

The Languages of Communication in the Joint Strategy PNDP-Plan Cameroon for the Development of the Agricultural Sector in the Commune of Rey-Bouba

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Abstract: In Cameroon, the search for solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment is the main concern of public authorities and development partners. The Youths of Rey-Bouba locality of North Cameroon, benefit in the framework of the optimization of programs for development of the agricultural sector, the support of the National Program of Participatory Development (PNDP) and Plan-Cameroon, which are two organizations that support development. But when we look at it, we deplore the fact that these young people are unable to achieve their socio-economic integration. To better understand this state of affairs, this article aims to assess the impact of the communication languages used to conduct these agricultural programs. To this end, a survey based on observation, questionnaire, interviews and documentary research, conducted among 800 local subjects, including the populations of the villages of the borough of Rey-Bouba, the officials of the Town Hall, the PNDP and Plan-Cameroun, reveals that communication between beneficiaries of agricultural projects and support organizations is done in official languages. These languages, in particular French and English, are poorly mastered by local populations. Since the translation and interpretation of these texts are not precise, the chances of empowerment and socio-professional integration of Youths are undermined. The work then recommends the use of local languages in the development strategy of the agricultural sector.

Keywords: Development, Languages, Youth, Agricultural Sector

1. Introduction

The development of the populations is one of the main concerns of the Cameroonian authorities, whose population is estimated at 27 224 262 souls, with 37.05% of people living in extreme poverty [1]. In rural areas, 90.04% of these people practice agriculture. The State then undertook reforms to develop this sector of activity which occupies nearly 60% of the active population and represents 68% of GDP in 2016 and 76.38% in 2017 and approximately 15% of budgetary revenue in Cameroon [2-4].

It is in this perspective that Plan Cameroon and the National Participatory Development Program (PNDP), have been supporting the State since 1996 and 2004 respectively, in promoting the sustainable development of all local

communities [5].

However, despite the highly appreciated joint deployment of these two organizations in the locality of Rey-Bouba in the North-Cameroon Region, young people find it difficult to acquire the skills likely to ensure their socio-economic integration through the reform agrarian.

This work therefore aims to analyze the impact of the languages of communication in the joint action carried out by the PNDP and Plan Cameroon, with a view to developing the agricultural sector in this locality. The theoretical and methodological insertion, the results and discussions, as well as the suggestions constitute the main articulations.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Insertion

The clarification of the key concepts, the literature related to the object, some explanatory theories, as well as the methodological approach constitute the essence of this section.

2.1. Some Key Concepts

Language is a structured system of vocal signs, used by humans to communicate [6, 7]. It is also defined as a set of necessary conventions adopted by the social body to allow the use of the faculty of language existing in the individual [8].

Development, conceived as a dynamic process of changing the environment, natural or societal, with a view to transforming the human condition [9], is characterized by more production, more technological and socio-political changes likely to maintain or increase the yields obtained [10, 11]. Its local dimension is understood as the qualitative and sustainable improvement of an economy and its functioning, relative to a given environment. This approach calls on the traditional and cultural values of the said environment and makes use of methods of synergy between the actors involved in supporting young people in the fight against poverty.

2.2. Literature Paper

Declining his vision of endogenous development, Ngalasso-Mwatha states the following:

It is more effective to develop a national language than to artificially cultivate a foreign language. An education that would be given in a mother tongue would avoid years of delay in the acquisition of knowledge. Very often the foreign expression is like a waterproof coating that prevents our mind from accessing the content of the words which is reality [12].

Indeed, it has been shown that the use of national languages as a medium of communication facilitates the transfer of knowledge. This suggests that their introduction into development programs is a source of added value [13, 14]. Thus, alluding to Ncabwenge, comprehension “consists in relating the elements dispersed in the text”, which requires “a wide range of linguistic, extralinguistic and cognitive skills of the receiver [15]. Agreeing with Ki Zerbo, he asserts that the promotion of endogenous development requires “an Africanization of programs and the implementation of an educational method that favors the culture of a new spirit.

In this vein, peasant and rural organizations present themselves as the place of expression of the interests of the populations and a means of achieving the objectives they set for themselves to improve their living conditions. Thus, at the end of the assessments of the various actions and development projects carried out in Cameroonian localities, it appears that their failure stems from the non-involvement of the beneficiaries and the ineffectiveness of the communication approaches adopted [16, 17]. Overall, the literature indicates that the socio-economic integration of young people through agricultural activity requires the judicious use of the languages

of communication [18].

2.3. Explanatory Theory

We have borrowed for this work, the classic models of development, born from the developmentalist paradigms. The exogenous model, based on the liberal economy, advocates the implementation of projects and programs designed, financed, planned and controlled by the international financial community. This model does not include the involvement of populations, hence the increase in poverty, school dropouts, unemployment, illiteracy, etc. In this vision, African languages are unsuitable because they are numerous, unwritten, non-functional. Therefore, it is necessary to literate/communicate with the populations in the imported languages to instil in them the consumer ideology to support economic growth [19].

The endogenous model, on the other hand, aims to be self-centered, centered on “self-reliance” and on “people-centered” or popular participation. Contrary to the liberal vision, the endogenous model is based on cultural anthropology according to which languages and cultures are invaluable resources to be capitalized in any development process [20]. It is in this perspective that the authors of the new economy did not hesitate to insert them in the direction of a fair, human and efficient African economy, taking the opposite view of the theses of the Breton Wood Institutions according to which, the multilingualism and ethnicity would reduce economic performance [21].

It then becomes clear that linguistic inequality in the face of modern and universal knowledge affects the development of African countries. Several theses subscribe to it in these terms: In local African communities, where daily communication takes place almost exclusively in local languages, the need to develop and promote modern communication systems in these languages remains a concern. Where information on modern approaches to development is available to most of these communities, this occurs almost exclusively in the official inherited languages, which most of the population neither understands nor speaks [22]. This approach to information dissemination is largely responsible for the failure of the vast majority of development programs proposed and carried out on the continent over the years [23].

3. Methodology

This section presents the study participants on the one hand, and the survey instruments and procedures on the other.

3.1. Attendees

The participants in this survey come from a parent population estimated at 800 subjects, including the populations of the villages of the Arrondissement of Rey-Bouba, the officials of the Town Hall, the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon. Based on simple random sampling and reasoned choice techniques, we selected ninety-five young

people from four villages and five officials from the PNDP, Plan Cameroon and commune structures. For a total sample of 100 subjects, i.e. a representativeness rate of 12.5%. The general characteristics of our sample have been listed in the following table:

Table 1. Distribution of the sample.

Villages	Hommes	Femmes	Total partiel
Rey-Bouba	25	04	28
Baikwa	26	10	36
Dobinga	10	02	12
Bere	13	06	19
Mairie	01	01	02
PNDP	02	00	02
Plan Cameroun	00	01	01
Total			100

Source: Field data, May 2021.

3.2. Instruments and Procedures

The investigation that we carried out in the period from March 2017 to July 2019 was made possible by the use of four techniques, namely direct observation, documentary exploitation, semi-direct interview and questionnaire survey. The documentary research first consisted of identifying international, regional and national trends relating to the languages of communication in development strategies. This approach allowed us to consolidate the interest of this contribution.

Thereafter, the direct observation carried out on the basis of an observation grid, came to enrich the documentary exploitation, making it possible to define in a concrete way, the linguistic behaviors of the actors of the community of Rey-Bouba within the framework support for the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon in development projects in the agricultural sector. With regard to the semi-direct interview, it was able to be carried out through conversations using an interview guide. These interviews took place with officials of the local town hall, as well as those of Plan-Cameroun and the PNDP. This procedure allowed us to have an idea of their linguistic representations and to know what is the effectiveness of the languages of communication that they use in the conduct of development projects in this locality. To complete the qualitative data, the same concerns were the subject of individual surveys by questionnaire among the populations. The following sections report on the results of the study.

4. Results and Discussions

The shortcomings related to the languages of communication, as well as the proposal of a model for the use of languages for the optimal development of the agricultural sector in the locality of Rey-Bouba constitute the main results of this work. Simultaneously, we will proceed to the discussion of these results.

4.1. Rey-Bouba: A Locality with Multiple Assets

Located in the North Cameroon region, Mayo-Rey

department, the municipality of Rey-Bouba was created in 1966 and covers an area of 8000 km². Agricultural production is at the heart of the economy of the locality, with hydromorphic soils and mountainous relief, favoring the practice of all kinds of food crops and cash crops, hence the qualifier of high agricultural income area [24].

The bush around the town of Rey Bouba is home to a diversity of animal species including large antelopes, elephants, buffaloes and the majority of African savannah beasts. Bouba Ndjidda National Park, hunting zones 10 and 11, the great captain or Mboukma village, are strongholds where wild animals evolve, factors of tourist attraction. The diversity of species in the municipality is a major asset for local communities, who exploit these natural resources to improve their daily living conditions.

Like the communities of black Africa with a high population growth rate, the locality of Rey-Bouba has an essentially young population, concentrated around the poles of economic activity. The social organization takes the form of a pyramid with a Lamido at the top, represented in the villages by a Daogari, who coordinates the actions of the chiefs of the districts or villages called Djaoro. These traditional authorities of great notoriety collaborate with the public administration. There are sixty-six (66) farmer organizations that play an important role in promoting local development. They work in particular in the production and marketing of cotton, under the coordination of SODECOTON. The major ethnic groups that inhabit this commune are the Fulani, the Damas, the Lélés, the Lamé, the Toupouri, the Dourou, the Moundang, the Gambaye. There are 45% Muslims, 35% Christians and 20% animists [25].

4.2. PNDP and Plan-Cameroon: Development Support Structures in the Locality of Rey-Bouba

The National Participatory Development Program is a structure placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT). Its mission is to fight poverty in rural areas by promoting "sustainable development". The PNDP has four components: financial support for the development of rural communities; strengthening municipalities in the decentralization process, building the capacities of actors and consultation, management, monitoring-evaluation and communication of the various actors.

Since 2004, the municipality of Rey-Bouba has benefited from multiple achievements of the PNDP. This is particularly the development of infrastructure and the training of communities in the areas of agriculture, livestock and fishing in several villages. We can cite the formation of young people in agricultural Common Interest Groups (GIC), the construction of agricultural storage warehouses, the construction of slaughterhouses in the markets to facilitate the marketing of livestock products (meat) and peaches (fish). Added to this is the financing of youth projects in the agricultural sector.

However, financial constraints, insufficient human resources and the inadequacy of the languages of

communication are the main constraints faced by this organization in supporting communities.

Plan-Cameroun is a non-governmental, apolitical and secular child-centered community development organization. Its primary vocation is the promotion of the rights of the child and its protection against all forms of abuse on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to Plan Cameroon, its approaches become consultative, long-term community-based and life-saving in favor of children with their families and communities in countries in Africa, Asia and America [26]. Plan therefore proposes, among other things, to enable disadvantaged children and their families to meet their food needs and increase their ability to benefit from the benefits of the actions of this organization; to strengthen the capacities of populations to participate in the development of their society; provide support to young people to facilitate their integration into society.

Thus, Plan-Cameroon grants financial and material support, as well as quality seeds, fertilizers and phytosanitary products to farmers, to increase the production of the communities where Plan has identified the needs. The organization also promotes hygiene, child nutrition, the construction of latrines in schools and the sanitation and equipment of health structures for the well-being of the community. It contributes to the fight against HIV AIDS, malnutrition, cholera, participates in the promotion of Income Generating Activities (IGA) and capacity building of vulnerable people in entrepreneurship. Plan-Cameroon provides considerable support in the development of inclusive, safe, healthy and child-friendly learning centers. But this organization encounters difficulties relating to the local cultural environment, in particular the languages of communication, as well as the dynamics of the population to adhere to the projects initiated by the organization.

4.3. Communication Languages of the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon

The survey carried out among the actors of the commune of Rey-Bouba reveals that the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon provide considerable assistance in the search for the well-being of the populations. Respondents say these organizations have provided solutions to concerns about children's schooling and health. Collective works are built and projects financed. But it remains observable that the young people of the locality see their expectations not met in terms of socio-economic and professional integration.

Despite the measures taken by these organizations to ensure a better future for them, the young people of Rey-Bouba are unable to appropriate the requirements of agricultural development, their main source of income. Whatever the component targeted, everything is done in the language of the organization, which is generally French. Despite the use of translators in local languages, the message remains inaccessible for most beneficiaries. While a few young literates succeed in drawing substance from the communications of these organizations, the majority, to which

must be added the illiterate adults, remain closed to all these achievements.

All actors recognize that the setting up, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural projects, as well as the various training courses aimed at building the capacities of actors, the development of teaching aids, are done in a language that the beneficiaries of the supervision of the PNDP and Plan-Cameroun do not all master. If it is so true that these organizations have the mission of promoting the development of grassroots communities, it seems obvious that an emphasis should be placed on the success of the communication dimension, a sine qua non condition for the success of the projects. In the case of this work, the languages of communication of the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon do not allow the development of the agricultural sector because the target populations do not appropriate the message of these organizations, mortgaging the government's vision of the fight against poverty.

5. Suggestions

For the population support approach of the PNDP and Plan-Cameroon to produce the expected results in this case, the socio-economic integration of young people through the development of the agricultural sector in the locality of Rey-Bouba, it would be judicious that it is based on the IMC model of Herbert Simon. This model is based on the respect of three stages in decision-making in relation to a problem. It is about the intelligence of the problem, the modeling and the choice of the option of resolution of the identified problem.

As part of the understanding of the problem, the development support organizations that are the PNDP; Plan-Cameroon and many others would benefit from involving beneficiary groups in the identification of projects and strategies for their implementation. This makes it possible to evaluate the level of oral and written expression of the target, to plan an effective communication strategy. The modeling here will be based on the treatment of the problem using the most appropriate supports to provide effective solutions to the problem of agriculture with a view to the socio-economic integration of young people in the locality. Finally, it remains to choose an appropriate solution in relation to the situation raised.

Beyond the other limits identified in the support approach for local initiatives adopted by the PNDP and Plan-Cameroun in the Rey-Bouba district, that relating to the languages of communication appears to be the main one. Also, to solve this problem, we were inspired by the model of the LSD/LCD interface designed by sociologists, anthropologists and linguists [27]. In the ComDev process, development projects are usually developed and disseminated in Source Languages of Development (LSD). Decoding is done either in Western languages or in local languages or Development Target languages (LCD) through translation, terminology, etc. activities. This creates linguistic insecurity [28] producing developmental errors on the one-way transfer of knowledge from northern countries to southern countries [29].

Thus, the proposed model is based on the consideration of local languages upstream and downstream in development projects. It triggers participatory energies and processes of rehabilitation of local knowledge that Robinson emphasizes in these terms: “the local language must find its place in a participatory development intervention” [30].

The sender, in this model, is represented by the secondary target population composed of community leaders such as village chiefs, religious leaders, elders, etc. It identifies and plans development needs. Awareness messages are designed in local languages and disseminated by traditional media (griots, palaver tree, drums, etc.). The primary target population adheres voluntarily in the sense of participatory development. The model of the LSD/LCD interface is part of a broad anthropological perspective. African languages and imported languages are essential for the balanced development of human beings. This position finds its justification in the variety of sources of knowledge and external and internal stimuli for development. It integrates the local, supra-local (national) and global dimensions without which there can be no development. This model is shown in the figure below.

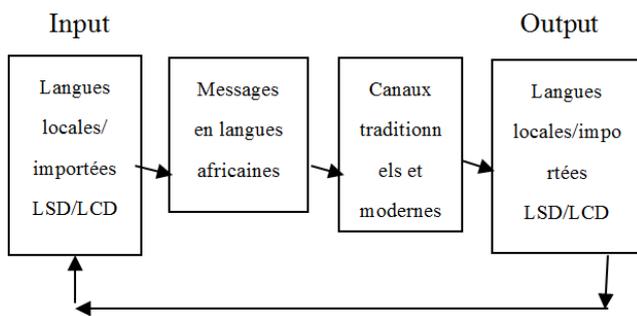


Figure 1. The LSD/LCD interface model [27].

The LSD/LCD interface, a crucial junction point for innovative information aimed at target communities, emphasizes feedback. The interface model breaks the LSD/LCD dichotomy, dilutes linguistic and gnomic borders and imposes itself as a receptacle for messages of exogenous and endogenous development, a source of sustainable development.

6. Conclusion

Based on the observation that, despite the efforts made by the public authorities and private partners to find solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment, the population and specifically the young people of Rey-Bouba are unable to integrate socio-economically, this work has set itself the objective of analyzing the languages of communication of the PNDP and Plan Cameroon in the development of the agricultural sector of the municipality of Rey-Bouba. At the end of a survey based on observation, documentary research, interview and administration of the questionnaire, several limits were identified in the support approach of these two organizations in the locality, the most significant of which

seems the inadequacy of the languages of communication. The LSD/LCD interface model, inspired by the work of Abolou has been integrated into the IMC model of Herbert Simon so that this problem in communities can be solved.

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