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## RESEARCH PROJECT

TOPIC

**MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY IN CAMEROON:  
AN APPRAISAL OF THE SIL  
AND CABTAL EXPERIENCES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Adult literacy has been a preoccupation for Cameroon authorities and researchers since the early days on independence. The government has initiated many campaigns in order to improve the literacy level of the population. The main motive being that literacy helps to improve the living standard of the people. But the government isn't the only initiator of literacy projects. Various organizations and institutions have been involved in these activities. Churches and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have initiated literacy programmes in different areas of the country, some even before independence. On their part, researchers have suggested forms and models of multilingual literacy in order to facilitate the learning of both their mother tongues and the official languages by the learners. At present, there are four main partners in the domain of literacy in Cameroon: the SIL or Summer Institute of Linguistics, the CABTAL or Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy, the NACALCO (National Cameroonian Languages Committees) and the National Literacy Programme. The SIL is an international NGO which specialises in language development and literacy. It gave birth to CABTAL which, in addition to the SIL's activities, focuses on Bible translation. The NACALCO is a pure Cameroonian initiative which serves as an implementation and experimentation tool to researchers working on literacy. The National Literacy Programme is very recent and is the government arm in the implementation of its literacy policy.

This research aims at carrying out an evaluation of the SIL and CABTAL literacy experiences. As already said, the SIL and the CABTAL have many things in common. Both work on language development and literacy, share almost the same resources and have almost the same goals. Their main difference is that SIL is international whereas CABTAL is Cameroonian.

### **1. GOALS OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **1.1. Scope of the research**

This study sets out to appraise the SIL and CABTAL Adult literacy experiences in Cameroon mother tongues, particularly their objectives, their organization, their programmes and their methods and outcomes, because we want to evaluate how efficient and effective their activities are on the life of the literate communities in order to determine the capabilities of these communities. The study will find out if their reading ability, if they really use their

literacy skills, how they can use the language? Another goal will consist to determine if these communities use the written form of their languages for other communication purposes.

This study aims at finding out the efficiency and the effectiveness of the programmes and what makes them successful.

## **1.2. Limitations of the study**

Both the SIL and the CABTAL work in the fields of training, linguistics, translation and literacy. Their training, linguistics and translation activities will not interest us in the framework of this study. Our efforts will be focussed exclusively on their literacy work and examine it from three perspectives: efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

### **1.2.1. Efficiency**

Efficiency here means the appropriateness of input in relation of the output. Is the input appropriate to the expected output? The inputs here are: the teacher's competence, the teaching methods, the teaching materials.

### **1.2.2. Effectiveness**

Effectiveness here means the extent of the objectives achievement. To what extent are the objectives of these organisations achieved in the various programmes they have conducted?

### **1.2.3. Impact**

Impact is the action of the projects. At this level, this study will find out the effects on people's lives. Did the actions make a difference on their lives? How have their lives changed?

## **2. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

The significance of this study can be perceived at various levels. Significance here refers to the utility of the work. It looks forward to establishing the importance of the research to the community. The interest can be assessed at different levels: scientific, pedagogic, institutional...

### **2.1. The scientific interest**

This interest sums up the contribution of this study to the advancement of science, particularly of applied Linguistics.

The SIL has been in activity in Cameroon since 1969, which is 40 years of existence and has carried out a great deal of language research and development work, Bible translation and literacy in all the 10 regions of the country. No known study of this kind has been carried out for the scientific community to understand their methods, approaches and even the results achieved. It is the same for CABTAL.

### **2.2. The pedagogic interest**

The adult literacy activity is actually taking a new turn in Cameroon with the National Adult Literacy Project entering its second phase. Its pilot phase, which was launched 26 August 2005, lasted for two years. Before that date, adult literacy activities had been forgotten in the country for almost three decades. In the mean time, the SIL and the CABTAL were doing the field work. Their experiences will certainly serve as a reference for the State programmes in terms of sustainability, approaches and efficiency and effectiveness. The SIL and the CABTAL are now the pioneers in the field of adult literacy in the country, thus their experience need to be publicised to help improve on the quality of the teachings provided by other organisations.

### **2.3. The political interest**

The Government of Cameroon is planning the extension phase of the National Adult Literacy Programme, following its two-year pilot phase from 2005 to 2007. There are presently four main institutions working in adult in the country: the SIL, the CABTAL, the NACALCO and the National Adult Literacy Programme. The first two, which are the target of this study, serve as reference in the domain. Their experience, if assessed and publicised, could help in the planning of state projects.

## **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section wants to focus on the models to be used in the framework of the study. Three main aspects will be examined thanks to their pertinence in the research: the models of evaluation, the types of evaluation and the functions of evaluation. In this field, the models and types elaborated by Bhola (1990) will be considered. He prescribes up to fourteen models. But among them, three are appropriate to the present work: the Tyber's objective oriented model, the Context-input-process-product (CIPP) model and ELPAO Grid and the Discrepancy evaluation.

### **3.1. Models of evaluation**

Bhola (1990) defines a model as „information, data or principles grouped, verbally or graphically (and sometimes mathematically) to represent or describe a certain thing, idea, condition or phenomenon... a model is the essence of the learning and thinking of a specialist, stated clearly and briefly.’

#### **3.1.1. The Tyber's objective oriented model**

According to Bhola, evaluation under this model is synonym of testing. Adults in a program or project are tested to see if the objectives in regard to acquiring a certain skill or attitude have been achieved. What are the “actual outcomes” compared to the “intended outcome”? This model helps to measure clearly stated objectives. This model will help to assess the impact of the SIL and the CABTAL activities on the lives of their beneficiaries. The impact

evaluation assesses the extent to which a programme has caused the desired changes in the target population.

### **3.1.2. The Context – input – process – product (CIPP) Model**

According to the CIPP model, the sole goal of evaluation is to provide decision-makers with useful information. Each of the four elements of systems is evaluated to produce information for specific decisions:

1. Context evaluation will provide information on the setting for planning decisions.
2. Input evaluation, information for programming decisions such as alternative projects or personnel decisions.
3. Process evaluation will provide information for decisions related to methodology and implementation.
4. Product evaluation will evaluate impact and help to make recycling decisions.

This model is suitable to test the efficiency of the projects implemented by the SIL and the CABTAL.

### **3.1.3. The Discrepancy evaluation**

This model aims at comparing the performances against the standards in order to determine Discrepancy. It thereby helps to make judgements about the worth of a project. This model will be useful to establish the discrepancy between a literate community and those which have been taught literacy in their mother tongues by the SIL and the CABTAL.

## **3.2. Types of evaluation**

Many types evaluations are used in project evaluation. They can be formative, summative, Participate or collaborative, collective, objectives-related or tasks-related.

### **3.2.1. Formative evaluation**

Formative evaluation in the framework of a project is the assessment of the content of a project in term of curriculum, from the moment it is formed. This type will help to appraise what is planned in CABTAL and SIL projects before implementation.

### **3.2.2. Summative evaluation**

Summative evaluation is to sum things up, to assess what has been achieved; it usually takes place at the end of a process. It is particularly adapted to projects that are completed or are in their terminal phase to check progress. It will be applied on certain programmes.

### **3.2.3. Participative, collaborative evaluation**

In this type of evaluation, participants in a project collaborate with the evaluator to appraise the success of the project, its outcomes and limitations. In the course of our study, we will interview participants for their feedbacks.

### **3.2.4. Collective evaluation**

This is an evaluation carried out collectively by participants in groups. They discuss their appreciation of the impact of the programmes on their lives. As will be seen, it falls under the focus group research method.

### **3.2.5. Objectives – related**

Projects are launched to achieve specific purposes, specific objectives which must be assessed periodically in order to determine the worth of the projects. It will consist to compare the set objectives to the actual achievements to determine discrepancy.

These numerous types of evaluation can take different forms: Needs assessment, Base – line survey, achievement and attitude testing, learner evaluation, personnel evaluation, curriculum evaluation, institutional or organisational evaluation, product evaluation, impact evaluation, cost – effectiveness evaluation and self – evaluation.

Only a few of them suit our purpose: Achievement and attitude testing, product evaluation and impact evaluation.

### **3.3. The functions of Evaluation**

Evaluation can serve many purposes. It can be informational, professional, organizational, political, social – psychological or historical. The end use here is informational.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The appraisal of the experiences of SIL and CABTAL in mother tongue literacy in Cameroon will be conducted with a combination of the qualitative and the quantitative data collection methods. Both components of the approach need to be examined in detail.

### **4.1. The qualitative method**

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research and as such, it consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question using a predefined set of procedures to answer the question. In doing this, it collects some evidence to produce findings that were not determined in advance and that can be applied to other studies. More specifically it seeks to understand a given research problem from the point of view of the local population involved in it. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations.

The three most common qualitative methods are participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data.

#### **4.1.1. Observation**

The observation can be that of the participants to the project under consideration or that of the researcher. It is suitable for collecting data on behaviours in their usual contexts. For this study we intend to carry out field observation of various projects and in the meantime gather participants' observations.

#### **4.1.2. Interview**

The researcher interviews participants to a project to collect personal histories, perspectives or experiences. Oral and impromptu interviews of participants will be conducted in ended and ongoing projects to in a sort of collaborative evaluation of the programmes.

#### **4.1.3. Focus groups**

The researcher organises group discussions with participants in order to elicit data on cultural norms and to generate broad overviews of the issues of concern to the group in their activities in relation to the project under study. Group discussions will be organised both in terminated projects and in ongoing. In the first case the aim will be to find out their appreciation of the impact on their lives. In the second case it will aim at

### **4.2. The quantitative method**

#### **4.2.1. Statistical data collection with a questionnaire**

In order to reinforce the objectivity of the findings, a survey will be conducted using questionnaires with multiple choice questions. Communities where SIL and CABTAL have completed their activities will be indistinctly surveyed. Two different questionnaires will be necessary for each of the two categories of communities.

#### **4.2.2. Sampling**

The sampling will not be randomised. In fact size of the sample population will depend on the size of the communities, the number of communities involved in the various projects and on the areas covered by the projects conducted by the SIL and the CABTAL.

#### **4.2.3. Data analysis**

The collected data will be analysed using statistical tools and will be presented in the forms of tables and graphs showing sums, percentages and standard variations.

#### **4.2.4. Testing**

Students will be administered a test that will allow us to determine their ability both in ongoing as in completed programmes.

## **5. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **5.1. Studies and thoughts on mother tongue literacy in Cameroun**

Many scholars have expressed ideas on mother tongue literacy in Cameroon.

Duningam (1989) summed up the essence of these thoughts and attempts to use mother in schools in Cameroon, right from the Nufi project in 1928 to the PROPELCA Project in 1979.

Tadadjeu, (1987) studied the situation, the possibilities, the difficulties and the approaches in teaching mother in schools in Cameroon.

Ngo Eloma, (1999), tried to find out the role of urban adult literacy in local language and concluded that it greatly contributes to national development.

Abega, (2008) Studied the experience of the National Literacy Programme in Southern region of Cameroon in its pilot phase in order to find out its effectiveness and concluded that the objectives of the programme were achieved at 60%.

As we can see, no particular study has been conducted on the SIL and CABTAL experiences in Cameroon.

### **5.2. Projects evaluation**

In projects evaluation in general, International organisations which incept, implement and evaluation development projects regularly produce guidelines in various aspects of the life of projects. Monitoring and evaluation is an up-to-date principle and is greatly documented and used worldwide by development organisations. The World Bank's *Monitoring and evaluation: some tools, methods and approaches* (2004) is a reference in the domain.

More specifically, Bhola (1990) gives guidelines, models types and approaches in literacy projects evaluation.

### **5.3. Key terms definition**

#### **5.3.1. What is evaluation?**

Monitoring and evaluation of projects and organisations are now some of the core activities of development institutions, most of them members of the United Nations system such as the UNESCO or the UNDP. They believe that regular monitoring and evaluation constitute the key elements in the efficiency of projects and programmes. Literacy is one of the education goals in human development, and as such falls under the various types of programmes which interest these institutions. Their definitions of Evaluation are particularly interesting and appropriate, as well as those of other scholarly organisations.

According to the UNDP (2002), *'Evaluation is a selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress towards and the achievement of an outcome.'*

For Janet Shapiro (2008) *'Evaluation is the comparison of actual project impacts against the agreed strategic plans. It looks at what you set out to do, at what you have accomplished, and how you accomplished it.'*

For the World Food Program, evaluation is *'the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed operation, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, as well as efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.'*

Bhola sees evaluation as *'a process of judging the merit or worth of something.'*

From all these definitions applied to programmes, we can say that evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed operation, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results in order to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

#### **5.3.2. What is mother tongue?**

The mother tongue is the language that someone learns from the mother. It is his/her first language. It is usually opposed to the official language which is learned at school and spoken in administrations.

### **5.3.3. Literacy.**

Literacy simply put is the education of adults. Adults who did not have the opportunity to go to school at the normal age are taught reading and writing.

### **5.3.4. Mother tongue literacy.**

It is the education of adults in their local language so as to enable them read and write and eventually perform other social and economic activities

## **6. POTENTIAL RESULTS**

By the end of this study it should be possible to determine the number of communities that have been alphabetised by the SIL and the CABTAL. It will also be possible to say what literacy method is more likely to produce better result in the Cameroonian context.

According to Hamdache and Martin (1986), „evaluating a literacy project means measuring so as to describe, measuring so as to compare and analyse, and measuring so as to try to understand and explain.’ The task will consist of comparing the current situation both to the initial situations of the programmes conducted by SIL and CABTAL and to the situations they expect and desire at the completion of the programmes.

This study is expected to produce information on

- How the achievements of these NGOs compare to their objectives,
- How they structure their literacy activities,
- The quality of their trainers,
- The quality of their pedagogic materials,
- How they implement their literacy methods,
- The percentage of the literate population which can effectively use the acquired skills,
- How they beneficiary communities appreciate the activities,
- The impact of the mother tongue literacy programmes on the lives of the beneficiaries.

## **7. TENTATIVE OUTLINE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON ADULT LITERACY IN CAMEROON**

#### **Chapter one: Language, mother tongue and literacy**

- 1.1. Adult literacy
- 1.2. Formal education
- 1.3. Functional literacy
- 1.4. Functional literacy
- 1.5. Mother tongue
- 1.6. Official language

#### **Chapter two: An outline of adult literacy efforts in Cameroon**

- 2.1. Before independence
- 2.2. After independence: the early years
- 2.3. The 1970s
- 2.4. Mother tongue literacy propositions
  - 2.4.1. Ngidjol
  - 2.4.2. Bot Ba Njock
  - 2.4.3. Tadedjeu
- 2.5. The 1980s
- 2.6. Researchers efforts
- 2.7. NGOs activities
- 2.8. State programmes
- 2.9. A review of legal framework
  - 2.9.1. Political commitment
  - 2.9.2. University – SIL
  - 2.9.3. MESIRES – SIL
  - 2.9.4. SIL – STATE
  - 2.9.5. Governmental decisions

### **Chapter three: A review of some evaluation models in literacy**

- 3.1. Tyber's objectives – oriented model
- 3.2. Societal experimentation model
- 3.3. Context – input – process – product (CIPP) Model and ELPOA Grid
- 3.4. Countenance model of evaluation
- 3.5. Responsive evaluation
- 3.6. Discrepancy evaluation
- 3.7. Transactional evaluation
- 3.8. Goal-free evaluation
- 3.9. Investigative approaches to evaluation
- 3.10. Evaluation as illumination
- 3.11. Evaluation as connoisseurship
- 3.12. The advocacy model of evaluation
- 3.13. Participatory evaluation model
- 3.14. The situation-specific strategy (3-S) model.

### **Chapter four: The evaluation criteria of adult literacy in Camroon.**

- 4.1. Objectives achievement
- 4.2. Pedagogic methods
- 4.3. Curriculum
- 4.4. Teaching methods / approaches
- 4.5. Text books used
- 4.6. Equipment
- 4.7. Classroom
- 4.8. Didactic material
- 4.9. Students motivation / attendance
- 4.10. Teachers' qualification
- 4.11. Students' ability at completion
- 4.12. The literate community

## **Chapter five: Literacy methods and characteristics of a literate community**

- 5.1. Literacy methods and approaches
  - 5.1.1. The Gudshinsky approach
  - 5.1.2. The multistrategic approach
- 5.2. The characteristics of a literate community
  - 5.2.1. Existence of a standard written language.
  - 5.2.2. People use the language (its written form) for daily activities.
  - 5.2.3. Books are produced in the language.
  - 5.2.4. News papers are published in the language.

## **PART TWO: THE SIL AND CABTAL EXPERIENCES**

### **Chapter six: The main literacy organizations operating in Cameroon**

- 6.1. SIL
- 6.2. CABTAL
- 6.3. NACALCO
- 6.4. PNA / NLP

### **Chapter seven: The SIL experience**

- 7.1. Objectives
- 7.2. Organization
- 7.3. Executive committee
- 7.4. The general management
- 7.5. The programmes
- 7.6. Research programmes
- 7.7. Language development programmes
- 7.8. Literacy programmes

7.9. The literacy methods and approaches

7.10. Achievements

## **Chapter eight: The CABTAL experience**

8.1. Objectives

8.2. Organization

8.3. The executive committee

8.4. The management

8.5. The programmes

8.6. Research programmes

8.7. Language development programmes

8.8. Literacy programmes

8.9. The literacy methods and approaches

8.10. Achievements

## **Chapter nine: Impact on the communities**

9.1. SIL

9.1.1. Completed projects

9.1.2. Ongoing projects

9.2. CABTAL

9.2.1. 10.2.1. Completed projects

9.2.2. 10.2.2. Ongoing projects

9.3. SIL

10.1.1. The abilities of the literate members

10.1.2. Their use of their mother tongue

9.4.

10.1.3. The abilities of the literate members

10.1.4. Their use of their mother tongue

## **CONCLUSION**

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