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## **Chapter 10**

### **Towards a National Language Policy for Cameroon**

***Blasius A. Chiatoh and Pius W. Akumbu***

If language constitutes a fundamental defining feature of human existence, then it means that a country's language policy options signal the development orientations established for that country. Accordingly choosing between foreign and indigenous languages directly implies choices between development and underdevelopment. In this light, the underdevelopment of Africa crucially hinges on the inappropriate choice of language policy adopted at independence or the failure to ensure the implementation of those considered to be significantly appropriate. In Cameroon, the case is clear. Despite the country's rich linguistic diversity, we have continued to implement a language policy that is based on foreign languages that falls short of responding adequately to the needs and aspirations of citizens. At this historic moment of reunification commemoration, the demands of a thorough review of this policy are enormous and their implications far-reaching. The need for an integrative policy, in fact, one that carefully considers the country's socio-cultural and political landscape is not only real but also urgent.

#### **Introduction**

Linguistic complexity plays an important role in the formulation of a language policy for a country. Admittedly, language policy formulation is less challenging in countries with less complex linguistic landscapes. Cameroon's situation can effectively be described as a complex situation par excellence. The country plays host to about 248 languages, a majority of which are minority languages with less than 10,000 speakers each. This makes the task of choosing a national language policy an extremely challenging one. Faced with this complexity, the country has since reunification in 1961, adopted English and French as its only official languages. Such a choice, dictated primarily by purely political concerns has over the years, proven its inherent inadequacies in properly addressing the educational and written communication problems in the country. In fact, despite constitutional and educational reforms, contained in legal frameworks considered by some as language policy, the system has failed to provide adequate solutions to the country's language problems. Today, more than 50 years afterwards, the need for an

appropriate language policy is increasingly evident. This need is made even stronger as we commemorate 50 years of reunification, an event that should mark a turning point in the history of the country's development planning.

However, the emphasis placed on the promotion of foreign language policy greatly overshadows any efforts towards putting in place a balanced policy based on indigenous languages. Current policy, which has demonstrated its limits by virtue of its exclusive and discriminatory nature, accounts to a large extent for the country's failure to judiciously harness its resources for the purposes of development. As we celebrate 50 years of reunification, it is incumbent on us to reconsider our language policy options. It is a period for us to take stock of the gains and losses incurred through a language policy based on foreign languages and to reorient our development initiatives. Undoubtedly, 50 years is a really long period in the life of a nation. Failure to plan at 50 invariably represents a resolve to fail forever. In this paper, I attempt a suggestion of theoretical and practical issues worthy of consideration in elaborating an appropriate and operational policy for Cameroon. The basic understanding in the paper is that all development planning issues are fundamentally language policy ones in the sense that they essentially constitute the core of citizenship cultivation and participation in the life of the nation.

### **On the Value of Language**

One of the key causes of wrong choices of policy is the misconceptions people have about indigenous languages. In most minority language contexts, these languages are perceived as problems rather than assets. In Cameroon, for instance, they have for many years been considered as threats to national unity and so relegated to the background (Mba & Chiatoh, 2000: 3). It is thus essential to understand that languages, like all other resources in the nation, are crucial in national development efforts and so should be incorporated into planning processes. But to do this, planners must be convinced that language, whether big or small has value in society. Alexander (2003) identifies four levels of this value, namely; economic, political (democracy), education (learning) and cultural (identity). To these can be included a fifth – ideology. Below, we present each of these value levels briefly.

*Economic value:* Language policy, through its choice of language for specific functions, can either accelerate or slow down economic productivity. Greater productivity calls for greater efficiency, which in turn necessitates better and improved education for all. So, strong foundations for economic productivity as well as scientific and technological advancement in Cameroon must be laid on a solid educational base.

*Educational value:* All modern knowledge, skills and know-how are ideally transmitted through the educational system. Given the importance of indigenous languages in the enhancement of learning, it is clear that the strongest foundation for quality education lies in a system founded on the indigenous values, that is, languages and knowledge systems of Cameroonians. In this regard, research informs us that learning is greatly facilitated when instruction takes place in languages that learners master best, that is, their tongues (UNESCO, 1953; Heugh, 2000; Obanya, 2004). For a vast majority of Cameroonian learners, these mother tongues are indigenous languages.

*Political value:* Language policy is inevitably linked to issues of voice in the definition of power relationships as well as in the distribution of opportunity. By mainstreaming some languages at the expense of others, policy is directly depriving their speakers of the right of voice in the nation. Besides, language planning prioritises equal and equitable management of linguistic resources thus providing an ideal framework for the respect and promotion of rights in the nation. Societies that uphold the values of democracy also endeavour to put in place inclusive or democratic language policies as a means of fostering people participation and the cultivation of responsible citizenship.

*Cultural value:* The interrelationship between language and identity has been well-documented. Every single individual, community or nation is concerned with issues of identity and belonging. Our identity is essentially embedded in the languages we speak. Since it takes individuals to build communities, and communities to build nations, it is, therefore, incumbent on us to carefully consider the role of indigenous languages in the construction of our national identity. In

the present circumstances, Cameroon can only boast of a foreign language national identity based on English and French. It is no doubt that such a choice is ridiculous for a nation with about 248 indigenous languages and ethnic groups. It suggests deliberate measures to impose foreign identity values on the citizens. Of course, today, there is no justification whatsoever for Cameroon to continue to promote such an alien identity among its citizens. Cameroon and Cameroonians need a national identity of their own that reflects their cultural specificities. This can only be achieved through indigenous language promotion.

*Ideological value:* This is closely related to the political and cultural values of languages. It has to do with the specific needs of defining our national cultural orientations against the overall ambition of fostering national development. More specifically, it involves acknowledging that no country has been truly independent when its educational system is fundamentally founded on foreign languages and values. Independence for Cameroon should be reflected in the choice of its educational system as demonstrated by its language-in-education options. It means recognising that continuous exclusive reliance on foreign languages as media of instruction in our schools renders our independence more of an illusion than a reality. Incorporating our linguistic resources into educational and other important domains thus constitutes a bold step towards re-appropriation of our independence, indeed, our common collective destiny. Decolonisation of our educational system calls for indigenisation, domestication and diversification (Mazuri, 2002: 276) and this ideally takes place through the valorisation of indigenous languages.

### **On the Nature of Policy**

Language policy and planning have the potential of considerably shaping individual and social attitudes and development orientations through the cultivation of a clearly expressed set of values in the nation. Whatever role a language plays in a nation is determined almost entirely by the opportunities created for the languages. For this reason, language policy can either contribute to the smooth development of a country or its systematic destruction depending on the role it is called upon to play. The value of language as a

development asset and the consequences language policy could have on society are carefully captured by Cuellar (1995: 179) in the following words:

A people's spoken and written language is perhaps its most important cultural attribute... Language policy, like other policies, has been used as an instrument of domination, fragmentation and reintegration into the ruling political structure. Linguistic diversity is thus a precious asset of humanity, and the disappearance of any language means impoverishment of the reservoir of knowledge and tools for intra-cultural and inter-cultural communication.

Consequently, policy choice is never the result of haphazard decisions. Rather, it is always the outcome of meticulous reflection and consensus. An appropriate policy for a country, therefore, takes into account a host of factors that together constitute the main thrust for building national consensus on matters of language use. In the particular case of Cameroon, given its linguistic and political complexity, great care must be taken to integrate all possible variables capable of rendering policy a desired development tool for a modern society. For a society like ours, to respond properly to collective needs, some underlying frames must be considered. Outstanding among these are:

- a) Historical frame: Cameroon is a bi-cultural country based on its official languages (English and French) inherited from colonial administration. Moreover, harmonious development planning in Cameroon calls for scrupulous respect and safeguarding of Anglophone and Francophone values along 1961 reunification demands. This means not only ensuring true equality of English and French but also revalorising national languages relegated at reunification by making them an integral part of the country's linguistic resources. The celebration of 50 years of reunification provides an ideal framework for thorough overhauling of current policies.
- b) Theoretical frame: Language planning should be understood to involve three vital components. It should be understood as involving decisions consciously and explicitly taken about language issues that encompass very highly technical areas such as standardisation of language, reforms of orthographies, terminology development and renovation (corpus planning)

and the allocation of functional roles or status to particular languages or varieties of languages (status planning), the teaching of second languages and educational decisions involving minority languages (acquisition planning).

- c) Ideological frame: Ideologically, language planning should be understood as representing a strong and genuine national vision. It encapsulates major concerns about the history and future of a nation and what it takes to construct a national spirit of oneness, dignity and pride of citizenship in the nation. Policy should not render citizens strangers or foreigners in their own country. As such, it should provide appropriate answers to crucial questions such as: Who are we? Where are we coming from? Where are we going to? Why should we go there? How do we get there? Underlying these questions must be a firm resolve to protect and project a legitimate cultural image worthy of internal and external admiration.
- d) Political frame: All language policy matters are basically political issues. Politically, language policy must pay attention to addressing concerns about harmonious coexistence of citizens from different historical and cultural backgrounds. Our fundamental goal here should be to ensure the building of national unity in diversity rather than the destruction of diversity. Constructing unity in diversity is what we refer to as integration, which is opposed to unification that involves the destruction of difference. Given Cameroon's linguistic and cultural diversity, it would be political falsehood, indeed, national betrayal to opt for unification rather than integration.
- e) Linguistic frame: Language policy and planning is a deliberate process intended to provide adequate answers to language problems in a nation. Theoretically, language problems only arise in contexts characterised by bilingualism or multilingualism. It is these situations that necessitate the choice of one or more languages for clearly prescribed functions in society. Cameroon's linguistic landscape is marked by important dichotomies that must be carefully analysed. Accordingly, the languages in this country can be grouped into foreign versus indigenous (national) and majority (vehicular) versus minority languages. Other crucial issues to be considered have to do with the phenomena of language shift and endangerment and then special learning needs for

disadvantaged minority groups such as the deaf (sign language) and minority language children. This calls for the use of languages other than English and French in official communication. Also, in line with the current process of decentralisation, which grants autonomy to regions, the choice of regional languages becomes an imperative.

- f) Educational frame: Language policy invariably involves crucial decisions about educational processes and institutional structures. Important areas of educational promotion such as curriculum development, teacher training, materials development, national assessment and certification are crucially language matters. In a multilingual setting like ours, successful educational planning must provide for the inclusive use of all languages in all teaching and learning processes. National languages shall thus serve instructional purposes (as mediums of instruction and as subjects or disciplines).
- g) Legal frame: For language policy to command national respect and adhesion; it must be legally binding, that is, it must enjoy legal backing. One of the major legal dimensions of policy is its recognition of minority linguistic rights. Linguistic rights are fundamental human rights and should be respected irrespective of the status of the languages concerned. It is, therefore, a basic right for each child or community to learn in its own language. While these are not negotiable, different learning models may be adopted depending on the context of policy application. Critical in the legal frame is the need for policy to enjoy constitutional backing that renders its application mandatory.
- h) Communicational frame: In modern society, communication in all its forms is vital in the dissemination and marketing of ideas, products and services. The same applies to language policy which enjoys significant market value (Cooper, 1989: 72). For policy to become part and parcel of the daily lives of the citizens, it should be properly marketed through appropriate communication channels and in all forms of media.

### **On the Choice of Language Policy**

Making policy decisions has always been a delicate and challenging process. In fact, a lot of stakes are involved especially given that the



choices made directly affect the interests and aspirations of citizens in the nation. Of particular attention here is the fact that language issues are fundamentally sentimental issues since they are central in identity and citizenship construction. Tollefson (2002: 5) aptly summarises the relationship between the symbolic value of language, language policy and human struggles in the following argument:

[...] Therefore, in order to understand language policy debates and the role of language policy in contemporary states, we must examine the underlying social, economic, and political struggles that language can symbolise. The symbolic value of language can have profound consequences, not only for language minorities seeking to negotiate complex and changing identities, but also for dominant groups seeking to retain various forms of political and economic power.

In a linguistically complex context like ours, therefore, it is not only desirable but equally imperative that our choice of policy integrates different levels of interests with respect to the varying socio-cultural and political realities of the country. Ours should thus be a policy that embraces the allocation of official status to some of our national languages. Only on these grounds can we guarantee more committed national interest in the integration and promotion of indigenous languages and values. Our option, therefore, shall be one that responds to local, national and international demands by valorising all the country's linguistic resources. This can only be possible through systematic cultivation of a culture of linguistic cohabitation, whereby foreign and national languages are required to share socio-cultural, economic and political space.

In making language policy choices, planners should be guided by an in-depth understanding of the different models of language planning. Some of these models are (Haugen's (1983) model cited in (Kaplan & Baldauf; 1997:29) and Hornberger's (2006) model. Haugen's model identifies two key levels of language planning, namely; status planning and corpus planning as presented on the table below:

### Haugen's (1983:275) Language planning model

	<b>Form (Policy formulation)</b>	<b>Function (language cultivation)</b>
<b>Society (status planning)</b>	1. Selection (decision procedures)	3. Implementation (Educational spread)
	a. Problem identification	a. Correction procedures
	b. Allocation of norms	b. Evaluation
<b>Language (corpus planning)</b>	2. Codification (standardisation procedures)	4. Elaboration (functional development)
	a. Graphisation	a. Terminology modernisation
	b. Grammatication	b. Stylistic development
	c. Lexicon	c. Internationalisation

**Source: Kaplan & Baldauf (1997: 29)**

On its part, Hornberger's model is more integrative and proposes besides the two levels of status and corpus planning, another critical level, which is the acquisition planning level. The table below specifies the different components of each of these levels.

### Language Policy and Planning goals: an integrative framework

<b>Type</b>	<b>Planning policy approach (on form)</b>	<b>Cultivation planning approach (on function)</b>
Status planning (about uses of language)	Officialisation Nationalisation Standardisation of status Proscription	Revival Maintenance Spread Interlingual communication – international, intralingual
Acquisition planning (about users)	Group Education/School Literary	Reacquisition Maintenance Shift Foreign

of language)	Religious Mass media Work	language/second language/literacy
	<b>Selection</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
	Language's formal role in society Extra-linguistic aims	Language's formal role in society Extra-linguistic aims
Corpus (about language)	Standardisation of corpus Standardisation of auxiliary code	Modernisation (new functions) Lexical Stylistic
	Graphisation	Renovation (new forms, old forms) Purification Reform Stylistic simplification Terminology unification
	Codification Language's form Linguistic aims	Elaboration Language's functions Semi-linguistic aims

From the two models, we realise that while status planning concerns political decisions on the status (prestige and value) to be accorded languages in for clearly specified functions in society, corpus planning deals with the deliberate intervention on the form of language, that is, the different activities of written development and promotion of the language. As for acquisition planning, it focuses on the users of language, that is, the process through which they learn or acquire a language.

In order to arrive at an appropriate policy for Cameroon, it will be necessary to give serious consideration to some key underlying factors of a general and specific nature as presented below:

### **General Principles**

Adopting a national language policy for Cameroon entails, taking cognisance of important general principles of language planning and policy formulation such as:

- 1) Standardisation of unwritten languages: Such standardisation is imperative in improving written communication involving indigenous languages. Many Cameroonian languages, especially the very minority ones, are not yet written and so cannot serve written communication functions.
- 2) Language as a development resource: Languages should be recognised as cardinal resources in holistic human development. In this light, the active presence of indigenous languages in all development planning activities (socio-cultural, educational, religious, administrative, etc.) becomes a necessary imperative.
- 3) Cultivation and strengthening of national integration: Our choice should be guided by the multilingual and multicultural nature of Cameroon. By respecting all these differences and neatly incorporating them into policy, we shall cultivate and strengthen national integration. Here, emphasis shall be laid on the distinction between national integration and national unity. While the former fits into the Cameroonian situation, the latter is a colonialist option intended to neutralise the identity and values of the different components of the Cameroonian society.
- 4) Multilingualism and multiculturalism as a national resource: Our language policy should embrace and uphold multilingual and multicultural values as indispensable ingredients for constructing a strong and integrated society. It should promote the learning and use in education (media of instruction) of languages other than English and French. In this regard, it shall recognise minority languages not as a problem but as development assets (Wolff, 2011: 62), indeed, a positive value. This mother tongue-based multilingual policy shall replace the current exclusive and discriminatory foreign official language policy practiced in the country.
- 5) Coexistence of languages: Both foreign and indigenous languages are indispensable in the definition of our present linguistic reality. While national languages shall constitute the core of our natural existence by ensuring cultural rooting, foreign languages shall enable us to meet instrumental needs of a global society. Our identity and values shall be defined in terms of the coexistence of these two categories of languages.

The role of our language policy option shall thus be to confer legality and legitimacy to this coexistence.

- 6) Balanced use of English and French: In contrast to current practices, the equality of English and French should be guaranteed through their balanced use in all controlling domains.
- 7) Mother tongue-based multilingualism: In contrast to the foreign official language bilingual policy, a multilingual policy founded on indigenous mother tongues should be instituted. This approach shall ensure cultural rooting and foster academic excellence in the classroom.
- 8) National languages in education: The use of national languages in education should be mandatory. These languages shall serve both as co-media (together with English and French) of instruction and as subjects (disciplines) in the classroom at all levels. These languages shall also become permanent instruments of lifelong learning.
- 9) National official languages: Some of our national languages should be upgraded to the status of official languages. These shall be vehicular languages or languages of wider communication (LWC). A single national official language shall be inappropriate for Cameroon. Rather, we shall need at least three languages. Given their vehicular nature, Cameroon Pidgin, Beti-fang and Fulfulde shall enjoy a place of choice on the selection scale.
- 10) Regional languages: In line with the on-going decentralisation process and considering the responsibility of regions in promoting national languages, the adoption of regional languages to serve official functions at the level of the regions should become an imperative.
- 11) Intellectualisation of Cameroonian languages: Cameroonian languages notably the ones to be granted official status should be promoted in the areas of science and technology and other fields of higher learning. Sustained research shall thus be encouraged on these languages to enable them effectively become instruments for the development and promotion of advanced learning.
- 12) National languages and preservation of indigenous knowledge: Indigenous knowledge systems inform all domains of modern science and development. These systems

(together with the values embedded in them) which are best anchored in indigenous languages should be adequately exploited for national development through in-depth scientific study and use of our national languages.

- 13) National languages and employability: National languages should be included in the official requirements for employment in both public and private sectors.
- 14) Place of other languages in education: In order to enable our children to meet the ever-increasing demands of globalisation and African renaissance, other languages (African and non-African) should be encouraged in education.

### **Specific Principles**

More specifically, in formulating a national language policy for Cameroon, measures should be taken to guarantee the respect of the following principles:

- a) Explicitness and clarity: The goals of the policy should be explicitly and unambiguously stated. This will facilitate the adoption of strategies, evaluation and feed-back on various stages of implementation. Clear and explicit definition of goals shall help ensure objectivity and so provide guarantees that the security concerns of all the different components of the society are duly taken into considerations.
- b) Comprehensive definition of goals: All policy goals should be defined in detail to permit all concerned groups, bodies and institutions to participate freely and actively in the implementation process. Roles of different languages (majority and minority; foreign and national) should also be fully defined.
- c) Balance and economy: In the definition of policy interests and actions, steps should be taken to ensure that these reflect overall national needs. Emphasis should be laid on the need for effectiveness and feasibility of action as well as the costs involved in realising the actions proposed.
- d) A coordinated approach: Measures should be taken to establish effective and efficient national coordination of activities especially with respect to different organisations, bodies and institutions charged with the enactment of the

policy. This coordination shall be ensured by a neutral body made up of members of all the stakeholders.

- e) Broad spectrum of policy: Policy should be defined in a way as to make it generally applicable across all sectors and languages of the nation. For instance, each language, its size notwithstanding, shall feel concerned by the policy.
- f) Bottom-up-top-down policy approach: For greater efficiency, the process should follow a bottom-up-top-down approach. To this end, the most important voices in decision-making shall be those of the majority of the population (ordinary people) rather than those of the minority political elites.
- g) Access to information and services to non-official language speakers: Policy shall guarantee that non-speakers of official languages (foreign and national) shall have free, if not equal, access to all information and services within the nation.
- h) Texts of application: The practice of texts of application as prerequisites for policy implementation is regressive and should be reconsidered. Authorities should realise that these texts are more of obstructions than facilitators to effective policy implementation and should either be totally scraped or their speedy elaboration and application should be guaranteed.

### **Vital Policy Domains Other than Education**

Given the linguistically diverse nature of the country and considering the need for the promotion of national languages as development resources, policy should mandatorily cover such vital domains as:

*Legal system:* The languages of the different communities should be respected as a fundamental human right in the courts and all other forums charged with rendering justice.

*Legislation:* Deliberations, documentation and reports in parliament should be in all the official languages (national and foreign) of the country.

*Civil registry:* All civil registration services should employ the languages of the locality alongside the official languages (national and foreign) in the establishment of birth certificates for newly born babies.

*Administration:* Administration should duly respect the linguistic landscape of the country. Different functions shall be clearly defined for all languages at local, regional and national levels.

*National identification:* National identification cards, travellers' passport and other related services should be in the official (national and foreign) languages.

*Tourism:* Tourism is a central income-generation source for Cameroon. Multilingualism shall be promoted in this sector in line with the linguistic realities of the country. At regional levels, regional languages shall be used alongside official languages (national and foreign).

### **Languages, the Media and Modern Technologies**

National languages should be employed in the exploitation and promotion of media networks as well as modern science and technologies. As such, the policy should ensure:

- a) Inclusion of national languages in regular media and science and technology promotion programmes.
- b) Creative use of technology for language maintenance, promotion and learning.
- c) Strengthening of the use of national languages in official (written and audio-visual) media such as the presentation of news in national official languages and a sign language.

### **A National Literacy and Non-Formal Education Policy**

An appropriate language policy for Cameroon should duly take into account the needs of adult literacy and non-formal education for youths. Policy should thus guarantee:

- Promotion of adult literacy with focus on special learning needs.
- Promotion of non-formal education for youths and out-of-school children.
- Gender-sensitiveness in adult literacy and non-formal education.



- Interconnections between adult literacy, non-formal education and formal education

### **A National Book Policy**

A language policy based on national languages must make provision for the promotion of books in these languages. A national book policy should:

- Trigger enthusiasm in book production and publishing in national languages.
- Encourage the creation of a national language book industry for a developing Cameroon.
- Encourage professionalisation through the emergence of publishers, editors, literary and scientific writers, music writers, etc. in national languages.
- Motivate the establishment of national language libraries at local, regional and national levels.

### **Policy Document and Declaration**

There is need for a policy document detailing the main components of the policy statement. The document shall clearly define the goals, strategies and mechanisms of implementation. It shall specify all relevant policy sources such as constitutional and legal provisions. The contents of the document shall be publicly declared by a competent authority most preferably, the President of the Republic.

### **Translation and Interpretation**

An appropriate and operational language policy for a multilingual Cameroon will definitely need to cater for translation and interpretation services. The policy should thus guarantee:

- Institutionalisation of translation and interpretation involving national languages.
- Dissemination of vital development information through translation into and from national languages in domains such as HIV/AIDS, agriculture, health, hygiene and sanitation.
- Professionalisation and job creation in the area of translation and interpretation involving national languages.

### **Policy Management**

Management is an important aspect of language policy effectiveness and success. In our case, the policy should be ensured by:

*A Cameroon Language Policy Advisory Board:* This board should advise government in matters of policy formulation and implementation. Its membership should comprise researchers, practitioners and specialised institutions. Its main goal should be to provide counselling on strategies and techniques of policy implementation.

*A National Language Policy Board:* This board should cater for the implementation of language policy in the country. It should be a neutral body created specifically and duly empowered for this purpose. As such, it should enjoy institutional, human resource and financial autonomy. The Board should have regional and local offices.

*A National Certification and Qualifications Board:* This board should be responsible for assessment and certification at national level. It should work closely with the National Language Policy Board at national, regional and local levels.

### **Appropriateness of Policy**

Given the context of language policy formulation, it seems imperative for us to address the crucial question of appropriate policy. As indicated earlier on, some Cameroonians are of the opinion that the country has a language policy. To this category of Cameroonians, what the country lacks is the political will to ensure implementation. My opinion on this matter is that what others consider as policy; rightly constitutes some important elements of policy but is not policy in purely scientific terms, as stated in Chumbow (1990: 288). From the steps enumerated above and the specifications of each of the steps, we realise that we cannot truly say that Cameroon has a policy worthy of the name. What we have is a set of fragmented pieces of constitutional and legal frameworks that can conveniently be referred to as expressions of intent or as half-baked policy. On-going work by the Ministries of Basic Education and Secondary Education lend credibility to our view. They are currently working on the language policy for the protection and promotion of national languages.

If what Cameroon is currently promoting is not policy enough, what then is an appropriate or ideal policy? What are its fundamental defining features? Bamgbose (1999: 24-28) makes an important contribution to this effect. While recognising the necessity for the participation of all role players and stakeholders in the process of language planning, he stresses on the overarching role of government in ensuring the success of planning actions. According to him, for language policy to be appropriate, it must enjoy the following central ingredients:

- 1) Government must be convinced of the role of African languages in development: Apparently, the Cameroon government is convinced of the need to promote national languages. However, judging from its rather laissez-faire attitude, it is doubtful if such conviction really exists.
- 2) Policies must be such as are likely to raise the status of African languages: Present legal frameworks are mute on the status of Cameroonian languages.
- 3) Policies on development of African languages must be phased: There is practically no goal specification and consequently no clear definition of phases of implementation of policy.
- 4) Implementation must be specified at the point of policy formulation: Constitutional and legal frameworks provide for the promotion of national languages but nothing is mentioned about implementation.
- 5) Implementation is best entrusted to specialised agencies rather than to government ministries and departments: So far, ministries exercise overwhelming power in matters of policy design and implementation. Again, there seems to be no indication of government preparedness to surrender implementation to a neutral body.
- 6) Grassroots' involvement and private initiatives in language development must be encouraged: Here, government neither encourages nor prohibits grassroots and private initiative. However, through its lukewarm attitude towards elaborate formulation and implementation of policy, it clearly discourages private initiative particularly within local community, missionary and civil society levels. They want to engage in actions and processes that enjoy government recognition.

- 7) Negative attitudes to African languages must be combated through awareness campaigns: Although government is visibly consistent in its promotion of official bilingualism, very little effort is made to improve on the public image of national languages.
- 8) For policies to succeed, they must be backed by a strong political will: As we have indicated earlier, political will to promote national languages is extremely low.

### **Policy Formulation Process**

Policy formulation is a highly technical process. Given the technicalities involved, it is critical that the process be diligently followed. Rubin (1983: 6-9) identifies four key steps in the formulation of policy which I take the liberty to summarise here as follows:

*Fact finding:* This is the step set aside for the collection of vital amount of data on the situation in which planning is taking place. Information is needed on the languages in use, their different dialects, other languages used, how these language relate to ongoing socio-economic and political processes (such as education, democratisation, HIV/AIDS prevention, poverty alleviation). In short, information is required on the needs, interests and aspirations of the target population. Here the more the information, the better.

*Decision-making:* The information collected enables planners to make policy decisions. Decision-making involves several levels and different sets of people. Decisions are made based on prior studies, referred to above as fact finding. One of the decisions should be whether or not to assign official and regional status to national languages. After determining the needs of the target population, decision-makers may prioritise problems involved.

*Establishment of goals, strategies and outcomes:* Here the goals, strategies and outcomes of policy are specified. Goal specification too takes place at several levels. First, a legislature establishes some general goals and assigns responsibility for implementation. Then the agency or institution of implementation defines these goals more specifically in line with other considerations like funding and staff

capabilities. Finally, the implementers may define goals in terms of the local situation. Usually, outcomes are not established in advance even though it would be helpful if they were. The identification of actors, strategies, resources (human and material) as well as the institutional framework for implementation is crucial in this step. Goal specification should be done according to short, mid and long-term needs.

*Implementation:* This step involves concrete policy actions such as (a) the mobilisation of resources, general finance and personnel management, (b) motivation and supervision of those involved with the management of the programme and the targets, (c) the sequencing and coordination of related aspects of the policy such as the preparation of texts in languages not formerly used as media of instruction. Implementation is a critical variable in the success of the plan. An important clarification concerning implementation is that it shall be phased depending on priorities established by the implementers.

*Evaluation:* Evaluation involves analysis of trends and general monitoring system as well as specific aspects of a particular programme. The planner must determine whether actual outcomes match projected outcomes, and if not, then why not? This information enables him to know whether or not to modify his strategies in order to achieve predicted outcomes. Evaluation also permits the planner to provide feed-back on the implementation process. Ideally, evaluation should take place in the short, mid and long-terms in line with established policy goals.

## **Conclusion**

For many years now, Cameroon has recognised the need to adopt an alternative language policy to fill the gaps created by the dominant English-French language policy. As we celebrate 50 years of reunification, therefore, the formulation of an appropriate and operational language policy for Cameroon becomes even more compelling. To succeed in this noble journey, government openness to different sheds of opinion is an absolute necessity. But even more importantly, the diagnosis and treatment of language problems in this country must be informed by scientific and inclusive approaches. In this paper, we have attempted to make proposals that could inspire

stakeholders in this direction. Whatever the limitations of these proposals, they constitute nevertheless, a scientific basis for more reflections on ways and means of forging ahead with the language policy formulation process. The historical and political implications for urgent action are obvious and should be given serious consideration.

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