission which might be due to the African practice, whereby a woman marrying into another speech community abandons her mother tongue (Bitjaa Kody 2001a).

The loss of national languages in urban areas is also linked to values attached to languages. In urban areas national languages have no traditional function. In rural areas French is only associated with one function: communication with strangers. It has thus no status value as opposed to urban communities (Zachée Denis Bitjaa Kody, pers. comm. 13 February 2004).

### ***6.2.2 Other informal domains***

As stated earlier in part 4.1.2, both national languages and languages of wider distribution are used in informal communication. Camfranglais is widely spoken, especially among youth, as a LWD in urban areas. Bitjaa

Kody (2001b) has nevertheless noted that French<sup>45</sup> dominates informally as the medium of communication in the streets, the markets and in other service functions in the capital Yaounde. The dominance of French was confirmed by observations *in situ*.

According to Bitjaa Kody this usage catches the general attitude towards the language, which is, of course, the result of the multi-lingual situation that has prompted the need for a lingua franca.

National languages are also used in culture, music and traditional ceremonies.

## 7. Some reflections and conclusions

Cameroon is rather unique in the African context having chosen both English and French as official languages. The country is however not unique in choosing former colonial languages at independence. This strategy is reflected in most African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. The attitudes towards African languages vary somewhat. Bamgbose states that “some countries have declared in favour of an African language (as Kenya with Swahili) but have nevertheless conducted a laissez-faire policy which has favoured English” (1991:56). Most African countries were reluctant to formulate a language policy which accounts for their national languages. Whenever African countries took care of their languages in official documents, the policy is often vague and lacks implementation.

As shown in the paper, there has been a change in official policy since 1996. After more than twenty years of unilateral focus on two foreign ex-colonial languages, the constitution of 1996 recognized national languages. This was welcomed by many linguists who had been arguing for the introduction of these languages into education and other domains for a period of thirty years. The study demonstrates that the work of linguists and language experts had an impact on politicians, government officials and other stakeholders who ultimately accepted the existence of these national language as reflected in various documents.

The language policy of Cameroon might be said to be an overt policy according to the definition given by Schiffman (2000).<sup>46</sup> Even if the national languages are included in the 1996 constitution, further legislation with regard to both status and corpus planning is still missing. The *de jure* policy is advocating linguistic pluralism whereas the *de facto* policy

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<sup>45</sup> Actually sub-standard French.

<sup>46</sup> Schiffman (2000) suggests that overt policies (as opposed to covert policies) “state explicitly the rights for any or all linguistic groups to the use of their language in whatever domain they specify.”

promotes linguistic assimilation with French as the dominant language. There is nevertheless a tendency of decentralisation of both responsibility and implementation, as some directives (e.g. République du Cameroun 1998b) make provincial institutions responsible for drafting programmes for the implementation of the revised position towards national languages. Whether or not any strategy will be successful is hard to say. So far, however, no changes seem to have taken place.

All the interviewed persons considered promotion and inclusion of the national languages in education to be a step forward. Nearly all also considered formal recognition to be insufficient. What both scholars and experts promoting the use of national languages are waiting for, be it realistic or not, are more precise guidelines of how the present constitution stipulation should be transferred into practice in administration, education and other domains of the Cameroonian society. The description of, work on orthography and development of the national languages are important, if these languages can survive in future. In addition, the national languages must simultaneously be given a viable role and a function in society.

As described in the paper, language policy models dealing with priorities of both status and corpus development exist in Cameroon. It will be interesting to see whether or not the rudiments of a language policy including national languages, which this study has shown to exist, will be translated into practical and operational measures. Language policy and ideas about its implementation will hopefully be given more serious consideration and be more clearly articulated in future.

In Cameroon the reason for choosing English and French as official languages and also as languages of instruction was, as discussed in part 5, pragmatic, seen as a way of contributing towards national unity in a multiethnic and multilingual society. The idea of unity was later stated explicitly in the education law of April 1998 and thus seems to be an ideological choice.

The unity ideal, both expressed and implicit in the policy of Cameroon, is an interesting area which could have been studied in more detail. National and unity are key words both in written and oral sources. On top of this, the term national languages is used to address Cameroonian languages other than English or French. The unanswered question of this paper is whether or not these African languages have a role to play in the Cameroonian society which they are part of. A short tentative answer involving claims of authenticity and efficiency corresponding to nationalism and nationism<sup>47</sup> (Fishman 1968, as cited in Bamgbose 1991) would only be partly affirmative as follows:

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<sup>47</sup> Nationalism: a language of sociocultural integration and authenticity is required. Nationism: involves a language of political integration and efficiency (Bamgbose 1991:20).

- Firstly, the choice of exogenous official languages did not support nationalism, but nationism.
- Secondly, the chosen bilingualism has not been on equal terms as French has a *de facto* dominant role. Tension exists between Anglophones and Francophones. As seen from this paper and its discussion, the question is not easily answered and needs to be studied in more detail.

It would be interesting to investigate, if the fear of choosing national languages, as the suppression of teaching African languages at the University of Yaounde in the 1970s showed, still influences the approach to language policy in Cameroon. Whether a future multilingual status planning will create ethnic destabilization or not is still not investigated.

The objective of creating unity may even be discussed in terms of social and economic development. Socio-economic development may be defined in different ways. It is here used as a process involving change and growth induced by human effort. In this context language policy may (or may not) contribute to socio-political and economic development. The promotion of any language or lingua franca facilitates both trade and more general communication between different speech communities; it “separates those communities from others which do not speak the language” (McLean 1992:151). An adequate language policy which deals with issues like these is thus an important element in the policies and programmes of a country.

Studies of language use in Cameroon show that French is gaining ground in urban areas, since there is a lack of inter-generational transmission via national languages (Bitjaa Kody 2001a; 2001b; 2005). Accordingly, an accelerating urbanisation rate may affect the linguistic situation in Cameroon, as the role and use of Cameroonian French will be expanding.

In Cameroon the mastery of the two official languages, especially French, is a prerequisite for socio-economic development and individual advancement and excludes the rural population. Francophones have continued to occupy top ranking positions in the Cameroonian society. French is the career language that is required for employment in government and the civil service. This fact massively influences the attitudes of parents towards the official languages. Echu (2003b), citing Adebija, says that parents want their children to be introduced to European languages as early as possible.

The non existing use of Cameroonian languages in education and other formal domains deny minority groups the right to use their mother tongues outside domestic domains. It is here perhaps possible to talk of language genocide instead of the threat of language death, using the terminology of Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2002).

When children are taught and forced to use a dominant language, whether it is an exogenous language or an African language, over a

generation or two, the children assimilate linguistically, and often even in other ways, to the dominant group. According to Bitjaa Kody (2001a; 2005) this process has started in Cameroon. The educational language situation in Cameroon is similar the UN definition of linguistic or cultural genocide: “Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group” (Article III, 1).<sup>48</sup>

The sources referred to in this study, both oral and written, showed a discrepancy as to the number of languages existing in Cameroon. Some of the differences may be related to the dating of the sources. Thus, older sources register a lower number of languages and more recent sources identify languages not classified earlier. There are, however, some more principal differences in the discussion on the number of languages in Cameroon. One informant argued that the number of languages was less than a tenth of the more commonly expressed view. This opinion indicates that further studies to find out the genetic relations related to the terms language and dialect would be of interest.

Although the linguistic situation in Cameroon is rather unique in its complexity, this country shares with other African countries similar problems as well as differences in policy and implementation. A comparative study of variables as language policy, implementation of policy, the influence of trans-national African organisations or international associations on policy, attitudes of different groups, results in education related to language of instruction etc. would for instance be interesting to conduct.

The former trusteeship power France still plays an important role in Cameroon. *Francophonie*,<sup>49</sup> which is the French equivalent of the Commonwealth, seems to have a substantial influence on the economic, social and cultural development of Cameroon. The attitude of *Francophonie* towards language use and language planning might be interesting to study in future. In this regard, a slight change in attitude, shown in a new vocabulary which is used, seems to be taking place in present day Cameroon and elsewhere in so-called Francophone countries. In recent publications the word *partenaire*<sup>50</sup> is frequently used to describe

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<sup>48</sup> UN International Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Crime of Genocide, E793, 1948, referred to in Skutnabb-Kangas (2002).

<sup>49</sup> *Francophonie* is a political and socio-cultural movement which, among other, aims at strengthening French [...] to ensure that the language is used in all areas of communication [...] to remind and convince people of its noble qualities (Bamgbose 1991:60). An official 2007 version released by the organisation itself informs that *Francophonie* is a political and socio-cultural movement, established in 1970, grouping 55 states on 5 continents. The base of the cooperation is the use of French either as unique official language or official language alongside other languages (OIF 2007).

<sup>50</sup> *Partenaire*: partner, partnership.

the function or rather relationship between French and African languages. This term is even used by Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (2002) in addressing future language planning where the relation between the different languages is not only a relation of equality, but of a complementary use where each language has a specific role to play. Despite disagreement as to which model would be best for implementation of the recent change in policy, the common opinion among scholars, politicians and linguists seems to be a policy of co-operation where the different languages have a supplemental role, in accordance with the new term *partenaire*.

If Cameroon takes a step further in implementing the language policy as stipulated by the Constitution, laws and decrees, collaborators are prepared to contribute to the development. National language committees, linguists, educational experts and NGOs working with development have already finished a substantial number of orthographies, dictionaries and grammars which may support the development of national languages in Cameroon.

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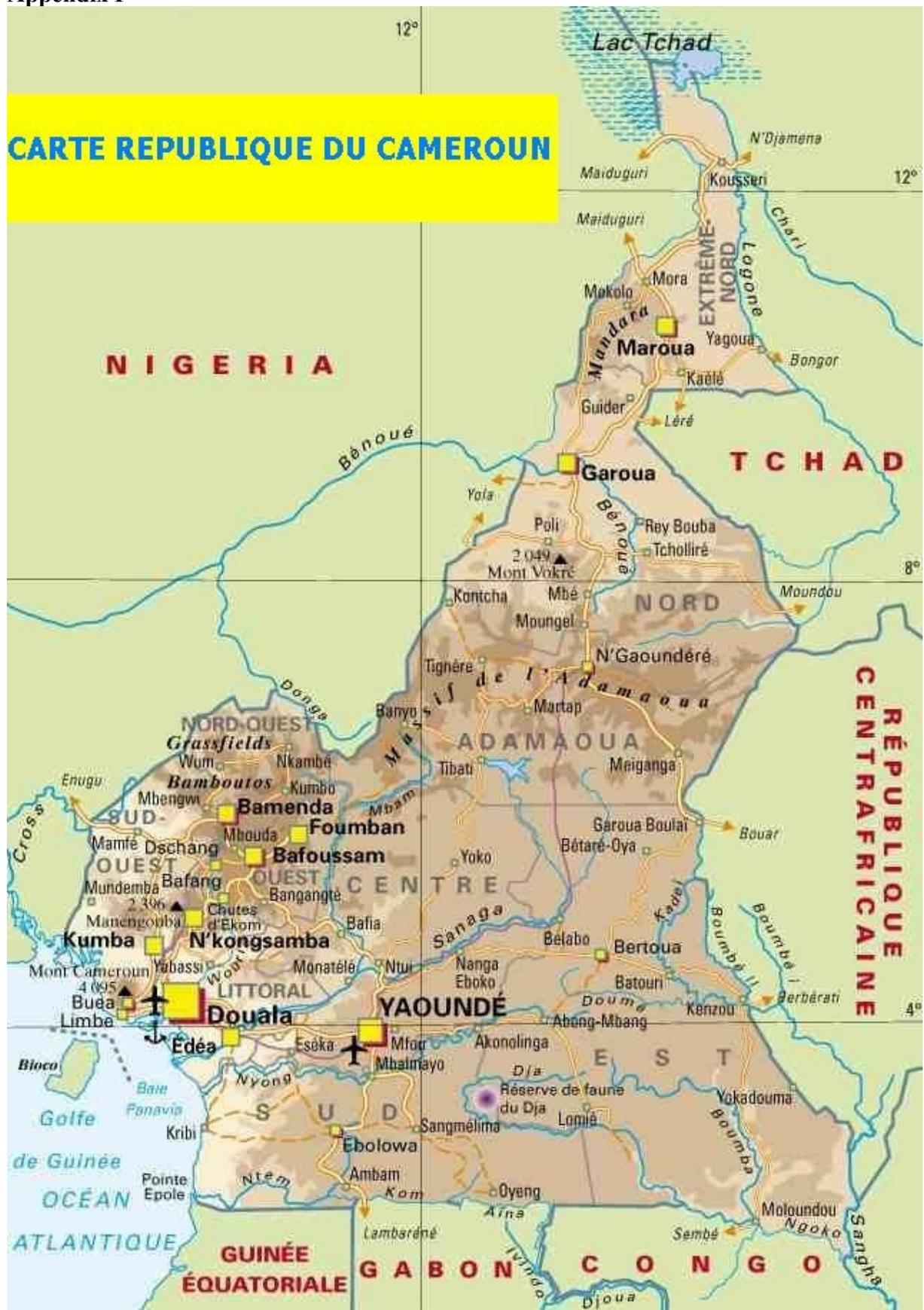
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Appendices  
Appendix I



## Appendix II

### The national languages of Cameroon. Language family tree

PHYLUM	SUB -PHYLUM	FAMILY	SUB -FAMILY	BRANCH	SUB- BRANCH
<b>Nilo-Saharan</b>	<b>Chari Nile</b> (Ngambai) <b>Saharan</b> (Kanuri)				
<b>Afro-Asiatic</b>	<b>Semitic</b> (1) (Shua Arabic) <b>Chadic</b> (60), 5 undergroups				
<b>Niger- Kordofanian</b>	<b>Niger-Congo</b>	<b>West Atlantic</b> (Fulfulde/Fulani) <b>Adamawa- Ubangi</b>	<b>Ubangi</b> (3) <b>Adamawa</b> (40) 8 undergroups		
		<b>Benue-Congo</b>	<b>Jukunoids</b> (9) <b>Cross-River</b> (2) <b>Bendi</b> (1) <b>Bantoid</b> (140)	<b>Non- Narrow Bantu</b>	<b>Mambiloids</b> (7) <b>Tivoids</b> (12) <b>Ekoids</b> (1) <b>Jarawan</b> (3) <b>Beboid</b> (9) <b>Nyang</b> (3) <b>Grassfield</b> (51)
				<b>Narrow Bantu</b>	<b>Guthrie A10</b> , 5 undergroups <b>Guthrie A20</b> , 7 undergroups <b>Guthrie A30</b> , 4 undergroups <b>Guthrie A40</b> 6 undergroups <b>Guthrie A50</b> , 4 undergroups <b>Guthrie A60</b> , 3 undergroups <b>Guthrie A70</b> , 5 undergroups <b>Guthrie A80</b> , 7 undergroups <b>Guthrie A90</b> , 3 undergroups

Overview based on Essono 2001 and UV 412 Séminaires 2003. Terminology partly changed to follow Greenberg's classification: Essono's Congo-Kordofanian replaced by Niger-Kordofanian.

## Appendix III

### The Constitution of Cameroon.

#### Preamble and Part 1.

#### LA CONSTITUTION DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN.

LOI N° 96/06 DU 18 JANVIER 1996

PORTANT RÉVISION SUR LA CONSTITUTION DE JUIN 1972

#### PRÉAMBULE

Le Peuple camerounais,

Fière de sa diversité linguistique et culturelle, élément de sa personnalité nationale qu'elle contribue à enrichir, **mais profondément conscient de la nécessité impérieuse de parfaire son unité**, proclame solennellement qu'il constitue une seule et même Nation, engagée dans le même destin et affirme sa volonté inébranlable de construire la patrie camerounaise sur la base de l'idéal de fraternité, de justice et de progrès

Jaloux de l'indépendance de la Patrie camerounaise chèrement acquise et résolu à préserver cette indépendance ; convaincu que le salut de l'Afrique se trouve dans la réalisation d'une solidarité de plus en plus étroite entre les peuples africains, affirme sa volonté d'oeuvrer à la construction d'une Afrique unie et libre, tout en entretenant avec les autres Nations du monde des relations pacifiques et fraternelles conformément aux principes formulés par la charte des Nations Unies

Résolu à exploiter ses richesses naturelles afin d'assurer le bien-être de tous en relevant le niveau de vie des populations sans aucune discrimination, affirme son droit au développement ainsi que sa volonté de consacrer tous ses efforts pour le réaliser et se déclare prêt à coopérer avec tous les états désireux de participer à cette entreprise nationale dans le respect de sa souveraineté et de l'indépendance de l'état camerounais.

Le Peuple camerounais,

Proclame que l'être humain, sans distinction de race, de religion, de sexe, de croyance, possède des droits inaliénables et sacrés; Affirme son attachement aux libertés fondamentales inscrites dans la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme, la charte des Nations Unies, la Charte africaine des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples et toutes les conventions internationales y relatives et dûment ratifiées, notamment aux principes suivants :

- Tous les hommes sont égaux en droits et en devoirs. L'État assure à tous les citoyens les conditions nécessaires à leur développement,

- L'État assure la protection des minorités et préserve les droits des populations autochtones conformément à la loi;
- La liberté et la sécurité sont garanties à chaque individu dans le respect des droits d'autrui et de l'intérêt supérieur de l'État;
- Tout homme a le droit de se fixer en tout lieu et de se déplacer librement, sous réserve des prescriptions légales relatives à l'ordre, à la sécurité et à la tranquillité publiques;
- Le domicile est inviolable. Nulle perquisition ne peut y avoir lieu qu'en vertu de la loi;
- Le secret de toute correspondance est inviolable. Il ne peut y être porté atteinte qu'en vertu des décisions émanant de l'autorité judiciaire;
- Nul ne peut être contraint de faire ce que la loi n'ordonne pas;
- Nul ne peut être poursuivi, arrêté ou détenu que dans les cas et selon les formes déterminées par la loi;
- La loi ne peut avoir d'effet rétroactif. Nul ne peut être jugé et puni qu'en vertu d'une loi promulguée et publiée antérieurement au fait punissable;
- La loi assure à tous les hommes le droit de se faire rendre justice;
- Tout prévenu est présumé innocent jusqu'à ce que sa culpabilité soit établie au cours d'un procès conduit dans le strict respect des droits de la défense;
- Toute personne a droit à la vie et à l'intégrité physique et morale. Elle doit être traitée en toute circonstance avec humanité. En aucun cas, elle ne peut être soumise à la torture, à des peines ou traitements cruels, inhumains ou dégradants;
- Nul ne peut être inquiété en raison de ses origines, de ses opinions ou croyances en matière religieuse, philosophique ou politique sous réserve du respect de l'ordre public et des bonnes mœurs;
- L'État est laïc. La neutralité et l'indépendance de l'État vis-à-vis de toutes les religions sont garanties;
- La liberté du culte et le libre exercice de sa pratique sont garantis;
- La liberté de communication, la liberté d'expression, la liberté de presse, la liberté de réunion, la liberté d'association, la liberté syndicale et le droit de grève sont garantis dans les conditions fixées par la loi;
- La nation protège et encourage la famille, base naturelle de la société humaine. Elle protège la femme, les jeunes, les personnes âgées et les personnes handicapées;
- L'État assure à l'enfant le droit à l'instruction. L'enseignement primaire est obligatoire. L'organisation et le contrôle de l'enseignement à tous les degrés sont des devoirs impérieux de l'État;

- La propriété est le droit d'user, de jouir et de disposer des biens garantis à chacun par la loi. Nul ne saurait en être privé si ce n'est pour cause d'utilité publique et sous la condition d'une indemnisation dont les modalités sont fixées par la loi;
- Le droit de propriété ne saurait être exercé contrairement à l'utilité publique, sociale ou de manière à porter préjudice à la sûreté ; à la liberté, à l'existence ou à la propriété d'autrui;
- Toute personne a droit à un environnement sain. La protection de l'environnement est un devoir pour tous. L'État veille à la défense et la promotion de l'environnement;
- Tout homme a le droit et le devoir de travailler;
- Chacun doit participer, en proportion de ses capacités, aux charges publiques;
- Tous les citoyens contribuent à la défense de la patrie;
- L'État garantit à tous les citoyens de l'un et de l'autre sexes, les droits et libertés énumérés au préambule de la Constitution.

## **TITRE PREMIER : De l'Etat et de la Souveraineté.**

### **Article premier:**

(1) La République Unie du Cameroun prend, à compter de l'entrée en vigueur de la présente loi, la dénomination de République du Cameroun (loi n° 84-1 du 4 février 1984).

(2) La République du Cameroun est un État unitaire décentralisé.

Elle est une et indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale.

Elle reconnaît et protège les valeurs traditionnelles conformes aux principes démocratiques, aux droits de l'homme et à la loi.

Elle assure l'égalité de tous les citoyens devant la loi.

**(3) La République du Cameroun adopte l'anglais et le français comme langues officielles d'égale valeur.**

**Elle garantit la promotion du bilinguisme sur toute l'étendue du territoire.**

**Elle œuvre pour la protection et la promotion des langues nationales.**

(4) La devise de la République du Cameroun est : « Paix - Travail - Patrie ».

(5) Son drapeau est : Vert, Rouge, Jaune, à trois bandes verticales d'égales dimensions. Il est frappé d'une étoile d'or au centre de la bande rouge.

(6) L'hymne national est : «Ô Cameroun, Berceau de nos Ancêtres».

(7) Le Sceau de la République du Cameroun est une médaille circulaire en bas relief de 46 millimètres de diamètre, présentant à l'avant et au centre le profil d'une tête de jeune fille tournée à dextre vers une branche de caféier à deux feuilles et joutée à senestre par cinq cabosses de cacao avec, en exergue, en français sur l'arc inférieur la devise nationale : « Paix - Travail - Patrie », au revers et au centre les armoiries de la République du Cameroun avec en exergue, en anglais, sur l'arc supérieur : « Republic of Cameroon », et sur l'arc inférieur, «Peace, Work, Fatherland ».

Les armoiries de la République du Cameroun sont constituées par un écu chapé surmonté côté chef par l'inscription « République du Cameroun », et supporté par un double faisceau de licteurs entrecroisés avec la devise : « Paix - Travail - Patrie », côté pointe.

L'écu est composé d'une étoile d'or sur fond de simple et d'un triangle de gueules, chargé de la carte géographique du Cameroun d'azur, et frappé du glaive de la balance de justice de sable.

(8) Le siège des institutions est à Yaoundé.

## **Article 2**

(1) La souveraineté nationale appartient au peuple camerounais qui l'exerce soit par l'intermédiaire du Président de la République et des membres du Parlement, soit par voie de référendum. Aucune fraction du peuple ni aucun individu ne peut s'en attribuer l'exercice.

(2) Les autorités chargés de diriger l'État tiennent leurs pouvoirs du peuple par voie d'élections au suffrage universel direct ou indirect, sauf dispositions contraires de la présente Constitution.

(3) Le vote est égal et secret; y participent tous les citoyens âgés d'au moins vingt (20) ans.

## **Article 3**

Les partis et formations politiques concourent à l'expression du suffrage. Ils doivent respecter les principes de la démocratie, de la souveraineté et de l'unité nationales. Ils se forment et exercent leurs activités conformément à la loi.

## **Article 4**

L'autorité de l'État est exercée par:

- Le Président de la République;
- Le Parlement.

## Appendix IV

### LOI N°98/004 DU 4 AVRIL 1998 D'ORIENTATION DE L'EDUCATION AU CAMEROUN

#### TITRE I - DES DISPOSITIONS GENERALES

**Article premier** : (1) La présente loi fixe le cadre juridique général de l'éducation au Cameroun.

(2) Elle s'applique aux enseignements maternel, primaire, secondaire général et technique, ainsi qu'à l'enseignement normal.

**Article 2** : (1) L'éducation est une grande priorité nationale.

(2) Elle est assurée par l'Etat.

(3) Des partenaires privés concourent à l'offre d'éducation.

**Article 3** : L'Etat consacre le bilinguisme à tous les niveaux d'enseignement comme facteur d'unité et d'intégration nationales.

**Article 4** : L'éducation a pour mission générale la formation de l'enfant en vue de son épanouissement intellectuel, physique, civique et moral et de son insertion harmonieuse dans la société, en prenant en compte les facteurs économiques, socio-culturels, politiques et moraux.

**Article 5** : Au titre de la mission générale définie à l'article 4 ci-dessus, l'éducation a pour objectifs :

1. la formation de citoyens enracinés dans leur culture, mais ouverts au monde et respectueux de l'intérêt général et du bien commun;
2. la formation aux grandes valeurs éthiques universelles que sont la dignité et l'honneur, l'honnêteté et l'intégrité ainsi que le sens de la discipline;
3. l'éducation à la vie familiale;
- 4. la promotion des langues nationales;**
5. l'initiation à la culture et à la pratique de la démocratie, au respect des droits de l'homme et des libertés, de la justice et de la tolérance, au combat contre toutes formes de discrimination, à l'amour de la paix et du dialogue, à la responsabilité civique et à la promotion de l'intégration régionale et sous-régionale;
6. la culture de l'amour de l'effort et du travail bien fait, de la quête de l'excellence et de l'esprit de partenariat;
7. le développement de la créativité, du sens de l'initiative et de l'esprit d'entreprise;
8. la formation physique, sportive, artistique et culturelle de l'enfant;
9. la promotion de l'hygiène et de l'éducation à la santé.

**Article 6** : L'Etat assure à l'enfant le droit à l'éducation.

**Article 7** : L'Etat garantit à tous l'égalité de chances d'accès à l'éducation sans discrimination de sexe, d'opinions politiques, philosophiques et religieuses, d'origine sociale, culturelle, linguistique ou géographique.

**Article 8** : L'enseignement est apolitique.

**Article 9** : L'enseignement primaire est obligatoire.

**Article 10** : L'école publique est laïque. Sa neutralité et son indépendance vis-à-vis de toutes les religions sont garanties.

## **TITRE II - DE L'ELABORATION, DE LA MISE EN OEUVRE DE LA POLITIQUE ET DU FINANCEMENT DE L'EDUCATION**

**Article 11** : (1) L'Etat assure l'élaboration et la mise en oeuvre de la politique de l'éducation à laquelle concourent les collectivités territoriales décentralisées, les familles ainsi que les institutions publiques et privées. A cette fin, il :

- arrête les objectifs et les orientations générales des programmes nationaux d'enseignement et de formation, en liaison avec tous les secteurs de la vie nationale en vue de la professionnalisation de l'enseignement;
- veille à l'adaptation permanente du système éducatif aux réalités économiques et socio-culturelles nationales ainsi qu'à l'environnement international, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la promotion des enseignements scientifiques et technologiques, du bilinguisme et l'enseignement des langues nationales;
- fixe les conditions de création, d'ouverture et de fonctionnement des établissements publics et privés et en assure le contrôle;
- définit les normes de construction et d'équipement des établissements de l'enseignement public et privé et en assure le contrôle;
- élabore et met à jour la carte scolaire.

(2) Il est assisté dans ces missions par un organe consultatif, le Conseil National de l'Education, dont l'organisation, les attributions et les modalités de fonctionnement sont fixées par décret du Président de la République.

**Article 12** : Le financement de l'éducation est assuré par : les dotations budgétaires de l'Etat, les allocations budgétaires des collectivités territoriales décentralisées, les contributions des partenaires de l'éducation, les dons et legs, toute autre contribution prévue par la loi.

**Article 13** : La responsabilité des collectivités territoriales décentralisées dans la mise en oeuvre de la politique de l'éducation et le financement de celle-ci fait l'objet d'une loi particulière.

## **TITRE III - DE L'ORGANISATION, DE L'EVALUATION DU SYSTEME EDUCATIF ET DE LA RECHERCHE EN EDUCATION**

### **Chapitre I : De l'organisation du système éducatif**

**Article 14** : L'organisation et le contrôle de l'enseignement à tous les degrés sont des devoirs impérieux de l'Etat.

**Article 15 :** (1) Le système éducatif est organisé en deux sous-systèmes, l'un anglophone, l'autre francophone, par lesquels est réaffirmée l'option nationale du biculturalisme.

(2) Les sous-systèmes éducatifs sus-évoqués coexistent en conservant chacun sa spécificité dans les méthodes d'évaluation et les certifications.

**Article 16 :** (1) Le sous-système anglophone est organisé en cycles et filières ainsi qu'il suit : l'enseignement maternel d'une durée de deux (2) ans; l'enseignement primaire d'une durée de six (6) ans; l'enseignement secondaire d'une durée de sept (7) ans; l'enseignement post-primaire d'une durée de deux (2) ans; l'enseignement normal d'une durée de deux (2) à trois (3) ans.

(2) L'enseignement secondaire comprend : un premier cycle de cinq (5) ans ayant un sous-cycle d'observation en tronc commun de deux (2) ans et un sous-cycle d'orientation de trois (3) ans d'enseignement général et technique; un second cycle de deux (2) ans d'enseignement général ou d'enseignement technique.

(3) En plus de l'enseignement général, une formation pratique est offerte aux élèves dans les collèges et lycées professionnels, selon leur orientation.

**Article 17 :** (1) Le sous-système francophone est organisé en cycles et filières ainsi qu'il suit : l'enseignement maternel d'une durée de deux (2) ans; l'enseignement primaire d'une durée de six (6) ans; l'enseignement secondaire d'une durée de sept (7) ans; l'enseignement post-primaire d'une durée de deux (2) ans; l'enseignement normal d'une durée de deux (2) à trois (3) ans.

(2) L'enseignement secondaire comprend : un premier cycle de cinq (5) ans ayant un sous-cycle d'observation en tronc commun de deux (2) ans et un sous-cycle d'orientation de trois (3) ans d'enseignement général ou d'enseignement technique.

(3) En plus de l'enseignement général, une formation pratique est offerte aux élèves dans les collèges et lycées professionnels, selon leur orientation.

**Article 18 :** (1) Les diplômes sont délivrés dans chaque sous-système ainsi qu'il suit : à la fin du cycle d'enseignement primaire; à la fin du premier cycle d'enseignement secondaire; à la fin du second cycle d'enseignement secondaire; à la fin de la formation post-primaire; à la fin de la formation d'enseignement normal.

(2) Le passage au second cycle d'enseignement secondaire est conditionné par l'obtention du diplôme de fin de premier cycle.

(3) Un décret du Président de la République détermine les certifications du système éducatif.

**Article 19 :** Les enseignements en cycles et filières, ainsi que les modalités de choix et de changement desdites filières sont fixés par voie réglementaire.

**Article 20 :** (1) Les milieux professionnels sont, en tant que de besoin, associés à l'élaboration et à la mise en oeuvre de la politique de formation par alternance, des contenus et moyens de la formation ainsi qu'à l'évaluation et à la validation des résultats de cette formation.

(2) Un décret du Président de la République fixe, en tant que de besoin, l'organisation et le fonctionnement du système de formation par alternance.

**Article 21** : Les objectifs et les orientations générales des programmes nationaux d'enseignement et de formation ainsi que le calendrier scolaire national sont fixés par voie réglementaire.

**Article 22** : (1) L'année scolaire comporte au moins trente-six semaines de cours effectifs.

(2) Le rythme d'enseignement comprend des périodes d'études et des périodes de vacances.

**Article 23** : (1) L'enseignement est dispensé dans les établissements scolaires ci-après : les écoles maternelles; les écoles primaires; les collèges et les lycées d'enseignement général; les collèges et les lycées d'enseignement technique ou professionnel; les écoles post-primaires; les écoles normales d'instituteurs de l'enseignement général et technique.

(2) Il peut également être assuré par un système d'enseignement à distance.

**Article 24** : (1) Les établissements privés d'enseignement concourent aux missions de l'éducation.

(2) Ils peuvent être libres ou sous contrat.

(3) Le régime de l'enseignement privé est fixé par une loi particulière.

**Article 25** : L'enseignement dans les établissements scolaires prend en compte l'évolution des sciences et des technologies et, dans ses contenus et ses méthodes, est adapté aux évolutions économiques, scientifiques, technologiques, sociales et culturelles du pays et de l'environnement international.

**Article 26** : Toute implantation d'un établissement public et privé sur le territoire national doit se faire conformément à des orientations et aux critères définis par voie réglementaire.

**Article 27** : (1) L'enceinte d'un établissement d'enseignement est inviolable.

(2) Les chefs d'établissement scolaire sont responsables du maintien de l'ordre dans leur établissement.

(3) L'intervention des forces de l'ordre ne peut y avoir lieu que sur réquisition expresse du chef d'établissement.

(4) En cas de défaillance dans l'accomplissement de leur mission de maintien de l'ordre, les chefs d'établissement sont suppléés de plein droit par les autorités hiérarchiques ou de tutelle.

**Article 28** : (1) Toute implantation de salles de jeux, de débits de boissons, de salles de cinéma, de commerce de tabac et toute autre nuisance est interdite sans l'enceinte ou la périphérie des établissements scolaires.

(2) Toutefois, la vente des boissons hygiéniques peut être autorisée au sein des établissements scolaires.

**Article 29** : Les activités d'orientation et de psychologie scolaire s'effectuent au cours de la scolarité de l'enfant à tous les niveaux d'enseignement.

## **Chapitre II : De l'évaluation du système éducatif et de la recherche en éducation**

**Article 30** : L'Etat procède à l'évaluation régulière du système éducatif/

**Article 31 :** (1) L'Etat encourager et soutient les activités de recherche en éducation.  
(2) Les activités de recherche en éducation sont conduites par les organes dont la création, l'organisation et le fonctionnement sont fixés par voie réglementaire.

## **TITRE IV - DE LA COMMUNAUTE EDUCATIVE**

### **Chapitre I : De la notion de communauté éducative**

**Article 32 :** (1) La communauté éducative est l'ensemble des personnes physiques et morales qui encourent au fonctionnement, au développement et au rayonnement d'un établissement scolaire.

(2) En sont membres : les dirigeants, les personnels administratifs et d'appui, les enseignants, les parents d'élèves, les élèves, les milieux socio-professionnels, les collectivités territoriales décentralisées.

**Article 33 :** Les membres de la communauté éducative sont associés, par l'intermédiaire de leurs représentants, aux instances de concertation et de gestion institués au niveau des établissements d'enseignement, ainsi qu'à chaque échelon de concertation des collectivités territoriales décentralisées ou des structures nationales de l'éducation.

### **Chapitre II : Des élèves**

**Article 34 :** L'élève a droit aux enseignements prescrits par les programmes. Ce droit s'exerce dans le strict respect de la liberté d'expression, de pensée, de conscience et d'information de l'élève.

**Article 35 :** L'intégrité physique et morale des élèves est garantie dans le système éducatif. Sont de ce fait proscrits : les sévices corporels et toutes autres formes de violence, les discriminations de toute nature, la vente, la distribution et la consommation des boissons alcooliques, du tabac et de la drogue.

**Article 36 :** (1) Les obligations des élèves consistent en l'accomplissement des tâches inhérentes à leurs études.

(2) Elles incluent le respect des textes en vigueur, y compris le règlement intérieur de l'établissement scolaire fréquenté.

### **Chapitre III : Des enseignants**

**Article 37 :** (1) L'enseignant est le principal garant de la qualité de l'éducation. A ce titre, il a droit, dans la limite des moyens disponibles, à des conditions de vie convenables, ainsi qu'à une formation initiale et continue appropriée.

(2) L'Etat assure la protection de l'enseignant et garantit sa dignité dans l'exercice de ses fonctions.

(3) Un décret du Président de la République fixe le statut particulier du personnel des corps de l'éducation.

**Article 38 :** L'enseignant jouit, dans le cadre des franchises académiques et dans l'exercice de ses fonctions, d'une entière liberté de pensée et d'expression, dans le strict respect de la liberté de conscience et d'opinion des élèves.

**Article 39** : (1) L'enseignant est soumis à l'obligation d'enseignement, d'éducation, d'encadrement pédagogique, de promotion scientifique, d'évaluation et de rectitude morale.

(2) Il est, en outre, soumis au respect des textes en vigueur, notamment le règlement intérieur de l'établissement où il exerce les fonctions d'enseignant.

## **TITRE V - DES DISPOSITIONS TRANSITOIRES ET FINALES**

**Article 40** : Le système éducatif régi par la présente loi sera progressivement mis en place par des textes d'application.

**Article 41** : Le système éducatif en vigueur demeure et continue de fonctionner jusqu'à l'intervention des textes d'application prévus à l'article 40 ci-dessus.

**Article 42** : La présente loi sera enregistrée, publiée suivant la procédure d'urgence, puis insérée au journal officiel en français et en anglais.