

Curriculum Development and Student Teachers' Bilingual Competencies in Cameroon

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Abstract

The present study entitled curriculum development and competencies of bilingual student teachers from higher teacher training colleges. This paper investigated the importance of addressing student teachers at the end of a cycle of training present a lack of linguistic competence when it comes to the practice of bilingualism. The sample consisted of 147 respondents from higher teachers Training College students in bilingual letters in Yaoundé, Bamenda, and Maroua. Data was collected using a questionnaire constructed following the Likert scale. The data was analyzed using the Spearman Rank Correlation. It revealed that curriculum development and competencies of bilingual student teachers in Cameroon are positively significant. This paper proposes that the syllabus for bilingual letters should be finished and a copy of each should be given to each lecturer.

Keywords: curriculum development, student teachers, bilingual, competencies

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Résumé

La présente étude a pour thème le développement du curriculum et les compétences des élèves-enseignants bilingues des établissements d'enseignement supérieur. Cet article étudie l'importance de s'adresser aux élèves-enseignants à la fin d'un cycle de formation présentant un manque de compétence linguistique en ce qui concerne la pratique du bilinguisme. L'échantillon était composé de 147 répondants des étudiants du Collège de Formation des Enseignants Supérieures des lettres bilingues de Yaoundé, Bamenda et Maroua. Les données ont été collectées à l'aide d'un questionnaire construit selon l'échelle de Likert. Les données ont été analysées en utilisant la corrélation de rang de Spearman. Il a révélé que le développement des programmes et les compétences des élèves-enseignants bilingues au Cameroun sont positivement significatifs. Cet article propose que le programme des lettres bilingues soit terminé et qu'un exemplaire de chacun d'entre eux soit remis à chaque enseignant.

Mots clés: développement du curriculum, enseignants stagiaires, bilingue, compétences

1. Introduction

Teacher training in every educational system is the beginning of quality education. In other words, to achieve good performance of students the teachers who are supposed to guide the students themselves ought to be adequately equipped. The process of improving the curriculum is based on need analysis, objective design, and selection approaching teaching-learning method, formation, and review. This is actually the very beginning of every formal education. Purposeful, time-bound, syllabus oriented, and deliberately planned with definite courses to be covered are some of the major characteristics of formal education that tie with the idea of curriculum development geared towards the achievement of competent student teachers (Alemdar, Lingle, Wind & Moore, 2017, p.5). Teachers who graduate from Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Yaoundé, bilingual series are competent in both official languages.

Over the years, Bilingual student teachers especially those whose training focuses on their ability to teach and transmit the usage of both official languages are that is: English to francophone learners of English and French for Anglophone learners of French (ESL) Find it difficult for themselves to communicate competently in these languages consciously or unconsciously. Their mastery and usage of these official languages stand as a barrier to language learning and acquisition. At Lycée de Nkol-Eton, ENS Yaoundé, and Government Bilingual Practicing High School Yaoundé (GBPHS), where bilingual trainees are usually sent for an internship, trainers recognize a lack of mastery of content in 70% of the trainees whom they received. While 30% admitted that their trainees had problems with methodology (class, time and board management, approach), 20% confuse the informal domain of language with the formal and they tend to use informal language in a formal milieu (Njika,

2015).

However, the mastery of two languages remains problematic as a linguist and other language specialists argue that the degree of bilingualism of people who speak more than one language that perfectly balanced bilinguals are extremely rare (if they exist), and usually, bilinguals have a better mastery of the first language (L1) in certain topics contexts and better L2 verbal abilities in other topics and contexts Colon–Papazoglu (2000) cited in Alfredo (2007, p. 225). Cameroon has both French and English being its official languages (Roland 2016, p. 6).

The first aspect clearly brings in the monitoring of curriculum given in the form of the syllabus to achieve quality training of teachers. The competencies of student teachers depend on the teachers' language proficiency (Achiri-Taboh, & Lando, 2017, p. 20). Competencies of student teachers depend on their carrier profile and it affects their performance as well as the school environment but curriculum development is seen as the primary cause which explains this situation (Tchombe, 2010, p.5). A plan of activity is put in place to help address the needs of the learners; learners here being student teachers in all the domains of learning; cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Tyler presented a model of curriculum transmission and transaction (Miller & Seller, 1990) and it serves as a guide in curriculum development.

This stands in contrast with chapter three section thirty-seven of the 1998 orientation law which states: “the teacher shall be the principal guarantor of quality education. In this capacity, he shall be entitled within the limits of the means available to suitable living and working conditions, as well as to appropriate and initial and continual training”(Achankeng, 2014,p.29). From this law, it could be said that the teacher himself ought to be adequately equipped at the level of training to be able to grant quality education to students. In this same line of reasoning, point VII 1.4 of the recommendation of the 1995 national forum on education based on pedagogic matters states The upgrading and updating of syllabus, methods, and course contents to suit the modern technological and cultural needs of Cameroon, the reinforcement of English and French (official bilingualism), and the reassessment of entry qualifications into teacher training institutions with the General Certificate Of Education Advanced Level (GCE and A level) or Baccalaureat being the minimum entry requirement.

The research question that guided this research was: how does curriculum development influence student teachers' bilingual competencies in Cameroon? The following sections present the literature review, methodology, results, and further research proposed for the present study.

2. Literature Review

Curriculum development is made practical with various curriculum models amongst which is Tyler's rationale which is a transmission and transaction model of curriculum development. The foundation of curriculum development includes philosophy, psychology, and sociology which influences the way the curriculum is applied.

Subject matter knowledge and skills for teaching are widely acknowledged as a central component of what teachers need to master, the design of teacher education curricula in colleges of education and universities seems to ignore the fact that prospective teachers need to master the relevant subject matter knowledge and skills in order for effective teaching to take place (Mulunga, 2010). Teacher education and training in Cameroon provide initial and in-service at all the levels in compliance with the presidential decree of 19th June 1980, structuring teacher education institutions and courses (Tchombe, 2000). This was the first policy stipulating the duration of basic teacher education and training. Efforts to democratize teacher education programs and make them more effective were primary in the government's venture in the 1980s and 1990s with a focus on ensuring quality and excellence. Trailing government efforts were those of the private sector which did not lag behind. The strength of teacher education in Cameroon today is in the government and private sectors.

African knowledge and systems of organization and management, including their social support systems, are gradually being inculcated as content in pedagogical practices. Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon saw teacher education from different perspectives. Anglophone teacher education laid great emphasis on the professional training of teachers institutionally, whereas its Francophone counterpart believed more in training on the job and becoming professional teachers through competitive examination.

The two colonial cultures did pose challenges for educational reforms in teacher education and for practicing teachers, which led to policy structuring teacher education following levels and types of education: nursery, primary, secondary general, and secondary technical and vocational. The Higher Teacher Training College or ENS was organized by decree no. 88/1328 of 28th September 1988 with novel initiatives and policies that had perspectives for updating and strengthening teacher education in the country. Teacher education now had to go beyond training the teacher for the classroom or only with survival value to global development.

Tambo & Tchombe (1997) identify five main components of initial teacher training programs. These include general education, specialized subjects, professional studies, practicum, and socio-cultural context knowledge. Training focuses on educational theory and principles for practice. Theoretical training also involves studying the academic disciplines. Practicum constitutes a major component of the teacher training program, although the duration is inadequate. Across the training programs offered, three program patterns are evident

(Tambo & Tchombe, 1997) that include comprehensive, professional, and disciplines or academic-focused. But today, teacher education and training lack depth and so there is a need for continuous restructuring of teacher training programs, with consideration to student teachers' personal education, their more immediate and long-term needs, and the structure and content of courses offered.

Concerning teaching language proficiency in the English language in Cameroon, over the years, the standards of English in Cameroon as well as the performance of students in the English language at the GCE, have been on a steady decline while Cameroonians keep making their way in the English language teaching industry as a result of the rapid expansion of English as a global language. The quality of language input administered to learners seems to be decreasing. The extent to which language teachers masters the language they teach has been an issue of great importance due to students' poor result in examinations (Taboh & Rodricklando, 2017).

3. Research Methodology

Research Design: This study was a survey and used quantitative analysis.

Population Samples: The population constituted of the selected respondents 147 higher teachers Training College students with bilingual letters Yaoundé, Bamenda, and Maroua. These are level three-level four and level five students who are at the end of a cycle of training and are taken to the field for practice as part of their training and evaluation to end up their training program before graduation.

Research Instruments: The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions constructed along with the pattern of the Likert scale: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (UN), Strongly disagree (SDA), Disagree (DA), for the student-teachers, based on the two research variables of the study: technological inputs and graduate destinations.

Techniques for Data Analysis: Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Spearman Correlation was the tool used in testing the association between two variables.

Spearman Correlation is expressed as:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma \frac{2}{k}}{\sigma^2} \right)$$

Where:

- D is the difference between the ranks of X and the corresponding ranks of Y
- n= the number of paired ranks.

Research Question

The research question investigated in this study was as follows: How does curriculum development influence student teachers' bilingual competencies?

Table 1.

Curriculum development and the student teachers' bilingual competencies

Item	Statement		SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean
1	The course outline of the lecturer suits my need as a bilingual teacher to be competent in both languages	<i>f_i</i>	48	54	15	17	16	2,33
		%	32,0	36,0	10,0	11,3	10,7	
2	I believe my training in ENS influences my mastery usage and performance in English and French	<i>f_i</i>	44	91	---	---	15	2,01
		%	27,2	57,1	---	---	10,0	
3	Programs of study in ENS increase teacher training.	<i>f_i</i>	27	72	8	36	7	2,49
		%	18,0	48,0	5,3	24,0	4,7	
4	I focus on courses using both French and English	<i>f_i</i>	41	58	10	26	15	2,44
		%	27,3	38,7	6,7	17,3	10,0	
5	I focus on other subjects (disciplines)	<i>f_i</i>	21	67	31	16	15	2,58
		%	14,0	44,7	20,7	10,7	10,0	
6	As bilingual teacher, it influences the way I think as far as teaching is concerned.	<i>f_i</i>	14	82	24	17	13	2,55
		%	9,3	54,7	16,0	11,3	8,7	
7	My internship is over I can confidently teach in both official languages	<i>f_i</i>	37	25	---	---	88	2,93
		%	24,7	16,7	---	---	58,7	
8	As a student teacher, I am aware of the fact that I am going to teach English to Francophones and French to Anglophones.	<i>f_i</i>	51	99	---	---	---	1,66
		%	34,0	66,0	---	---	---	
9	I have heard of syllabus, programmer, or curriculum for the bilingual series in ENS.	<i>f_i</i>	56	71	23	---	---	1,78
		%	37,3	47,3	15,3	---	---	

Item	Statement		SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean
10	There is a link between learning in the training school and the realities in the field (teaching practice)	<i>f_i</i>	65	56	---	13	16	2,06
		%	43,3	37,3	---	8,7	10,7	
11	Teaching practice sessions figure in my program.	<i>f_i</i>	52	75	23	---	---	1,81
		%	34,7	50,0	15,3	---	---	
12	I have a mastery of both languages (French and English).	<i>f_i</i>	62	22	28	11	27	2,46
		%	41,3	14,7	18,7	7,3	18,0	
13	I think the language spoken in my immediate environment has an influence	<i>f_i</i>	68	49	24	9	---	1,83
		%	45,3	32,7	16,0	6,0	---	
14	I find difficulties in teaching some subjects.	<i>f_i</i>	14	45	6	69	16	3,19
		%	9,3	30,0	4,0	46,0	10,7	
15	My trainers help to improve my difficulties	<i>f_i</i>	35	39	36	15	25	2,71
		%	23,3	26,0	24,0	10,0	16,7	

Item one is on the course outline of lecturers and its influence on the competencies of bilingual student teachers 32%(48) and 36%(54) support the statement while 10%(15) are uncertain and 11,3%(17) and 10,7%(16) do not agree with the statement. The mean 2,33 falls in the acceptance region, meaning that most of the respondents accept the statement. Although 23 % did not agree with the statement. This implies that most respondents believe that the course outline of lecturers can shape their level of competence in the English language and teach them as bilingual students. Item two shows the distribution of respondents according to them believe that their training in ENS influences their mastery, usage, and performance in English and French languages 27% (44) and 57,1% (91) strongly agreed and agreed with this statement respectively while 10,0%(15) strongly disagreed. The mean of 2.01 falls within the acceptance region implying that the training provided to students' teachers of the bilingual series impacts their mastery of both official languages greatly and could account for their good or bad performance in the aforementioned languages bearing in mind the capital importance of these languages to our country.

Item three presents the distribution of respondents according to the influence of programs of study of competence. 18.0% (27) and 48.0% (72) strongly agreed that programs of study influence the competencies of bilingual student teachers while 24.0% (36) and 4.7% (7) strongly disagree with this statement and 5.3% (8) were neutral to this notion. The mean of 2.49 falls within the accepted region which implies that these programs are designed toward achieving competence as end products of the training provided to student teachers. It also shows that the objectives of teacher training ought to be reviewed. Item four focuses on courses on English and French language structures and how they influence student-teacher competencies 27% (41) strongly agreed, 28% (58) agreed that language courses do influence their level of competence, 6,7% (10) were neutral while 10,0% (15) and 17,3% (26) strongly disagreed to this statement. The mean of 2.44 falls within the accepted area implying that courses focusing on English and French language structures determine the level of language competence of bilingual student teachers to an extent.

Item five presents the percentage of respondents according to the extent to which courses focussing on other disciplines influence their training. In respect, 14%(21) and 44,7%(67) of respondent admitted that this structure or orientation of courses influence their training to a greater extent while 10,7%(16), as well as 10,0%(15), did not agree and 20,7% (31) were neutral to this notion. The mean of 2,58 falls within the acceptance area this could be justified by the fact that only a few courses actually focus on language while others according to their timetable focus more on other disciplines such as research and psychology. They are important, though they should not overshadow the main subject discipline as seen from the distribution above. Item six presents respondents according to the influence the presence of a bilingual department has on them as bilingual teachers 9,3%(14) and 54,7%(82) strongly agreed with this statement, and 16,0%(24) are uncertain about the influence of the presence of a bilingual department on their teaching while 11,3%(17) and 8,7%(13) say the presence of a department has no influence on their teaching thus completely disagreeing with the statement. The mean of 2.55 falls within the acceptance region implying that the presence of a bilingual department is of paramount importance in the training of bilingual student teachers for it builds in them a sense of ownership and belonging thereby catering to their affective needs. The absence of ignorance of a department would only justify their attitude of rejection ESL and FLE students have towards the language as justified in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Item seven presents the distribution of respondents according to their capacity to teach confidently in both official languages. Only 24,7%(37) and 16,7%(25) agreed on being able to teach confidently in both official languages while 58% (88) disagreed. Whereas this is the primary objective of teacher training in the bilingual series. The mean of 2,93 falls within the acceptance zone implying that this objective isn't attained and should be reviewed or better still given a close look at so as to remedy this situation. From these statistics, it could be inferred that most student teachers tend to be more confident in the teaching of one of the official languages and

not both. Item eight shows the distribution of respondents according to their awareness that they will teach English to francophone and French to Anglophones by the end of their training. 34,0%(51) agree and 66,0%(99) strongly agree to be aware. The mean 1.66 shows that all the respondents, therefore know what awaits them in the field and therefore expect that the training received in ENS to equip them with the necessary tools to be up to the task.

Item nine presents the distribution of respondents according to awareness of the syllabus or curriculum for bilingual letters. 37.3% (56) and 47% (71) of respondents agree to be aware of the existence of a curriculum for bilingual series in their teacher training college, while 15.3%(23) are ignorant of the existence or the non-existence of a curriculum for bilingual series. The mean of 1,78 shows that student teachers are in expectation of what they will receive as teaching based on the syllabus designed for them. the inadequacy of which, can make or more the competencies of these teachers in the making. in addition, the fact that 15.3%(23) are ignorant of the existence of a curriculum could be justified by the fact that in some teacher training colleges like ENS Yaoundé whose existence dates as far back as the 1960s, the curriculum for this field of study was inexistent until 2014 and is still under creation most parts were still uncompleted at the moment this investigation was conducted. The impact this lack of knowledge has on the teaching-learning process is that students can't tell exactly beforehand what they are supposed to be taught; they can't fix precise objectives based on what they will be taught. It is some sort of blind learning. The only clue they can have is on the teacher's course outline which is designed at will. This element is crucial in the training of teachers and as such raises a crucial question: on what basis were all teachers who graduated from this series being trained?

Item ten focuses on the link between what is learned in the teacher training college and the realities in the field (teaching practice) in other words link between theory and practice 43.3%(65) agreed with this statement; 37/3%(56) strongly agreed meanwhile 8.7%(13) disagreed and 10.7(16) strongly disagreed to the fact that there exists a link between theory and practice. The mean of 2.06 falls in the acceptance region this exposes the gap that exists between theory and practice reason being that most of them discover the practical part of it only at the end of a circle. This forcefully affects competence. Item eleven presents the distribution of respondents according to the presence of teaching practice in their program of study. 34,7%(52) and 50,0%(75) strongly agreed with the notion while 15.3% (23) were neutral. The mean of 1.81 falls within the acceptance area; we could deduce from this statistic that curricula for teacher training comprise maximally two teaching practice sessions from level one to five. This might not be enough to appraise student teachers' degree of competence.

Item twelve presents the distribution of respondents according to student teacher's mastery of both official languages (French and English) 41.3%(62) and 14.7%(22) strongly agree having and mastery of both official languages. 18.0% (27) and 7.3%(11) acknowledge in disagreement that they do not have a mastery of both official languages while 18.7(28) are completely ignorant of their level of mastery of both official languages. The mean of 2.46 shows acceptability. It could be inferred from the aforementioned statistics that the level of mastery of both official languages by student teachers of the bilingual series is of great importance for it sets the basis, the background for an adequate training of the individual in this regard hence anticipating on their level of performance during the training, and competence by extinction as the ultimate outcome these training bilingual students whose mastery of both official languages is questionable at the moment of entry into higher teacher training college in this field will have to depend greatly on the training provided to upgrade his language level thus stressing the vital nature of the training provided to student teachers who in turn are expected to transmit language to their students and bilingualism by extension.

Item thirteen presents the distribution of respondents according to the influence languages spoken in their immediate environment have on their level of competence .45.3% (68) respondents agreed that the languages spoken in their immediate environment actually influence their level of competence in both official languages. 32.7% (24) strongly agreed with this statement while 6.0% (09) strongly disagreed and 16.0% (24) were neutral. The mean of 1.83 implies that student teachers' competence in both official languages is also determined by the language spoken in their immediate environment. Also, the languages are spoken in their immediate environment and the natural acquisition that results from this proximity could affect student teachers' usage and transmission of both official languages.

Item fourteen presents the distribution of respondents according to difficulties encountered in teaching English and French 9.3% (14) and 30.0%(45) strongly agreed haven encountered difficulties in the course of teaching these subjects while 46.0%(69) and 10.7(16) strongly disagreed to this statement. 4.0% (6) were neutral. The mean of 3.19tey falls within the acceptance zone and implies that there is a need for adequate linguistic competence from student teachers. These statistics also expose the defects of teacher training and demand for remedy if we expect to achieve bilingualism as the end product. Item fifteen presents the distribution of respondents according to help provided by the trainers to improve difficulties encountered by student teachers 23.3% (35) and 26.0% (36) strongly agreed while 10.0% (15) and 16.7% strongly disagreed. 24. 0% (36) neither agreed nor disagreed with having help from their teacher trainer. The mean of 2.71 shows that trainers on their part do what they can to complete the training students teachers receive practically. But this is not enough

because the learners themselves have to put in personal efforts to improve personal quality thereby making themselves competent.

Table 1.

Correlation between Curriculum development and the student teachers' bilingual competencies

		Curriculum Development	Student Teachers' Bilingual Competencies
Spearman's rho	Curriculum Development	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,174*
		N	,033
Competencies of Bilingual Student Teachers	Curriculum Development	Correlation Coefficient	150
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,174*
		N	,033
Competencies of Bilingual Student Teachers	Competencies of Bilingual Student Teachers	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,174*
		N	,033

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The correlation in table 1 exposes that the relationship between curriculum development and competencies of bilingual student teachers in Cameroon is positively significant. This is because the level of significance is 0.033 thus lesser than 0.05, which is the alpha level which is the standard error margin. On the other hand; the correlation coefficient (0.174) is a positive value and is situated within the normal range. It is high and close to 1, indicating that there is a weak link between variables under investigation. The results reveal that we have no chance of making an error if we accept that the association between the variables exists. We can therefore conclude that the curriculum evaluation significantly influences the competencies of bilingual student teachers.

Discussion

The old paradigm of university-based or college-based teacher education where academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching is arched on the content-based approach to teacher education (Zeichner, 2010, p.91). Theories concerning quality teacher education curriculum indicate that there is a way of arriving at the core body of knowledge and skills with which a teacher must be equipped in order to provide them with the appropriate knowledge and skills of effective teaching for their particular subjects (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005). Tyler's rationale describes a model of curriculum development that deals with four basic questions: what educational purposes should the school seek to attain? What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attend these purposes? How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? And how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? Bandura (2007) on the other hand says learning depends on experience and may lead to long-term changes in behavior potential. The main assumption is that the environment (social context), conditioning, and [reinforcement](#) are sufficient to analyze how behavior emerges and changes. As opposed to *short-term* changes in behavior (those caused by fatigue) learning implies *long-term* changes, but not necessarily those associated with *aging or development*.

Conclusion

Competence is central when it comes to quality education and the teacher is the principal guarantor of this education. His training as seen throughout this work with the help of curriculum development factors is of utmost importance for the achievement of quality education. Granted the teacher is not viewed as the all-knowing but rather, as a guide. The word guide presupposes that he knows the way for, a blind guide cannot help but mislead those to whom he is supposed to show the way willingly not. It is on these grounds that our study on curriculum development and competencies of bilingual student teachers finds its very roots. The importance of a second language in today's globalized world can't be overemphasized; it paves the way for a variety of opportunities ranging from international relations to employment opportunities through communication and business. Implicitly, bilingualism and the training provided to potential teachers of the two official languages should therefore be given a fresh look.

Further research

- The syllabus for bilingual letters should be finished and a copy of each should be given to each lecturer.
- The number of language lessons should be increased for, language teachers ought to master the language which they teach to students. It is in fact the core of their discipline.

- The course outline of lecturers should be revisited to make sure it ties with the needed content students await to equip them with the necessary linguistic competence.
- Lecturers should make it a habit to attend teaching practice sessions of student teachers so that they can detect and bridge the gap between theory and practice. This will also help lecturers provide specific help to student teachers based on their performance in the field and thus better the practice of teaching and achieve competence as the ultimate outcome of teacher training on the part of student teachers.
- Student teachers should be cautious in their language use. They should be able to dissociate the formal from the informal milieu to avoid conscious or unconscious errors in language use both in the spoken and in the written part. Pidgin language should be avoided in the formal milieu while short forms should be avoided when texting so that it does not deter the spelling provided to the student in vocabulary lessons.

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