

The place of culture and language in school and its implications for learning, identity and development

A case study of two villages in Western Cameroon



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Illustration: Character by Faith47, used with permission.

**“True education must correspond to the surrounding
circumstances or it is not a healthy growth”**

(Mahatma Gandhi)

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CFA	(Franc de) Communauté Financière Africaine
EFA	Education for All
LOI	Language of Instruction
LWC	Language (s) of Wider Communication
MT	Mother Tongue
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
MINEDUC	Ministère de l'Education Nationale/Ministry of national Education
PTA	Parent-Teachers Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
UN	United Nations

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1. Introduction

Education in Africa bears testimony to the colonial legacy of a system directed and controlled from the center of a nation-state, a syllabus dominated by theoretical subjects and Western culture, and European languages as languages of instruction. This thesis sheds light on the extent of this legacy - and on how the use of former colonial educational content - and languages is experienced in two villages in Western Cameroon in 2007.

Education is often regarded as a panacea in development discourse and there is considerable focus on achieving “Education for All”. However, values and ideologies are entrenched in education and it is therefore always political and inextricably linked to other processes at work in society. Any analysis of education must bear this in mind. This means that education does *not* necessarily lead to development in the meaning defined below. On the contrary, it can contribute to the legitimatisation and reproduction of society’s structures and to the sabotaging of a challenge to - and transformation of them (Ginsburg in Brock-Utne 2000). It is a central claim of this thesis that the educational systems of the South for the most part are adjusting the consciousness of their pupils to accept the injustice they suffer, instead of enabling them to deal with the causes of that injustice (Freire 1970).

The concern is that the focus on universal enrolment and on measurable learning outcomes such as technical reading and writing skills are effectively hindering a consideration of the more fundamental questions concerning the relevance of schooling such as the relevance of the language, learning processes and content for a life in African societies - and for development.

For many years, scholars and politicians alike have agreed that learning is best achieved when it is mediated by the mother tongue of the learner, and that second and third languages are best learned when the learner masters her mother tongue both practically and theoretically (Cleghorn 2005). Moreover, African politicians, including Cameroonians, have talked about the importance of African languages for some time. This consensus seems to have put the matter to rest, “forgetting” that this knowledge has not been spread to the masses and forgetting the fact that the language of instruction still *is* French, English or Portuguese in the majority of sub-Saharan Africa, and few countries have successfully reoriented their systems since the colonizers left. I will argue that this has to do with lack of political will to change the situation.

1.1 Research objective

The objective of the study is:

To explore what kind of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and reflections are present among teachers, parents, and children regarding the place of language and culture in education.

The assumption is that the mentioned priority given to foreign culture and languages is profoundly affecting the attitudes of Cameroonians towards their own languages and culture and that political decisions are blocking their access to knowledge of the fact that the children would learn better if taught in their mother tongue. Furthermore I assume that there is a mismatch between the reality they are presented with in school and the reality they see around them when they leave school. If this is true, there are no real prospects for empowerment neither of the individuals nor of the two communities, on the contrary, school becomes a place of disempowerment, and the potential positive effects of education are missed. In talking with people in the two villages I wanted to find out how they perceive these questions: Do they know what the academics and politicians know about Language of Instruction? Do they perceive the mismatch between school and society as a problem? How do they feel about their own language and culture - and what are their thoughts on education and development? It is particularly interesting to see what the teachers think of these questions because they are the communicators of the educational system and as such their attitudes reflect the system.

1.2 Education and development

The term “development” applied in the field of development geography should imply an improvement of many people’s lives. This means that development does not equal “economic growth” or “transformation” because the first might benefit only a few and the second might not be for the better. Furthermore there has to be other aspects to development than the economic one, as people and countries alike have social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs that are not all fulfilled by money (Friedman 1992).

The meaning of development that I choose for myself is a transformation that leads to Chambers’ “well-being for all” (1997: 9). Well-being is a person’s experience of having a life of good quality - and although this is a subjective experience - many people will agree that this involves the raising of living standards, access to basic services, security and freedom for

fear, health, good relations with others, friendship, love, peace of mind, choice, creativity, fulfilment and fun.” (1997: 10). Furthermore, a transformation that comprises nature’s quality and/or ability to reproduce and sustain itself can never be called development.

Finally, a self-sustained, sustainable development needs to be rooted in the country’s own resources, culture and language (Freire 1970, Friedman 1992)

To achieve “Universal Primary Schooling for All” is one of the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and “Education For All” (EFA) is a recurrent slogan. There are good reasons for this. The level of education in a given population correlates positively with both social and economic development; education has the potential to foster skills, knowledge, attitudes and understandings that are useful both for the individual, the community and the nation.

For the *individual* education is a form of empowerment. Literacy opens doors, and schooling has the potential to strengthen the pupils’ sense of self and confidence by giving them a sense of mastery and by encouraging self-reflection. It gives pupils insight in the opportunities that exists in their society, in rights and in ways to go about things, and thus contributes to enhanced possibilities of realisation of goals and dreams. Furthermore, education offers a wider perspective on processes and causes-effects in society and the role of individuals in it. Education means the possibility to take control of your own life.

In a macro perspective, the two main functions of education are to provide a workforce for the economic system, and to make people into citizens, that is to integrate them into society’s norms and values. Education is also seen as having a unifying effect in pluralistic societies. Mass education is organized around the nation-state and has as a distinct goal to foster feelings of belonging and a common culture to the nation. Furthermore, the provision of national expertise is pivotal for self-reliance and area-appropriate policies.

1.3 Limitations

I have chosen to focus on primary schooling because the issues at hand are particularly pertinent here, at least when it comes to the pedagogical and psychological aspects. Unfortunately, it is also a fact that many African children drop out of school before the secondary level, and so the content of primary schooling is very interesting.

It cannot be stressed enough that teachers and pupils in Africa suffer severe material shortcomings due to the economic situation and that the quality of teaching and learning necessarily is greatly affected by this. The teacher-pupil ratio or lack of qualified teachers,

low wages, poor infrastructure, lack of pedagogical material and lack of text books are problems that are not discussed in this paper because they can be explained *primarily* by the economic situation.

The continued use of colonial languages and content in African schools deserves analysis on macro, meso and micro levels. While I touch on all these levels, the main focus was to explore how the institutionalized form and content of schooling was experienced by the individuals and the communities - to try to understand them and explain them.

This thesis does not focus on gender. I therefore feel the need to call attention to the sad fact that all problems of education hit girls harder than boys. They are significantly more often than boys kept home from school, they drop out earlier and they have fewer positive role models and job opportunities to inspire them.

1.4 Structure of thesis

In chapter 2 I present the neo-colonial perspectives that have formed the backdrop of the thesis. This choice of neo-colonial relations as an explanatory device necessitates an outline of the colonial background of Cameroon which is given in chapter 3, along with a presentation of the field. Cameroon's unique history of two separate colonial trajectories was a main reason why I chose to do my field work there, and it is also what the Cameroonians I met use as an explanation for many of the country's problems. In chapter 4 I explain my choice of a qualitative approach, I reflect on the quality of my material, and I show the different considerations taken while conducting the field work. The following analytical chapters present the data structured around different topics. In chapter 10 I attempt to summarize the implications of my findings.

2. Theory

The history of development policies is dominated by the modernization ideology. Though there have been, and still are, forceful attempts to make a dent in this wall of neoclassical economics, no other ideology can be called “mainstream” or “powerful” on policy level. The perspectives applied in this thesis were born out of a rejection of this paradigm. Modernization thinking professes a linear, evolutionist model of development that is applicable everywhere. Only in imitating the stages of development that the states of the industrialized North went through, can the poor countries of the South achieve development. In order for this to happen, most modernization theorists also underline the need for people in the south to change their ideas, traditions and norms to be more like the secular, rational and positivist-minded people of the North (Coetzee et al. 2001). The focus is on an expansion of the manufacturing sector, which will eventually radiate modernity in a sectoral and spatial spread of modernity. I agree with Kothari and Minogue (2002) that today’s neo-liberalist approach is a continuation of the modernization paradigm.

In the 1970s the so-called *dependistas* formulated theoretical approaches that claim capitalism is underdeveloping the South through relations of unequal exchange (Coetzee et al. 2001), and that there is no comparison, and thus no foundation for imitation, between underdeveloped and developed states. Many thought that only through de-linking from the capitalist nations of the world could the South hope to obtain development. The hegemonic idea of “development” as *economic* development was also attacked, and there was a shift in focus from the “core” (North) to the periphery (South).

The scholars behind the perspectives I apply are surely informed by these Neo-Marxist ideas, but none of them are as universalistic and deterministic in character as dependency theorists. Though it carries many layers, their work is applied in this thesis for two *main* reasons. One is their *post-imperialist* or *neo-colonialist* characteristics, which is why this term is elaborated on in the first sub-chapter. Besides their accurate descriptions of how power relations manifests itself in the educational system - and how these clearly do not work to the advantage of the majority of the people - I have chosen them for the way they put people in the centre of their own development. In my view, education should first and foremost work as an *enabler* for people to realize their potential. And I do believe in the power of human agency. To the degree that this chapter focuses on systems, this must therefore not be mistaken for a mechanical determinism.

The perspectives complement each other in the following manner and order: After the

mentioned presentation of post-imperialistic theories, I go on to outline some class perspectives that are fruitful for the understanding of how these power relations play out in African politics. Subchapter 2.3 concerns the theory of Paulo Freire on development through a liberating pedagogy of the oppressed. Freire is a natural choice when writing on education in the South because of his belief in education as a transformative force. But he is chosen most of all for his insistence on the potential of the people to regain control over their societies and change them. Next I have chosen to use Bourdieu's theory of reproduction because I find it useful in explaining how the power relations are reproduced by the people within the system. Before the chapter is summarized, I go on to explain the significance of language as this is given much emphasis in the thesis and is a very rewarding analytical nodal point.

2.1 Post-imperialism and neo-colonialism

Classical works on imperialism, such as Lenin's, explained the expansion of the European colonizers in the 19th century with the need of their capitalistic system for new markets, investment opportunities and raw materials (Coetzee et al. 2001). Lenin fused imperialism with capitalism by defining it as *monopoly capitalism*, and defining monopoly capitalism as the present (and highest) stage of capitalism.

“Monopolies, oligarchy, the striving for domination and not for freedom, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations - all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic or decaying capitalism.”¹

Post-imperialistic scholars are more practical in orientation than the system-focused imperialism and dependency theories, and focus on “questions of agency, power and politics.” (Coetzee et al. 2001: 63). They found Marxian theories to be too narrow, in that they did not allow much room for culture and alternative class formation. The rise of an international (corporate) bourgeoisie, where the elites of African countries have shared economic interests with the owners of a multinational company and not with their own people, is of special interest. In other words, loyalty is to class, and class transcends national boundaries.

In conventional use, imperialism has come to mean a country or company that controls

¹ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch10.htm> X. The place of imperialism in history. Retrieved 15.01.09.

another country (with or without the help of insiders) by use of their superior economic and cultural power. The essence of imperialism is thus exploitation and abuse of power.

Stavenhagen, in Paulston (in Karabel & Halsey 1977), writing on Peru, uses the word “internal colonization” on how the Creole landowning elite and their mestizo administrators in Lima are dominating and suppressing the large Indian majority. A main reason for this characteristic is the lack of control other regions have over their economic sector and the lack of surplus capital being reinvested in the region that has produces it. Paulston identifies the exclusive use of Spanish as Language of instruction, and the “totally irrelevant national curriculum based on an idealized version of coastal urban high culture” (Karabel & Halsey 1977: 416) as two of the major obstacles to the improvement of mass education in general and the completion of primary school for Indian children in particular. Moreover, he sees the instructional methods as thought-inhibiting, and this, along with the implicit and explicit stress on the legitimacy of institutions like the church, the military, the police and the civil bureaucracy is helping to “perpetuate the practice of internal colonization used by the superordinated group to help maintain their privileged positions” (Karabel & Halsey 1977: 419). There is much information and values being transmitted in school that is not in itself political, but that nevertheless may impinge on the development of an individual’s attitudes towards authority (Barbagli & Dei in Karabel & Halsey 1977). I am not in a position to comment on whether less developed regions in Cameroon act as colonies to Yaoundé and Douala, but using the metropolis-colonial analogy, I certainly was, as will be shown in chapter 9, presented with a superiority-inferiority relationship between city and rural areas concerning schools and pupils. For now, I will just mention that it is in the cities that the former colonial languages are spoken the most.

2.1.2 The colonial mentality

Descriptions of a colonial mentality are recurrent in many writings of neo-colonial nature. It concerns how the minds of individuals were colonized, and continue to be colonized, along with the colonization of the country. This happened/happens among other things through schooling. David and Okazaki ² researched the Filipino Americans and conceptualized colonial mentality among them as:

² <http://www.colonialmentality.netfirms.com/CM.html> Retrieved 03.05.09.

“A form of internalized oppression, characterized by a perception of ethnic or cultural inferiority that is believed to be a consequence of centuries of colonization under Spain and the U.S. It involves an automatic and uncritical rejection of anything Filipino and an automatic and uncritical preference for anything American. CM is conceptualized as an individual differences variable on which Filipino Americans likely vary in the levels of their endorsement. It is a multifaceted construct that may be manifested in a variety of ways by Filipino Americans.”

In addition to the denigration of the Filipino self, culture and body, they found the colonial mentality to manifest itself in bigotry towards less assimilated Filipinos and tolerance of oppression, past and present, against Filipinos as a nation, race or on an individual level. The point concerning exploitation of power relations thus exists on three levels; the international (macro) level, the national (meso) level and the individual (micro) level - the most damaging problem on all levels being the robbery of a state/a group/an individual's opportunity to form their own destiny. In the next sub-chapters I will sketch out these relations with education in mind.

2.2 The power relations at work in Africa today

2.2.1 International relations' impact on education

Some African states like Tanzania made a conscious effort at independence to take control and re-Africanize their education system. This did not go for Cameroon (and most other African states) which has been under heavy external influence from France, (to a lesser extent) Britain, the World Bank, and numerous organizations and agencies. The Structural Adjustment Programs prescribed by the World bank has weakened the grip of the Cameroonian state on education and is depriving Africa in general of countervailing views, because of the increased dependence on imported knowledge (Coetzee et al. 2001). Between 1960 and 1963 France and Cameroon signed at least ten influential treaties on cooperation on financial, cultural and military affairs including agreements on the stationing of French military -, teaching-, and judicial personnel (Markovitz 1977). This is symptomatic of the close ties between the two states that are, though may be weakened, still there today (Bray 1986). Both multilateral organisations like UNESCO, UNICEF and UNPD, financial institutions like the World Bank and the African Development Bank, state organs such as the British Council, and various NGOs like Plan International, Plan Cameroon, CARE, the Peace Corps, Action Aid and Volunteers Service Overseas have all made significant contributions to the educational budget of Cameroon (interview with pedagogical inspector). This has ramifications for the curriculum- and language policies chosen. The African elites, including

the former and present President of Cameroon are seen as *compradors* (collaborators, intermediates) of their international counterparts. It is not very controversial to claim that Cameroon never has had political philosophies or policies of her own.

2.2.2 Class in Africa

It is common to describe the Cameroonian society as divided, but it is perhaps most common to analyze it according to the colonial past or regions. Kofele-Kale (in Markovitz 1987) argues that the fundamental contradiction in post-reunification (post-1961) Cameroon, is not rooted in the differential French/British colonial experience, nor in ethnicity, geography or religion - but in class. He states that the composition of the national bourgeoisie cuts across the above-mentioned cleavages and that this bourgeoisie exploits the masses of Cameroon's workers and peasants. In his article he describes the rise of the Anglophone part of this bourgeoisie, and how the people belonging to it have shifted ideological and political standpoints according to what would be most beneficial to them in terms of power, prestige and wealth. He further argues that the post-independence federal system and the unitary system alike disappointed the expectations of the Anglophone masses because *they were not put together with them in mind* - these political arrangements worked out all right for the group of Anglophone negotiators trusted to serve the interest of the masses, but who in reality serve their own class; the organizational bureaucracy.

“The Francophone-Anglophone contradiction is superficial in the sense that it masks the sense of solidarity and unity of interests existing between the Anglophone and the Francophone ruling classes, both of whom constitute a national bourgeoisie.” (Kofele-Kale in Markovitz 1987: 138)

In the same way it masks the unity of interests between the peasants and workers across regions. Boyle (1999) points out that the educated elite that emerged through colonial education, as opposed to the traditional elite, was regarded as *national* in outlook and modern in values. Following the logic that the interest of this class lies with the member of its group, it is *not* national in outlook, and this belief can add to the veiling of its true colours.

The organizational bourgeoisie is:

“A combined ruling group consisting of the top political leaders and bureaucrats, the traditional rulers and their descendants, and the leading members of the liberal professions and the rising business bourgeoisie. Top members of the military and police forces are also part of this bureaucratic bourgeoisie.” (Markovitz 1977: 208)

It is thus a *coalition* of high status groups, and which one of them is the most powerful may change. Their social base is the developing business class, but their power derives just as much from their international position. These people derive their livelihood from the income of the nation and are thus parasitic. They make decisions that have a huge impact on the lives of the masses.

Thiong'o (1986) as well perceives two mutually opposing forces at work in Africa; an imperialist tradition and a resistance tradition. The first is maintained by an international bourgeoisie and the native ruling classes:

“The economic and political dependence of this African neo-colonial bourgeoisie is reflected in its culture of apemanship and parrotry enforced on a restive population through police boots, barbed wire, a gowned clergy and judiciary; their ideas are spread by a corpus of state intellectuals, the academic and journalistic laureates of the neo-colonial establishment. The resistance tradition is being carried out by the working people (the peasantry and the proletariat) aided by patriotic students, intellectuals (academic and non-academic), soldiers and other progressive elements of the petty middle class. This resistance is being reflected in their patriotic defense of the peasant/worker roots of national cultures, their defense of the democratic struggle in all the nationalities inhabiting the same territory.” (Thiong'o 1986: 2)

It is a common claim among neo-colonialist authors that the surplus capital produced in Africa is wasted; the elite spends it on luxury consumption or it is repatriated by the overseas companies, neither of which is conducive to African productive and economic growth (Arrighi & Saul 1973).

There is no need in this thesis to go into a sophisticated categorization of people into several classes and sub-classes. I have chosen to use three main categories, there is a certain consensus that such a three-way division has decent explanatory power (Bray 1986). Bray (1986) claims that the educational system have ruined the old societies and created three new nations (as opposed to one nation-state) through the imposition of Western values: *The educated - the half educated - the uneducated*. The first and the last group do not understand each other, and the half-educated do not understand any of the other groups. The distance between the elite and the lay Man is not only a matter of living in different realities - they also lack the ability to understand them in a quite literal sense. The elite have developed a feeling of superiority of their countrymen along the way, as they have identified with Western values (Celis 1990). Whereas the elite (alternatively *bourgeoisie*, *upper class* or *ruling class*) was defined above by Markovitz, the members of the intermediary class are the long-term unemployed but highly educated, or those employed in a low-status, low-paid position with

no prospects such as the teachers. These people often look down on peasants and low status workers and aspire to the culture of the elite, to which they do not qualify. Consequently they have difficulties accepting the uneducated group, and being accepted by the elite. The lowest class consists of peasants, blue collar workers, seasonal workers and workers in the informal sector. *In this thesis I will refer to these classes as the oppressors, the intermediary class, and the oppressed* (see below). Colonial education was the key to elite status in Africa, and is the creator of this three-way division among its peoples. According to Thiong'o (1986: 30), the use of the former colonial languages is instrumental in keeping it that way:

“The biggest threat to the comprador-ruling regimes would be an awakened peasantry and working class; this is why the neo-colonial state is happy to keep the African languages, which would have facilitated the addressing of the grassroots’ issues, out of the picture.”

2.3 Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian professor of pedagogical history and philosophy at the University of Recife, Brazil. All his professional life was devoted to developing and practicing his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970). After the military coup of 1964 he was forced to leave his country, and while in exile he conducted several adult teaching programs amongst poor, illiterate farmers in Chile. His work has had a huge impact on education as well as on development thinking.

At the base of Freire’s work lies this credo: From an axiological point of view, the central problem of humans - conscious as they are of being incomplete - has always been *humanization*, in other words the search for a stronger sense of self-worth and dignity. The struggle to regain dignity, and the longing for freedom and justice on the part of the oppressed, is an affirmation of this historical quest. Conversely, injustice, oppression, violence and unequal exchange are sabotaging it, and are working in favour of *dehumanization*. In our time, the path to humanization for the poor people of the South goes through *liberation*. The poor have been shut out from intervention in their own reality - the pedagogy of the oppressed is to facilitate the “checking in” of the poor in the historical process - their own destiny. Only in solidarity and togetherness can one strive for this dignity.

2.3.1 The dialectics of Freire

The *oppressed* and the *oppressors* is the central contradiction in Freire's theory, and he draws on Hegelian dialectics in describing the dynamics between them. While the oppressed *might* understand that they are in fact being oppressed, the reality of their hard day-to-day life engulfs them, and thus this acknowledgement is weakened. In the historical and human project of liberation, it is pivotal that the oppressed liberate not only themselves, but also their oppressors. Freire underlines that one should not mistake kindness, generosity or reforms on the part of the oppressors for liberation. If their concern for the oppressed was genuine, they would remove the *cause* of the oppressed's struggle, namely their own oppressing system. Only power that has grown out of the weakness of the oppressed can achieve this, because there is no human strength in the unjust and oppressing power of the oppressors - they are dehumanized. Nevertheless, the oppressed will initially - when liberated - tend to become oppressors themselves. This is because they identify with their oppressors and perceive them as real people - people who matter. They have made the consciousness of the oppressors their own, and have no consciousness of either themselves as individuals or as a (oppressed) class. It follows from this that it is not in order to be *liberated* that people want for example land reforms - it is to get land. That is not to say that getting land is not of great importance for the farmer.

In order to overcome oppression, the people need to understand its causes. When this is achieved, they will still be hampered by the fact that they are adjusted, and have resigned to, the existing structures. They are afraid of the unknown, of anarchy, and of the responsibility and independence that comes with freedom. When they discover the longing for freedom within them, they therefore prefer the one-dimensional security of their unfree situation to the creative togetherness that freedom will emanate.

“They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressors whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them: between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account.” (Freire 1970:30)

As a result of the historical and socio-economic situation and *not* as a result of some cultural characteristic - the oppressed are passive and docile. Also, according to myths and beliefs,

their situation is their destiny, i.e. God's will that they should accept. They are fatalistic. Because they cannot clearly see the structures that serve the purpose of the oppressor, they often vent on their own. Especially concerning the oppressed middle class, there is a strong desire to achieve the lifestyle and status of the oppressors, and the values and ideology of the elite are glorified.

Another characteristic trait of the oppressed is the devaluation of themselves (the colonial mentality). As mentioned, they have made the view of the oppressor their own, and thus see themselves as useless. The oppressors rationalizes their superior positions by categorizing the oppressed as lazy and stupid. The oppressed themselves will tell you that they are ignorant and that the teacher holds the knowledge and the answers, and who are they to second guess him? They seldom realize the knowledge that they themselves have accumulated, and they have an uncanny belief in the untouchableness of the oppressors.

Understood in this way, the masses of Cameroon - and more specifically the villages in question - are oppressed. As will be shown they display many of the characteristics outlined above. Economically speaking they suffer under the neo-liberal policies of their oppressors and their partners that have never validated self-sufficiency in food (the region being the "bread basket" of the country), and have always focused on exporting crops. These policies are also largely to blame for the fact that it is the parents who have to provide most of the funding for the primary schools. Importantly, this does not mean that they are denied basic human rights or that they have no possibility whatsoever to advance in life - it means that for the majority of them, the chances of realizing their potential are slim, and it means that they, as a community and class, are not checked in into the creation of their destiny.

2.3.2 Anti-dialogue

Freire distinguishes three actions of *anti-dialogue* used by the oppressors: *Manipulation*, *divide and rule* and *cultural invasion*. A cultural invasion is when a group imposes their worldview on another group. This happens in a manner of "acting subject - passive object". The invader imposes his values on those who are invaded, and the invaded group starts to adapt these values, norms and goals; a central point is that the invaded group must be convinced of their inferiority (Freire 1970).

"Cultural invasion further signifies that the ultimate seat of decision regarding the action of those who are invaded lies not with them but with the invaders. And when the power of decision is located outside rather than within the one who should decide, the latter has only the illusion of deciding. This is why there can be no socio-economic development in a dual, "reflex,"

invaded society. For development to occur it is necessary: a) that there be a movement of search and creativity having its seat of decision in the searcher; b) that this movement occur not only in space but in a existential time of the conscious searcher.”(Freire 1970: 141-142)

“Thus, while all development is transformation, not all transformation is development. [...] Women and men, among the uncompleted beings, are the only ones which develop. As historical, autobiographical, “beings for themselves”, their transformation (development) occurs in their own existential time, never outside it. Men who are submitted to concrete conditions of oppression in which they become “beings for another” of the false “being for himself” on whom they depend, are not able to develop authentically. Deprived of their own power of decision, which is located in the oppressor, they follow the prescriptions of the latter. The oppressed only begin to develop when, surmounting the contradiction in which they are caught, they become “beings for themselves” (ibid)

Because it is impossible to completely break down a person’s ability to have an opinion on the situation (i.e. on the oppressing society in which she lives), the oppressors create a set of myths to sustain a view of society as something static that we just need to accept, and that is really quite acceptable anyway: “We live in a democracy”, “we offer education for all”, “we respect human rights”, “as long as you work hard enough you’ll succeed”, “education equals success” - are some of these myths. I will show how myths - with roots in colonial times - are a central part of the discourse in the village in chapter 9. Another action of manipulation is to focus on parts of the problem - like corruption in Cameroon or the lack of tarred roads in the villages. This keeps people from seeing the big picture.

There are two delimited stages of the pedagogy of the oppressed. In the first stage the oppressed awakens to their oppression that is their reality and engages in the transformation of the structures. This is what Freire called conscientização. In the second stage, reality is transformed and the pedagogy is now a pedagogy of everyone in the continuing process of liberation. In this stage, the myths created by the oppressors are busted.

2.3.3 ‘Banking education’

Freire sees what he calls the “banking” system of education to be a giant obstacle to liberation. This is a form of education that see pupils as “[...] little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim” (Dickens 1854: 9³). The objects (the pupils) are filled up with knowledge by the subject (the teacher). This form of education is based on a static and mechanical view of

³ Chambers (1997) also uses “Hard Times” to illustrate the way both scientists and teachers have had a way of objectifying people and discarding factors that are difficult to measure.

consciousness and of the world, and is thus strangling creative forces. Freire maintains that people cannot keep their true self-worth when they are severed from investigation and action. It is through discovery that knowledge is created. All situations where some people deny others their rights to engage in this process of investigation and discovery, are violations of human dignity: “The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (Freire 1970: 66) In the same way that the position of the oppressors is being justified by their excellence and by the uselessness of the oppressed - the untouchable position of the teacher is being justified by the perceived ignorance of the pupils. Liberating teaching starts with the ending of this dichotomy. Banking education is a tool to integrate the pupils into the oppressing structures of society. It is in the interest of the elite to keep “changing the consciousness of the oppressed not the situation which oppresses them”. (Simone de Beauvoir, *La pensée de Droite, Aujourd’hui* (Paris): ST, *El Pensamiento politico de la Derecha* (Buenos Aires, 1963), p. 34. in Freire 1970: 55). In this sense, being educated means being adjusted - being better suited for society as it is. A liberating pedagogy on the other hand formulates problems - problems relating to the pupils lifeworld and world. Freire calls this a “problem-posing education”. It consists of acts of cognition, where “the cognizable object intermediates the cognitive actors - teacher on the one hand and students on the other (Freire 1970: 60). Consciousness is seen as consciousness of consciousness, and not something that can be separated from the world *or* from Man.

Teacher and student are mutually responsible in an ever-developing process of cognition. As times goes, and pupils continuously face problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, they will feel more and more challenged and obliged to respond to the challenges. They will not see these challenges as theoretical - they are perceived as interrelated and as related to a whole. Because of the never ending character of these problems, the pupils will become more and more critical, and gain new depth of understanding and assessment, with every challenge.

It is a common perception that banking education is omnipresent in Africa, and this was one of the things I wanted to look into.

2.3.4 Conscientização⁴ - the conscientization process

The oppressed need to realize the need for struggle through a “conscientization” process. So - called liberating propaganda and other attempts to *install* a belief in freedom in the oppressed, though well-intentioned, will eventually fail, because the realization needs to be genuine. While children in Cameroon are supposed to learn how to read and write and do mathematics at the same time they are supposed to learn French or English - Freire strived to find a way to teach people how to read at the same time as they were moving towards a critical attitude and a democratic mind. He was convinced that the people of dualistic societies needs to stand up to their lack in democratic experience by participating in dialogues.

The conception of humans in problem-posing education as “unfinished”, in search for a higher sense of self worth, dignity and depth of self, resonates with a view of reality as transformable. An education that promotes this conception is necessary for liberation. For people to perceive their world as challenging, they must recognize it as something that holds them back - as opposed to something that is predestined. The deepening of their consciousness around their situation leads people to see it as changeable. The first step in this process is for the oppressed to recognize the difference between the natural world, which is given, and the cultural world that we all, themselves included, create and recreate. This is an enormously empowering realization - and an anti-thesis to fatalism.

Together, teacher and student should conduct an investigation to find out what the generative themes are for them, in their culture. A generative theme is an iconic representation that has a powerful emotional impact in the daily lives of learners⁵. The investigation is the syllabus, and later the challenging of the themes will be the syllabus. They need to investigate the links between the different thematics, problematize them, and see their historical and cultural context. The most important factor, seen from the viewpoint of liberating teaching, is that people should start to feel like they are the masters of their own thinking - by discussing thinking and worldviews that are implied - directly or indirectly - in the suggestions they put up for discussion. The reason why the oppressed are not aware of their own thematic universe is that their “master theme” is silence - that is the passive way of relating to their reality (Freire 1970).

When the oppressed have had their critical awakening they will see that they are

4 This Portuguese word is kept in most English translations of Freire’s work and translates as both the process of obtaining a critical consciousness and as “critical consciousness”. The English word conscientization process is now also in common usage.

5 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscientization> Retrieved 17.05.09.

“hosting” the consciousness of their oppressors, and that both sides in this contradiction (The oppressed and the oppressors) are dehumanized. The dissolution of this dialectic contradiction gives birth to a dignified, new human being in a process of liberation - and ends the culture of silence.

The oppressed will start to believe in themselves with this dissolution of the dualism within, and the overview of the dualism in society. The struggle must be both intellectual and practical - neither one will do alone. “In dialectical thought, world and action are intimately interdependent. But action is human only when it is not merely an occupation but also a preoccupation, that is, when it is not dichotomized from reflection” (Freire 1970: 35).

2.3.5 Dialogue

Dialogue is what Freire calls a *cultural act* that is needed to dissolve the contradiction within the oppressed and in society caused by the cultural acts of anti-dialogue. A dialogue is a meeting between people who gives the world a name. It is a creative and creating action essentially drenched in love. At the essence of dialogue is the word. The word is two dimensional; it consists of reflection and action. A dialogue necessitates love for humans and the world, humbleness and a strong belief in Human beings and their ability to create and recreate. Whereas the belief in people is a condition of dialogue - trust will come out of it. “[...] the dialogue is the essence of revolutionary action” (Freire 1970: 126).

To concern oneself with the *content* of a dialogue, is to concern oneself with what should be the content of education. True education is driven by the teacher *together* with the student and with the world between them. When teachers and politicians speak, it often has an alienating effect because their language is not in harmony with the concrete reality of the people. They need to understand the structural premises that shape the people’s language and thinking.

Freire states that there can be no distance from the oppressed in a truly liberating pedagogy. Rather than implementing examples to follow that stems from their oppressors, they must be their own examples in the struggle for freedom. While systematic education can only be transformed by those in power, educational projects can and should be carried out *together* with the oppressed, and in the same process the oppressed can organize themselves. This means that a total overthrow of the system is - though the ultimate goal - not necessary to bring development to some.

In order to create a reflective dialogue, it is crucial to trust the people’s ability to reason, otherwise one resorts to slogans and monologues. It is also necessary to recognize the

weakness of the oppressed that is their dependence on their oppressors - and try to change this into independence.

2.4 *Reproduction*

The most formative factor in socialization is class (Bernstein in Karabel & Halsey 1979). Class influences work, worldview, educational roles and the way family members relate to one another. Class structure has marked the distribution of knowledge and the access to the understanding of the world as changeable. It has also separated the communities within societies from each other, and ranked them such as to place more worth on some and less on others.

“[...] access to, control over, orientation of and *change* in critical symbolic systems, according to the theory, are governed by these power relationships as these are embodied in the class structure. It is not only capital, in the strict economic sense, which is subject to appropriation, manipulation and exploitation, but also *cultural capital* in the form of the symbolic systems through which man can extend and change the boundaries of his experience.” (Bernstein, in Karabel & Halsey 1979: 475)

The central claim in Pierre Bourdieu and Passeron’s writings on education (1990) is that the educational system is contributing to the reproduction of these class differences. In his own words, “[...] to reproducing the structure of the distribution of cultural capital and, through it, the social structure [...]” (1990: vii). This is because of our class-influenced habitus: The habitus is “the system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice” (Bourdieu in Karabel & Halsey 1977: 487), in other words we are predispositioned (*not* predestined) by our socialization (which is marked by class) to adapt to the existing structures in society, and thereby contributing to the reproduction of them.

By symbolic or cultural wealth is meant wealth/goods that are “socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” (Bourdieu in Karabel & Halsey 1977: 488); this might mean a certain kind of art form, sport, literature, leisure activity, occupation and so on. Bourdieu states that cultural and symbolic wealth and goods which *in theory* is offered to every member of society, really only belong to those who have the instruments (the code) enabling them to decipher those symbolic goods. The cultural wealth offered to all in education, in reality belongs to the elite. Furthermore, the language codes used in schools are more similar to those used in elite families. Bourdieu and Passeron analyzed variations in the efficiency of the pedagogic communication relative to the social and scholastic characteristics of the pupils. In order to measure the productivity of pedagogic work, *the informational*

efficiency of pedagogic communication is one of the best indices. Naturally the informational efficiency of a communication depends on the mastery of the language of communication by the recipient. In France, there is a huge distance between working-class and academic, bourgeois language; Bourdieu and Passeron have studied in depth how this difference in speech codes manifests itself in the classroom. It seems very reasonable though, to assume that these findings are applicable in an African context, because it is exactly the formal, “bookish”, abstract, technical and intellectual characteristics of the bourgeois language that are perceived by Africans to be characteristics of the former colonial languages⁶.

As mentioned, Freire was involved (sometimes just as a participant in debates and discussions) in language policies in Africa, and after first considering factors like national unity, he came to the conclusion that Portuguese could never be the first language of literacy campaigns and education in Guinea Bissau. He felt that this would exasperate the class divisions and in practice that means a selection of students “on the basis of their knowledge of spoken and written Portuguese [that] would guarantee that only the children of the elite will advance educationally, thus reproducing an elite, dominant class”(Freire 1998: 178).

This is the hypothesis that Bourdieu and Passeron found to be confirmed:

“[...] the specific productivity of all pedagogic work other than the pedagogic work accomplished by the family is a function of the distance between the habitus it tends to inculcate (in this context, scholarly mastery of scholarly language) and the habitus inculcated by all previous forms of pedagogic work and, ultimately, by the family (i.e. in this case, practical mastery of the mother tongue).” (1990: 72)

As I have already stated, this distance is shorter for the children of the upper classes. The unconscious estimation of the probability of academic - and career success is to blame for the self-depreciation, negative attitude towards school, lack of investment in school, self-elimination and a resigned attitude to failure often found in children and families of the lower

⁶ Bourdieu, Passeron and Bernstein are European and have done their research in Europe (France and Britain respectively). More specifically, they are talking about differences in *speech* between the elite and the working class, and not about different languages altogether. I appreciate that this entails a different analysis; For example, Bernstein points out that while working class children do not use certain ways of expressing themselves, and certain words, it does not mean that they do not know these words. This is not the case in Cameroon; there are certainly many words children do not use because they do not understand them. I have still chosen to use this logic on the African context, I believe it holds to the extent that I apply it.

classes. There is thus a relationship between the anticipated success or failure of the child in the school system, and the investments made by the family; “Those sections which are richest in cultural capital are more inclined to invest in their children’s education at the same time as in cultural practices liable to maintain and increase their specific rarity [...]”(Bourdieu in Karabel & Halsey 1977: 502).

Furthermore, the linguistic relation between teacher and pupil (the pedagogic relation) is not just communicative. To say it is, is to disregard any characteristics the relation owes to the authority of the schooling institution (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990):

“The mere fact of transmitting a message within a relation of pedagogic communication implies and imposes a social definition [...] of what merits transmission, the code in which the message is to be transmitted, [...] and, finally, the mode of imposition and inculcation of the message which confers on the information its transmitted its legitimacy and there by its full meaning.
“(Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 109)

Another point of Bourdieu’s is that as we learn a language we also acquire a relation to that language. Bourdieu and Passeron distinguish between a relation characterized by natural ease and a relation characterized by forced ease. The opposition between them is rooted in the modes in which they have been acquired: “the exclusively scholastic acquisition which condemns the acquirer to a “scholastic” relation to a scholastic language, and the mode of acquisition through insensible familiarization, which alone can fully produce the practical mastery of language and culture that authorizes cultivated allusion” (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 119).

Part of the reason why the reproduction of class differences is allowed to continue, is the *illusion* of a meritocracy, which is what Freire would call an anti-dialogical act of manipulation; although African leaders would not deny that some have easier access to school than others, there is still the - often good intentioned - propaganda that if you only go to school and work hard, you have just as good a chance as anyone to succeed.

“Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.” (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 4)

2.5 *The significance of language*

It is my - not so controversial - claim that the language of instruction is of vital importance to the pupil, her community, and her state. This is because of how language affects the way we think, the way we think about ourselves and the world, and the way we learn.

“Language does not exist in a vacuum. It serves and is moulded by other systems in the human mind. Because it is used for conveying ideas, its structure and functions must reflect these ideas. Because it must be spoken and understood easily and efficiently, its structure and function are forced to stay within the limits imposed by people’s processing capacities. Because it is used for communication within a complex social and cultural system, its structure and function are moulded by these forces as well. Yet once people have learned how to use language, it wields a power of its own. It aids them in thinking about some ideas and hinders them in thinking about others. It moulds many aspects of their daily affairs.” (Clarck & Clarck 1977: 515)

2.5.1 How language affects the way we think: Universality versus relativity

The connection between language and mind is an area of disaccord among scholars. On the one hand is the presumption that language is, in its essence, innate. Of interest here is the claim from this camp that semantics are predestined by an inner thought language. Thus the variations in human languages are of no real importance, the deeper structure being the same in, for example, Norwegian and Wolof. This view has ideological implications in that it suggests that *all* people share concepts like for example equality and freedom, although some people do not have words in their language to talk about them (Gentner & Goldin-Meadow 2003). This is what linguistics call universality. The argument goes that children learn linguistic structures although these are not spelled out for them, and some of them are even unobservable, ergo, children must be predisposed to learning language structures. They look for some features of language and not others; what they look for are the linguistic universalities (Clarck & Clarck 1977). “Extremists” of this category, called “simple nativists” by Levinson (in Gentner & Goldin-Meadow 2003) believe that a language is the local projection of universal concepts that are innate in all humans. There is admittance that some complex concepts are more accessible in some languages than in others.

On the other side is the claim of relativity that states that language moulds ideas, and that people with different languages therefore logically should have different ideas. The argument goes that people have a more specialized vocabulary when there is a need for one, and this need is geographically and/or culturally “given”. Clarck & Clarck (1977) states that “proliferation in the vocabulary of any language reflects utility and hence expertise in concepts” (1977: 552). Does the famous example of Inuits having so or so many words for

snow amount to anything more than specialization? Will not the fact of talking about a phenomena such as snow with so many different words, lead people to think about snow in ways which are impossible to a, say, Brazilian? When a culture does not have any (or very few) words to specify the exact biological relation of a family member (which is the case in the villages I studied), such as brother, sister, uncle, grandmother, is it the culture that reflects on the language or the other way around? It seems to me that vocabulary bears on the degree of complexity in our categorization, and therefore on the way we think about the world.

[...] The world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement that holds through our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but *its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (Whorf 1956: 213-14)

The citation is of Benjamin Lee Whorf, who is the scholar most associated with linguistic relativity. In fact, “The Whorf hypothesis” *is* the hypothesis of linguistic relativity. The quote leaves no doubt that he thinks that the way we perceive and analyze the world is affected by how, and what, we speak about it. He reached this conclusion after studying and comparing Native American languages with English.

According to Levinson, when we take into consideration what we know about mental computation and semantic variation; we *must* conclude that our specific language code affects our thinking. Even though language is not the only factor affecting our thinking, and even though humans are highly capable of (if not always willing to) adapt new and unfamiliar ideas or ways of thinking, it is the claim of this thesis that the language we speak affects our thinking - in ways many of us are mostly unable to analyze, and therefore consider.

2.5.2 How language affects the way we think about ourselves and the world: Thiong’o

Thiong’o calls language “an image-forming agent in the mind of a child” (1986:15). The images - correct or incorrect - conveyed to me as a child are the basis of my conception of me and of my people. My ability to deal with the world in a successful way will depend on to what degree these images correspond to reality, or how helpful - or not - they are in my attempts to make sense of the world and of my struggles. Language is thus the mediator ” between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature.” (1986: 15). The *colonial* child was conditioned to see herself and the world as

reflected in the culture of the language of imposition.

The images are not transmitted to us by the universality of languages, but by one, particular language belonging to a particular community/area/people, and carrying within it the culture - and thus images of the world - of that particular place. To distinguish different elements of a given culture, such as history, folklore or art and treat them separately is quite possible, but language is the carrier of the essence of culture; the ways we perceive ourselves and others, and our place in the universe. I can separate myself from the artwork of my culture, but I can never separate myself from my maternal language - nor can another language ever be as inseparable from me as is my maternal language. My maternal language holds the essence of my selfhood.

Thiong'o states that language is at the heart of the opposition between the imperialist and the resistance tradition. This is because the choice of a language at the expense of others, and the choices made around different areas of use for different languages, says a lot about how a people define themselves in relation to their natural and social environment.

Because the African peasantry and working class for the most part do not speak the colonial language, the important political discussions take place without their participation. How can there be a democracy when the majority of the people are not able to understand political debates? Bernstein stated that the way the upper class has been socialized into knowledge, is by the "meta-languages of control and innovation" (Karabel & Halsey 1979: 477), and the way the masses have been socialized into knowledge is by the level of "context-tied operations." Thiong'o exemplifies this by stating that in Kenya, "distortions, dictatorial directives, decrees, museum-type fossils paraded as African culture, feudalistic ideologies and superstitions" (1996: 26) are communicated to the masses in their own languages by comprador ruling cliques, while progressive, alternative visions are expressed in English. This makes me think of a SIL⁷-pamphlet (SIL 2007) I read in Cameroon talking about the translation of HIV/AIDS brochures into African languages. A young man tells how his brother died after being sick for a long time, then their brother inherited his wife and he died too. Later, the wife accused of witchery died. Although this man *had* heard about AIDS, he did not believe in it, but dismissed it as one of the conspiracy theories that surrounds the epidemic. One day he was given a brochure about AIDS in his maternal language, and only then did the text resonate with him. "HIV talked to me in my language" he says, before he adds that he would have saved the life of one of his brothers if he had read this before.

⁷ Summer Institute of Linguistics - the world's leading organization in the field of strengthening linguistic pluralism and indigenous languages.

Macedo (Freire's associate) also believes it is impossible to re-Africanize the people through the medium that de-Africanized them: "Even if it should make sense linguistically (and I feel strongly that it does not), in political terms any decision to continue to use Portuguese as the official language and the only vehicle of instruction in Cape Verde would seriously undermine the political goals set forth by Amilcar Cabral" (Freire 1998: 182).

2.5.3 How language affects the way we learn: The detrimental breach between the world and the school world

Thiong'o recounts fondly how he used to belong to the community as a whole and how he and the people around him used to speak Gikuyu in the fields and by the fireside alike. How they learned the power of words through listening and telling the same stories with different words and images, and through riddles and transpositions. "The language of our evening teach-ins, and the language of our immediate and wider community, and the language of our work in the fields were one. And then I went to school, a colonial school, and this harmony was broken. The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture"(Thiong'o 1986 :11). The psychological effect of this breach between the pre-school world and the school world is well known:

"Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society. [...] it is at once evident that primary socialization is usually the most important one for an individual, and that the basic structure of all socialization has to resemble that of primary socialization." (Berger & Luckman 1966: 150-151)

As have been shown in sub-chapter 2.4 (and by this citation), the problem of a gap between the primary and the secondary socialization is not an African phenomenon. However, the gap is taken to the extreme in Africa because the school language and culture is not even African. Furthermore, the class differences reflected in the gap are even more intensely ridden with power relations, since school culture is associated not only with the elite, but with the former colonial power.

Neither colonial powers nor the current governments in Africa have successfully been able to impose the colonial language as the people's first language, and it has thus never replaced the African languages as spoken languages. However, it completely dominates the *written* aspect of language in Africa. Children in Africa do not read books because there are no books in their own language. Conceptualization for the African child happens in a foreign

language. Books are foreign. Her very own thoughts start to form in a foreign language (Thiong'o 1986).

The ones who succeed in the school world are those who successfully merge the practical mastery of language, learned in the family, with the scholarly handling of language (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). Vygotsky (in Tunesvik 2001) refers to this as the difference between the spontaneous concepts we develop in our everyday life - the ones Thiong'o remembers fondly - and the scientific concepts we only start to learn in school. Because the scientific concepts are taught systematically, they are normally fully developed before the spontaneous concepts have reached that state. Nevertheless, successful learning in a systematic way demands the ability to make use of one's vocabulary to formulate spontaneous concepts. In other words the two depend on each other, and gradually they merge. They merge faster the lesser the gap is between the primary and secondary socialization. In Cameroon the children are stripped of any scaffolds that children normally make use of when they start school.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter I have focused on power relations because they are omnipresent in African society in general and hence in the educational system. This system contributes to the reproduction of these consistent and consisting inequalities among Africans. Though there are many other relations of power that are influential, I find that class relations are the overriding factor impinging on culture and language in school. The language one teaches in, the methods applied and the curriculum chosen says everything about what is considered valuable in that given society; which language is worthy and which is not; what kind of knowledge is useful and important and what knowledge is not; what kinds of behavior, attitudes and thinking are rewarded. Class theories explain why these policies are reproduced when they are irrelevant to so many. Freire answers the question of how this is done in a more direct and slightly different way by pointing to the colonial mentality of the oppressed and the use of manipulation, divide and rule and culture invasion. Education in the South as such has traditionally been a culture invasion, where an alien culture has been imposed on the masses. He also points out the direction out of this oppression, which is to give people their voice back, through a conscientization process and dialogue. Thiong'o argues that language is at the heart of the contradiction between the imperialists (the elite) and the masses, and that language policies work in favor of the elite. If language affects the way we think, the enforced

use of a foreign language is a violation of the structure of thinking, if it affects the way we feel about our self worth - it is dehumanizing, if it affects the way we learn - it is a massive ocean of opportunities lost (in knowledge not obtained) for both individuals and Africa. They both think that the key factor in obtaining true development is to empower the people. People who feel empowered and worthy do not tolerate oppression. Both Freire and Thiong'o thus paint pictures of *what could be* if education in Africa was *rethought* and not just reformed as is the rule - if one were to reconsider what should be the goal, values and content of and in education. This way of looking at opportunities lost is fruitful because it, by definition, does not take usually unquestioned premises for granted. As will be shown, Cameroon is no exception to this tendency, and has an additional constraint in that it not only hangs on to the colonial education, but insists on hanging on to two separate systems of colonial education.

3. Background

3.1 Education in Cameroon before colonization

There used to be a powerful belief among Western philosophers and historians that African history started with colonization. For example, Hegel said that Africa “is not a historical continent, it shows neither change nor development” (Fage, J. D. in Gwanfogbe 2006: 19).

The lack of written sources and the widespread illiteracy at the time of colonization, along with the attitude of the Westerners to Africans is the cause of this misconstruction. From an educational point of view, the pre-colonial Africa enjoyed different forms of African education as well as the Islamic education system⁸. African education is often referred to simply as “informal education” (“informal” being equivalent to “un-scientific” in the vocabulary of science), and perceived to be nothing more than the bringing up of children that goes on in all societies at all times. We all learn about how, in our own society, girls used to learn home economics from their mothers, and boys used to learn trades from their fathers - by participating. So, the logic goes, as long as there is no hardcore intellectual training, preferably done in classrooms, one cannot call it education. To humor this logic, one can argue that the teaching on for example flora, fauna, ecological systems and the seasons in pre-colonial Cameroon was *not* restricted to participatory methods; they were explicitly taught and reasoned. Similarly, the learning of local history and songs and the drilling of recitations, proverbs and riddles are all as undeniably intellectual as they are practical. Cults debated philosophical, epistemological and cosmological questions. The mathematical concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division exist in all Cameroonian languages (Gwanfogbe 2006).

In Cameroon, parents were constantly reminded through celebrations and rituals of their responsibility of educating their child to fit into society. The African child was considered one of the community, not one of only a particular family. In Cameroon there were no words (in any of the over 200 languages) for aunts, uncles and cousins - since everybody was seen as mothers, fathers, sisters or brothers.

From about the age of six, children in all Cameroonian societies were started off in age-groups, and these were used for educational-, labouring-, social-, and political participation purposes. The different age groups had their own specific curriculum to cover.

⁸ Islamic education, introduced in Cameroon just before year 1000 A.D., will not be touched upon here because it had no significant impact on the South of Cameroon.

At the end of each course, there was an evaluation, topped off with a ceremony, like initiation ceremonies to new stages of education.

The most important goal of indigenous education was to produce “an honest, respectable, skilled and co-operative individual who will fit into the social life of society and enhance its growth” (Gwanfogbe 2006: 26). Because the life style of Cameroonians was social in nature, a consciously organized program of music and physical education was not needed - it was an integrated part of life. There was great emphasis on character building. Sought-after character traits were humbleness, courage, honesty, sociability and perseverance.

Western education was introduced in 1844 by the British Baptist Missionary Society (Gwanfogbe 2006). The goal of this education was to enlighten the African who was regarded as inferior in every way, and to enable them to read the word of God, and as such receive salvation. Victoria (now Limbe) and Douala became the nodal points of education in Cameroon, and Douala and Isuwu were the first languages to be put down in a standardized form of writing by the missionaries. Religion was the main, and often only, subject in the early missionary schools, and thus education had no potential for transforming society. Since most parts of African culture were considered evil, attending school meant alienation from one’s own culture (Gwanfogbe 2006).

3.2 Cameroon’s colonial history

In 1492, Portuguese traders reached the shores of Cameroon and travelled up the river Wouri estuary. They set up trading contracts with the local chiefs and kings, notably with the Douala, an economically and politically powerful ethnic group living by the estuaries of several rivers on the coast of Cameroon. In the following centuries, Portuguese, Germans and British traders were present, slave trade was widespread and the power relations between the three nations changed.

After 1820, Great Britain outlawed slave trade. This offset a series of negotiations and treaties between the British and the Douala (among other groups), with which the British wanted an end to the “superstitious” beliefs, the human sacrifice, and the slave trade (Mokake 2006). Missionary stations flourished in Cameroon around this time.

In the 1880s the scramble for Cameroon got serious. By now, the Portuguese had left the playing field and the French had entered. It was the Germans who won however; The Germano-Douala treaty, signed in 1884, was essentially a treaty between German firms and Douala kings and chiefs, and as such had nothing to do with a legitimized accord between two

sovereign states. Nevertheless, it gave the rights of legislation, administration and sovereignty over the territory to Germany. Importantly, many Cameroonians in the coastal area preferred Great Britain to rule them, and the Douala King Bell, among others, sent letters to England appealing for them to seal the deal (Gwanfogbe 2006, Mokake 2006). The British, however, were too slow.⁹

3.2.1 The German years

After the 1910 Education ordinance, the teaching of the German language became compulsory in school, and the autonomy of the missionary schools was ended. The English language had always been the language of choice of the traders and the military in the territory, and had continued to be used for these purposes despite the 20 years of German rule. As of now, German was the only language allowed. The use of the Douala language - which was on its way to become a Lingua Franca - was restricted to the Douala region out of fear that it would render the bitter Doula people more powerful. The same thing went for the Bali language of Mungakaa, which was spreading in the Western Grassfields (Gwanfogbe 2006). In other words, the German administration quite openly demonstrated their *fear that a lingua franca would unite the Cameroonian masses and consequently make them too powerful*. A severe crisis regarding the language of instruction in Cameroonian schools was onset. The policy of the German administration also sparked a persisting tension between the state and the missionary societies. The latter found that they could more effectively save souls through the African languages, and resented the interventions of the government (Gwanfogbe 2006). There were also many who claimed that the propagation of European languages in Africa would have disastrous consequences, because it would unite African peoples (overestimating the potential universality of these languages). *The linguistic heterogeneity was seen as a safeguard against large-scale rebellions against the colonial regime*. The syllabus was Germanic; German language, German geography and culture, German, glorious history. The indoctrination of European countries as superior to African ones, was followed up by the British and the French, and largely internalized by the Cameroonians, who began to seek the mastery of the European at the expense of the Cameroonian.

⁹ In fact, the British consul Hewett, who was sent to Cameroon with treaty forms, arrived only two days after the Germano-Douala treaty was signed.

3.2.2 The Partition of Cameroon

Great Britain and France invaded Cameroon in 1914, during World War 1. By February 1916, the German troops were defeated and Cameroon was partitioned between France and Great Britain without any consideration of the wishes of Cameroonians. France ended up with 4/5 of the territory¹⁰. This was mainly because Britain had relatively little interest in this colony, and also because Britain wanted to boost the morale of French troops in the ongoing war (Mokake 2006). This partition was the stepping stone for a separate linguistic and cultural development, and the so called bilingualism of Cameroon. It also divided ethnic groups and communities between the two parts, between which mobility was restricted. As already mentioned, certain groups wanted Great Britain to be their rulers from the beginning of colonization and these feelings had not changed. Protests and rebellions against the French were quite common. There are various reasons for this resentment of the French, one is that many of the Doula elite or their sons had been sent to England to study, and, although most people were glad to see the harsh German rule go away, a few powerful people had stood to benefit from that regime as well, and so they wanted it back. Furthermore, the British missionaries were dominating the scene early on, and in those early times they often intervened on behalf of the locals when the colonial administrative personnel or labour recruiters were abusing them (Gwanfogbe 2006). Certainly, a main reason was the French policy of assimilation, which inevitably entailed a disregard and degradation of local traditions and organization structures. The British on their side mainly opted for an indirect rule policy in their colonial possessions.

3.2.3 The French administration

The French language was the most important tool in obtaining the goal of making Cameroonians into black Frenchmen who regarded France as their mother Country. According to Mokake (2006), they developed an educational system comparable to none in West Africa. A relatively high number of schools were built, among them many specialized schools to train elites who could assist the French in the administration of the colony. A significant point is that missionaries contributed as much as the government in primary schooling, and as for secondary schools, they were very few, and almost totally dominated by the catholic mission. According to Mokake (2006: 61), the pupils of these schools “[...] only turned out to serve as agents for spreading the French civilization in the territory”.

¹⁰ Britain divided her part of Cameroon into “British Northern Cameroons” and “British Southern Cameroons”. The former later joined the Federation of Nigeria. The recount in this section concerns the destiny of British Southern Cameroons (which is the Anglophone part of present day Cameroon), referred to as “British Cameroon”.

Most Mission schools were run by British missionaries (from a myriad of Christian denominations and societies), and when the French stipulated a range of regulations that had to be followed to be allowed to run a private school - including the exclusive use of French as the medium of instruction and a shift of emphasis in the examinations towards testing languages skills - this naturally caused frictions.

The French policies for her dependencies and colonies aimed at economic, political and cultural dominance. Even though they shifted somewhat from a politics of assimilation towards a politics of association after WW1, they put in place a readymade structure for both private and government schools in Cameroon (as elsewhere) with the explicit goal to make French citizens out of the inhabitants of the various territories, and to suppress the indigenous institutions (Gwanfogbe 2006). Those who replaced their language and culture with the French were granted French citizenship and were commonly known as the *évoulués*.

Vocational training other than agriculture and home economics was disregarded. “Colonial education created an interest in white collar jobs and discouraged the development of traditional vocational training” (Gwanfogbe 2006: 80). Interestingly, Cameroonians showed little interest when the administration later made efforts to establish technical training and apprenticeship. They preferred a literary education with the prospect of a job in the bureaucracy. Parents believed that school was a place for literary studies, and vocational training could be done, may be better still, outside of school (ibid) In setting up schools and admitting pupils, clear priority was given to the children of the African ruling classes. This created the persistent connotation of education with money and status.

In the 1950s, while there was ever-increasing resistance and even guerilla warfare and terrorist attacks (carried out by the Union des Populations de Cameroun - UPC) in protest of the French colonial administration. There were also political parties, kings and chiefs who strongly opposed the idea of independence from France. The French-supported Block Democratique Camerounaise won the elections in 1951-52, and when French Cameroon was granted independence in 1960 Ahmadou Ahidjo from this party was appointed president. He felt the need to establish a highly centralized and strong government, partly because of the terrorist problem. When British Cameroon later decided in a referendum to gain independence by uniting with her “French” neighbour rather than by uniting with Nigeria, Ahidjo was not prepared to give them the loose federation they had in mind.

3.2.4 British administration

British Cameroon had been administered according to the principal of indirect rule. Significantly, it was also treated as a part of the region of Eastern Nigeria, Nigeria being a colony of importance. Although this created better conditions for local culture and traditions to survive, it also served to create conflicts and hate since particular rulers and Kings - from particular ethnic groups - were chosen to rule on the British' behalf, and others, for example educated elites, were relegated to the Background (Mokake 2006). The British also left the question of education to the local authorities and Missions. These in turn developed educational policies for Nigeria - that were also used for British Cameroon. In the beginning, these adaptionist policies were made "with the desire to relate this education to the traditional, political and economic cultures of the Africans so that the traditional institutions could be developed and socio-political harmony enhanced. Adaptionist policies were also said to encourage local and national socio-political identification" (Gwanfogbe 2006: 108). However, a demand for the curricula used in Europe became more and more powerful, as African elites felt they would never reach a higher level of technical and scientific knowledge if they were not taught the same as Europeans. It was also evident, as in French Cameroon that a more literate form of education led to higher status and white collar jobs. The policies thus seized to be adaptionist, although some regional schools stuck to more relevant training and local languages. In 1925 a white paper was issued on education in British Tropical Africa after a report from the Phelps-Stokes Fund and various other lobbyists demanding an education policy for the colonies¹¹. This education policy was also adaptionist; it intended to prevent the disintegration of the African society, and to blend the elements of European culture considered necessary with local ways. However, according to Gwanfogbe, it needed the African society to stand still while different European elements were shaped to fit the African mentality, occupations and traditions. Since the African society in no way stood still, these policies were difficult to implement. The ethos of the English education system, now also resounding in Africa, was "to develop the pupil's character and intelligence in order to enable him/her to fit in the *existing* society" (Gwanfogbe 2006: 122 my italics). Because of the rapid socio-economic changes, the cultural differences and the lack of sufficient knowledge and training, education did not succeed in acting as a blending force between African and

¹¹ The philanthropic Phelps-Stokes Fund is quite renowned for its fight for better hygienic, economic, social and cultural conditions for the colonized African peoples. "Various other lobbyists" included the Missions who wanted a clarification on the relationship between the Government and the private (their) schools.

European elements.

Although local languages were present in some forms or schools most of the time - schools in British Cameroon eventually prohibited native languages, but importantly accepted the Lingua Franca *Pidgin* in the lower classes. Until 1939, the only option of attending secondary school was to go to Nigeria.

According to Mokake, the Germans had left high quality plantations, railroads, ports, airstrips and modern buildings in Southern Cameroon which the British initially tried to manage, but fairly soon abandoned. Southern Cameroonians were not happy to be part of Nigeria, but they differed in their views of what would be a better solution. Allegedly, a majority wanted independence from both Nigeria and Cameroon. After a long and heated debate over what the various options in the planned referendum should be, the United Nations had to negotiate a draft resolution. Finally, since it was concluded by a commission that British Southern Cameroon was not economically viable on its own, the voters had the choice between joining the independent Nigeria and joining the independent Cameroon. It is generally felt that the landslide victory for joining French Cameroon was no more than the lesser of two evils. Among other factors, many Southern Cameroonians felt suppressed by the Nigerian Ibo, who had dominated the economic and educational scene since the Partition, and therefore becoming a part of their country would be to sign up for more suppression.

3.3.3 Pidgin

*This small swine he been go for the market
This small swine he been stay for house
This small swine he been chop soup with fufu
This small swine he no been chop no nothing
And this small swine he been go wee, wee sotei for house¹²*

The active participation of Jamaicans working under the British Baptist Missionary Society along with the presence of traders from Portugal, Britain, France and Germany laid the premises for Cameroonian Pidgin (Kamtok) which was to become the Lingua Franca in towns within Cameroon. It is registered in use in Cameroon from at least the 1880s.¹³ A pidgin language is a language arisen from the need to communicate, typically in the meeting between slaves and masters; slaves and other slaves, and traders and indigenous people from different

¹² Cameroonian pidgin version of “This Little Piggy”. *Chop* means to eat, *Fufu* is a boiled ball of cassava, yams and plantains alone or in combination, and *sotei* means *until*. Taken from Mesthrie et al. (2000: 279).

¹³ <http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/definitions/cameroon.html#top-hce>. Retrieved 08.03.09.

linguistic groups. It contains elements of different languages, and although English is the lexifier (the languages from which most of the vocabulary is drawn) in Kamtok, the grammar, intonation, syntax, rhythm, use of images and other characteristic forms of expression are distinct and African. According to Thiong'o, Kamtok shows how the peasantry of Africa never has totally given up on their languages. Through the years, Kamtok has been looked at as a degenerative form of English, but according to Todd¹⁴ this is gradually changing thanks to the persistent use by churches and the increasing use by the radio. While the imposition of the colonial languages symbolizes the suppressions of Africans, Pidgin has evolved on their own terms, and symbolizes their creativeness and willingness to supersede the multilingualism they are faced with.

3.3 The post-colonial history

3.3.1 Political and economic history

In 1961 the two Cameroons united to become the Federal Republic of Cameroon, with three governments, two Houses of Assembly, two legal systems, two administrative systems and two educational systems - in order to "protect and preserve the two different colonial cultures" (Mokake 2006: 151). In the more economically advanced "French" Cameroon, the government held a high rate of public investment; wages and taxes were fairly high. In Southern Cameroon on the other hand, the government kept taxes and wages low in order to encourage the private sector.

In 1972, after a referendum, the two states became one in "The United Republic of Cameroon". Southern Cameroonians feel cheated by the formerly French Cameroon. The *United* republic of Cameroon was always referred to as simply the Republic of Cameroon (Paul Biya who took over as President in 1982 formally changed the name in 1984), and Southern Cameroon felt that when they accepted the unification, they lost the advantages of being connected to the Commonwealth without gaining new advantages. The economic and judicial system within Southern Cameroon fell apart and this led to extensive corruption and fraud. Moreover, Southern Cameroonians have been discriminated against with regards to jobs and political appointments, and the ports, roads and industries in the South have suffered from underinvestment as compared to their counterparts in the East (Mokake 2006).

In 1987, an economic crisis manifested itself due to excessive military expenditure,

¹⁴ <http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/definitions/cameroon.html#top-hce>. Extracted on the 8th of March 2009.

embezzlement, fraud, tax evasion - most notably by the elite - capital flight, overconsumption of foreign goods at the expense of domestically produced goods, the smuggling of cheap Nigerian products and high government expenditure in general and on the lifestyle of the political elite in particular. The national financial Budget dropped by 80% from 1987 to 1988 (Mokake 2006: 193). Salaries of civil servants were cut twice in 1993 and have been irregular ever since. Unemployment levels for university leavers to First School leavers rocketed and Biya introduced Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in an effort to turn the situation around. This, among other things, led to the lay-offs of many workers in the ministry of Education.

The two (out of a total 10) Anglophone provinces of Cameroon are called North West and South West and had a population of 3.083.200 million out of 15.731.00 in Cameroon as a whole in 2001¹⁵.

3.3.2 Educational situation and policies

At the verge of independence, in 1959, 71% of the school age population attended school and thus received the gospel of the French superiority (Gwanfogbe 2006: 103). The curricula and the examinations were the ones received by French pupils in France. This was not only a result of politics of assimilation, but also of a strong demand from Cameroonians to have the same “superior” education that the French themselves enjoyed. Their dream was, and still is, to go to a European University, and for many to stay on there. At independence there was also an urgent need for university trained brains within Cameroon, and such training had to be obtained elsewhere. In this way, decolonization pushed Cameroonians to France. It should be noted here that there was also considerable rallying *against* the French both before and after independence, also on the part of the so called *évolués*. Nevertheless, the French educational system and language had irreversibly (or so it seems) come to be associated with success (Gwanfogbe 2006).

When independence was granted in 1960, or at least when the federation of the two Cameroons became one republic in 1972, Cameroonians could have seized the chance to start over; to construct an educational system built on African ideas, traditions and needs. They did not. They did not even state an overarching educational policy. Although Ahmadou Ahidjo talked about self-reliant development, he never talked of education as instrumental in

¹⁵ <http://www.citypopulation.de/Cameroon.html> Retrieved 12.04.09.

obtaining self-reliant development, nor did he state what self-reliant development would implicate for education.

“[...] neither a favorable cultural philosophy nor a clearly defined conceptual framework was developed in Cameroon to re-state the education policy in relation to the general development of the nation.” Gwanfogbe (2006: 166)

Instead it became clear that Cameroonian politician focused on two major “projects”:

1. The need to Africanize the education systems and
2. The need to unify the two systems

The first project had a very slow start, but must be said to have made progress the last years. The school curriculum as reformed in 1956 were kept. Some Cameroonian history and Geography had been included in them, but they largely reflected the former metropolitan system (Gwanfogbe 2006). French aid workers, experts and material perpetrated French influence, for example, the Bureau of Educational Research and Curriculum, who was in charge of all matters concerning the practical policies and implementations, consisted of exclusively French inspectors until 1976 (ibid). It is in fact difficult to overlook French interest in educational reform in Cameroon. As for West Cameroon, the London University General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Examination Board prescribed the subjects on the curriculum and as such blocked the hopes of an Africanisation of the curriculum. The previous syllabuses were impossible for me to get hold of because they existed only in relatively few copies to begin with, and so today they are even fewer and further between. But according to Gwanfogbe - whose book was finished (if not printed) before the new syllabuses of 2000 were made - none of them responded to national goals; “ [...] in content and in structure, both systems maintain the inherited colonial patterns that no longer gives satisfaction even to the needs of the former metropolis.” (2006: 166). He also maintains that attempts to change the curriculum and organization of schooling are resisted because of the Cameroonians perception that a conservative literary European-influenced curriculum is “better”. Furthermore he finds the system to be overly centralized and thus overly bureaucratic and out of touch with the grass root. The opinions of the provincial staff are hardly considered, and teachers and parents are never asked. However, the syllabuses of 2000, as will be seen in chapter 5, concentrate on Cameroonian and African realities, and so there

has been a certain degree of Africanization. The examinations in Cameroon have been set on a national level since the late 1970s, but they “remain closely related in style and content to British and French Examinations” (Ndongko & Tambo 2000: 166) so as to “maintain the standards” (ibid) When it comes to languages, nothing really worth mentioning has been done by the government to implement African languages in school since independence.

As for the task of unifying the two systems of education, the obstacles were many. Two obvious ones were East Cameroon’s treaties with France obligating them to follow certain policies and the fact that West Cameroon had a cherished *decentralized* education system while East Cameroon’s colonial legacy is a highly centralized system where initiatives come from above. Private education accounted for 60% of primary and 45% of secondary schooling in East Cameroon, and 95% of primary and 100% of secondary schooling in West Cameroon (Gwanfogbe 2006:149).

“[...]Whereas the educational system in one part pursued the Napoleonic tradition of separating church schools from state schools with a stone wall, the educational system of the other part perpetuated a symbiotic relationship between church and state, and so the church ran schools for and on behalf of the state; Whereas the administrative style of one part cherished elitism and selectionism for assimilation into the citizenship of the metropolis which became “home” to the tiny cultivated and transformed elite, the administrative style of the other part set up scarecrows in the guise of Native Authorities (N.A.), Missions, and a Bridge-Elite behind whom to hide and proceed by the method of Indirect Rule, which exonerates the colonialist of responsibility but had the effect of initiating the indigenous elite to think and react to situations quite independently of their colonial masters and the interest of the colonial empire and other metropolitan thinking on the subject.”(Ndongko & Tambo 2000: 2)

Harmonization attempts the first 35 years of independence were many, but never enforced, and so the two cultural groups were allowed to develop and re-enforce common identities *through the educational cultures*.

3.4 Today’s situation

In 1995, a national forum on education was arranged, assembling teaching staff, administrative personnel, the PTA, teachers - and workers associations, bureaucrats, politicians, NGOs, and academics to discuss education in Cameroon. It was a “consultative body aimed at making proposals for the formulation of a new educational policy for Cameroon” (Ndongko & Tambo 2000: 257). Among the twelve *raison d’être* for the forum we find: “The lack of a proper education policy”, “the neglect of local and national cultural values especially as concerns language” and “poorly adapted and overloaded programs”

(ibid). According to Tambo (2000), there was not enough political will or sensitivity to the issue prior to 1995 to get such a forum on its feet – and previous attempts failed. The Ministry of national Education had “ordered” proposals for policies on a number of issues categorized as political, economic, social or cultural in character, and the recommendations of the forum formed the basis of the 1998 law *Cameroon National Educational Guidelines No. 98/004* (called the “law of 98” from now on).

The National Education Forum of 1995 (called “the forum of 95” from now on) was a great initiative, the “orders” from the government were relevant and concrete, and I am sure a lot of ideas and knowledge came out of it. That being said, the recommendations of the forum were too vague to be the power tool needed in Cameroonian educational politics in order to enforce concrete and viable reforms. The two big changes, the ones some of the teachers I met knew about, were the organisation of an English-speaking and a French-speaking *sub-system* (instead of *systems*) of education, and the decision to start the primary school cycle at the age of 4 (2 years of pre-school) and 6 (6 years of primary school) in *both* systems.

The National Syllabuses for English Speaking Primary Schools in Cameroon/ Programmes Officiels de l’Enseignement Primaire en Cameroun were implemented in the year 2000, and was a central part of my research.

School fees were formally instituted in Cameroon in 1949 (Gwanfogbe 2006), but in reality parents always funded the schools. Not only do they pay fees - they pay textbooks, exercise books and uniforms. It was stated earlier that the freedom of management that was common in the Anglophone part of Cameroon during colonization had left them with an admirable self-reliance; I would like to note that during my fieldwork I found this self-reliance in both the Anglophone and the Francophone area. In the latter, 6 out of 12 teachers were employed and paid by the PTA, in the former the PTA rallied to build new classrooms.

Teachers in Cameroon are “civil servants” and are placed where the authorities need them. Therefore there are often teachers in rural areas who do not speak the language of the village and do not want to be there. Government teachers were paid about 120.000-140 000 CFA (1464-1708 NOK), while Catholic teachers were paid about 20.000 CFA (244 NOK) a month at the time of my field work. Teacher absenteeism and lack of motivation are considered serious problems.

The language of instruction is French in the 8 Francophone provinces and English in the two Anglophone provinces from class 1.

3.5 Presentation of the field

I spent 3 months in Cameroon in the autumn of 2007. My fieldwork was conducted in two villages, one in the Anglophone South West - and the other in the Francophone West province of Cameroon. The area is remote - only community roads reach the heart of it - but consists of fertile grassland and people there are mostly working as farmers - they are vegetable cash crop exporters. Irish potato, cabbage, leek, beet root, beans, garlic and radish are the main cash crops. People here do not starve. They have a hard life however, especially due to the lack of decent roads for transport, the labour intensive work on the inaccessible farms, and the harsh climate. The area's ecosystems have suffered severely from human intervention with fatal landslides, massive erosion - and soil degradation, and the extinction of natural forests and animal species among the consequences (Tiafack 2005). There is slightly more rain, colder temperatures and more uniformity of economy in the Anglophone village because it is situated at a higher altitude. The people in the two villages understand each other's "dialect" (in the European sense of the word, they share the same language), although the two have different names and one exists in writing whereas the other does not. They also share the same culture, although there are some differences. For instance, I was told by someone from the Anglophone village that the people in the Francophone village "love funerals so much". However, they are, with all that goes with it, separated administratively in a Francophone and an Anglophone province. I interviewed teachers and parents of three schools. In the Anglophone area I studied one private, catholic school and one government school. In the Francophone area I studied a government school.

Table 1. Basic facts on the schools of the study

	School 1 Anglophone government school	School 2 Anglophone private catholic school	School 3 Francophone government school
Fee pr. year	2500 CFA ¹⁶	7800-8010 CFA	2500 CFA
No. of pupils	197	311	669
No. of classrooms	3,5	5	11
No. of teachers	5	7	12

(Source: Fieldwork)

¹⁶ As I was leaving the village, the PTA of this school decided to raise the fee temporarily to 5000 CFA because they needed money to build a new classroom. 100 CFA corresponded to 1,22 NOK at the time of my fieldwork.

Although all three schools had significant infrastructural problems, school 3 was a bit better off when it came to the school building. The first school could not house all classes at the same time, and had to solve this by letting at least one class run around for recreation at all times (right outside the open doors and windows of the building). I wrote them down with 3.5 classrooms because the last 0.5 room was really more of a closet; it was an adjoining room of about 4 square metres. This school was quite new.

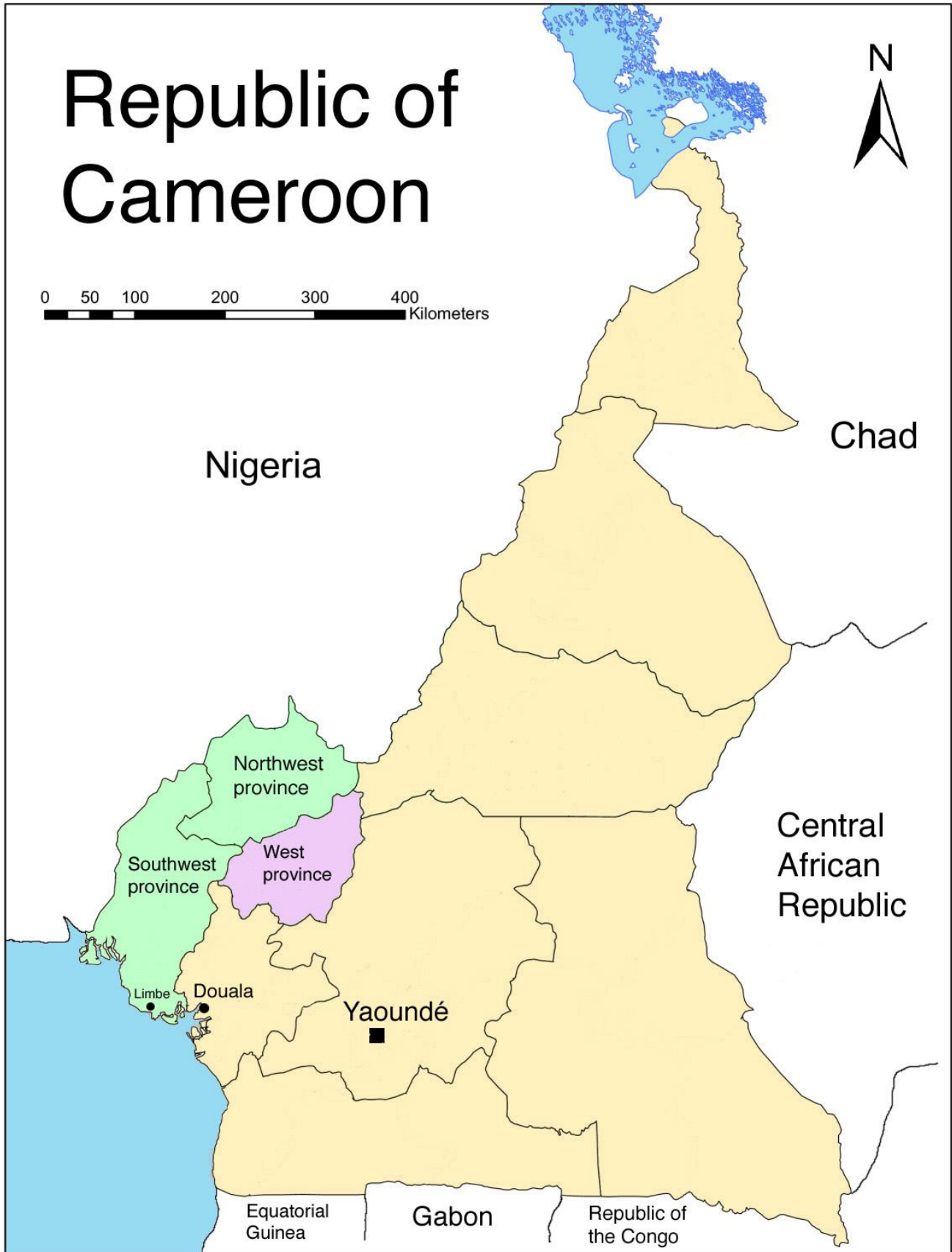
The second school, in the same village, was opened in the 1970s. They used to have 6 classrooms, but one building had been knocked down by wind last year. They solved this by teaching one class in a teacher's barrack. The teachers of this school all lived- two by two- in small compounds at the school grounds and left to see their families on the weekends.

School 3 was a considerably bigger and older school than the other two.

Republic of Cameroon



0 50 100 200 300 400 Kilometers



Based on www.biomedcentral.com 2006.

3.5 Summary

The effect of the colonial legacy on the socio-cultural identity of Cameroonians can - for the purpose of this thesis - be summed up in three points:

The rivalries and tensions between the many different actors in education led to a disintegration of the traditional order and social setting (Gwanfogbe 2006), and the involvement of two nations within the state of Cameroon is the most obvious and absurd consequence of colonization. Anglophone Cameroonians feel discriminated against; their education system has been made invalid by the preference of French examinations and the undermining of their technical education (Mokake 2006). While there I asked everyone I could “what is the difference between the French and the British system?” (Having my own knowledge and opinion on these differences) and virtually no one could give an answer with substance. That is not to say that there are no differences - there are - but when someone who is practically glowing when they tell me how much better the British system is, then proceeds to tell me that the difference is that one wears uniforms within that system, it may mean that what they are “practically glowing” over, is not the educational systems as such. It seems the educational system of Britain (as it was 50 years ago) has come to be a peg on which to hang the identity of Anglophone Cameroon and vice versa for Anglophone Cameroon. Attempts to harmonize the two systems - the number one policy goal - are thus often seen as attempts to assimilate the Anglophone Cameroonian minority, and they tend to be negative towards them. On the other side they realize that keeping the British system “untainted” by the French one is not an option, and so I often heard them say that they want “bilingualism” but that this is not implemented. From a conservative, conventional, Western, nation-building point of view, official bilingualism is the only way to go in order for the government to keep the little shred of credibility they have left with the Anglophones. I would also like to add that while the Francophone domination over Anglophones is obvious, *neither the underdevelopment nor the political underrepresentation is unique to the two Anglophone provinces* (Kofele-Kale 1987). There are other regions and provinces who can point to the same negligence. As I said in chapter 2, the enormous and uniform focus on the division of Cameroonians along the lines of Francophone and Anglophone stands in the way of a focus on what Francophone and Anglophone people of the lower classes have in common. It also stands in the way for a focus on the multicultural wealth of Cameroon. As for the language issue it is overwhelmingly obvious that the fight for English is at the expense of the fight for African languages.

Secondly, a preference was created in colonial times for abstract subjects in school and

white collar jobs in administration, at the expense of not only traditional vocational training, but of self-employment in general. This preference, brought on by the witnessing of elevated status and lifestyle of the few who succeed during colonial times, and by a false belief that this is the way all schooling is done in Europe, is so strong that the authorities have not been able to nudge it despite efforts. The educational guidelines after the 1995 forum declare a renewed attempt to boost up vocational training, but in the area of my fieldwork, the promised vocational centers are not in place.

Thirdly, the effect of the colonial legacy has been a colonial mentality. As I have described, this is characterized by an internalized colonization, where the individual constantly devaluates herself, her culture and language and conversely glorifies the culture and language of the colonizer. A sense of being ignorant and inferior is a hopeless starting point for claiming control over your own destiny and changing society for the better.

The effect of the colonial legacy on languages and languages of instruction in Cameroon is impossible to underestimate and can be summed up in four major points:

Missionaries put African languages into writing in order for Africans to read the Bible. Although it is a fact that they did this after their own European and non-linguist criteria and sometimes created several versions of one languages due to their uncoordinated work, they are not to be blamed for the unique linguistic diversity of Cameroon, containing some 247 African languages (Echu 2004).

The presence of traders and missionaries (notably Jamaican Baptist Missionaries) also onset the development of a Pidgin language called Kamtok. Kamtok is a Lingua Franca in Cameroonian towns, and in the Anglophone village I stayed in many uneducated people spoke Kamtok, enabling them to understand regional radio emissions and to communicate with people all over Cameroon.

The German language policy, while *de facto* allowing Pidgin to be spoken on the plantations, managed to stop what would most probably have been the evolvement of the Douala and/or Mungaka as Languages of wider communication in Cameroon.

Finally, a belief in the superiority of the colonial languages and a belittling of African languages were firmly established during colonial times, and persists today.

4. Methodology

We all have a worldview through which we categorize and make sense of what we see and experience. When a researcher collects, analyzes and interprets data, this too is filtered through her worldview, more specifically her view on science and how science is created. It is therefore appropriate to openly state these views in order for the reader to have full information when she is to assess the results of the study.

4.1 *Social Theory*

In terms of levels of generalisation, social theory is occupying the middle ground between philosophy and theory (Peet 1998). According to social theory, logics are political in intent, and cultural and social in origin. They are thus influenced by non-logical beliefs and cultural meanings. Furthermore, they are under influence by body and emotion *as well* by mind and as such social theory derives from frustrations with the idea that the mind has an innate logical structure. This idea was central in the Enlightenment revival of Greek classicism (Peet 1998) and has its linguistic version in the “simple nativists” described in subchapter 2.5.1.

4.2 *Structuration theory*

Peet (1998: 147) states that “[...] structuralism in many ways was the critical modernist culmination to the Enlightenment’s project of using knowledge for the emancipation of humanity”. In the 1960 and 70s, two streams of critical thought took the driving seat - one consisting of phenomenology, existentialism and humanistic geography - the other of radicalism, structuralism and Marxist Geography. However, in the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, structuralism took a severe blow and was fragmented. At the core of the criticisms against structuralism was the central question of structure versus agency; the determinism versus possibilism debate. Some felt that a bridge had to be built between a view of societal development as predetermined by its power structures, and a view of the world as non-existing outside the experience of the individual’s experience. Structuration theory can be said to be that bridge. This theory was first brought on by Berger and Luckmann, then further developed by Bhaskar, Bourdieu, and Giddens (Peet 1998). Intentionality is seen as a routine feature of human conduct, meaning that definite goals are not necessarily in the minds of actors as they act. However, humans are able to rationalize and reflect on their actions and their social and spatial context (“practical consciousness”), but knowledge is a prerequisite to achieving a particular outcome.

To recapitulate, I believe there are processes in the social world that are enhancing the interests of some groups in society at the expense of others (Thagaard 1998). The power of these groups is not necessarily based on money and property. The individual still possesses the ability to act purposefully and intentionally and many realize that they are being held down. The oppressed have the ability to influence their superiors. A few of them are able to escape their place on the bottom of the social ladder, but for the large majority this is *in practise* impossible. This is important to note, because it means that when I say (for example) that the parents and teachers have not reflected on a certain issue or that they lack knowledge - this is *not* a description of their (the agents') lack of intelligence or zest, but a description of how they are denied access to knowledge that is available to others in Cameroon, and how they have been socialized into the dominant mode of thinking and experience that is inherent in their symbolically constructed world (Bourdieu in Peet 1998: 154).

4.3 The choice of method

The last decades social sciences have been at the centre of a heated debate on quantitative versus qualitative methods. The quantitative camp is associated with positivism - a scientific outlook that postulates reality as measurable and quantifiable; "If you can't count it, it doesn't count." (in Holter & Kalleberg 1996: 73) On the qualitative side, reality is regarded as (more or less) socially constructed and dialectical and is therefore not suited as an object to be quantified. What little that can admittedly be quantified - such as the number of schools in an area - is not what should be the focus of our attention; "If you can count it, that ain't it" (ibid). According to Kvale (1997) "it" is the experience, meaningfulness, conversation, dialogue, story and language of the people we talk to. He states that there has been a shift from the natural scientific way of reasoning towards a philosophical one that includes hermeneutical interpretations of the meaning of texts, phenomenological descriptions of consciousness and a dialectical positioning of human activity in social and historical contexts (1997: 26, my translation). Accompanying this shift has been a shift towards the qualitative method which shares the outlined areas of interest.

To me, the necessity of both methods is self-evident, but for the project at hand I considered the qualitative method to be the right one. This is because I wished to achieve *insight* and *understanding* into the teachers', the parents', and possibly the pupils' own views on the transmission of values in school. Some of the mechanisms that transmits Western values are invisible - they are embodied in the language - and a qualitative, intensive study is

therefore best suited if one hopes to unravel these. An extensive survey concerning culture and language in school would certainly be very useful and interesting, but it would require another approach to the matter. The choice of method is often given by the research question (Undheim 1996). When one is concerned with the informants' reality as they experience it, they have to be allowed to express it with their own words, and it is necessary to take the time to try to disentangle the circumstances that leads to this experience. One is left with data material which is characterized by this; the *data* itself is quantitative, or, as in my case, qualitative (Holter & Kalleberg 1996).

The study consists first and foremost of interviews. My key informants were teachers. They have the knowledge regarding the interesting question of what teachers are "taught to teach", and also on what the "home culture" is like, and where this and the "school culture" might be colliding. The teachers in a "teacher driven" form of teaching have enormous power, and their attitudes to the issues at hand are thus determinative. The parents on their side hold the answer to how *they* feel the school is dealing with these challenges - if they consider them challenges at all - and to the view on education they are left with.

In addition to the interviews, I had several conversations with two pedagogical inspectors at the Ministry of Basic Education in Yaoundé. They provided me with valuable insight on the school system and the curriculum, as well as on language and culture in Cameroon. I also had several conversations with teachers elsewhere as well as with a former Head Teacher. To maximize my understanding I also studied relevant books, teacher plans, statistics, laws¹⁷, the report from the 1995 National Forum on Education, school textbooks and the First School Leaving Certificate examinations - 2007 session.

I wanted to achieve an understanding of the topic that takes into consideration the historical, geographical and social context and structures as well as the different ways of seeing the issue. It was thus important to me to look into as many sources possible in a meaningful way. Such use of many different perspectives and sources is known as *triangulation* (Flowerdew & Martin 1997).

As the socio-economic situation is the same for the two villages I visited, it seemed as conditions were good for studying the differences and similarities between them, that is, doing a *comparative case study*.

"A case study is a study of a phenomenon in its natural environment, and a study based on several data sources" (Thagaard 1998: 187, my translation). As opposed to a social

¹⁷Most notably the 1998 law on educational guidelines.

survey, where relatively little information is collected on many “cases” (often individuals), a case study contains a large amount of data on fewer cases (sometimes just one) (Gomm et al. 2000). Typically, a comparative method is used in order to “identify the necessary and sufficient conditions underlying relationships - at least in principle” (Gomm et al. 2000: 14).

However, the exercise of transferring this method frequently used in quantitative studies to qualitative studies is problematic in many ways. One is that the cases will rarely be comparable in all relevant ways (Gomm et al. 2000). In my case, though the maternal languages of the two places were very similar, the language of the Francophone village was also a written language, and popular reading- and writing courses were given in church. This might very well affect how these villagers feel about their language, and this is a central question in the study. Furthermore, a focal point of the study is how the colonial heritage and the national educational system impinge on the lives of the people in these villages; because the system itself probably distributes differences (the argument goes even if the system had evened out differences) it becomes difficult to tell which differences and commonalities stem from the system, and which stem from history and other causes (Gomm et al. 2000) - especially for a foreigner like myself. Moreover, the social world is not like the physical world subject to deterministic laws, rules of behaviour and chains of causation.

Nevertheless, it can still be fruitful to use one case to contrast other/s. There were many things I found interesting in the French school that I might not had noticed had it not been my familiarity with the English schools.

4.4 Preparations

The choice of the specific location in the Western Highlands of Cameroon was heavily influenced by two factors; firstly, I wanted to make use of my competence in French as well as in English, and both English and French are official languages in Cameroon. The area of my field work is situated along the border between the Francophone and the Anglophone zone and as such it gives the opportunity to study both areas. Secondly, my supervisor introduced me to a Cameroonian who is a former student at my department. He kindly offered to provide me with contacts in his village, an offer I happily accepted. He was in Cameroon at the time of my fieldwork and took me to his village - my “field”. He is a much respected man there, and he introduced me to several people including the village elders, his family (who hosted me), Head Teachers and my interpreter. This was a huge advantage - I was known as “the White Man who came with.....”, and though I was thoroughly stared at, people seemed to

handle my presence with calm. I went to see the Fon (chief) and in general I spent a lot of time on courtesy visits and gestures.

I found the making of the interview guide difficult. It seemed very “final” to me, and I thought it hard to try to imagine what questions would give me the information I needed. I conducted three unstructured interviews before I made the final interview guide. This helped me out rule some questions that proved to be irrelevant. The main purpose of the three pre-interviews was actually to find concrete examples of “conflicts” between home-culture and school-culture, but the result was rather meek. Nonetheless, they served another purpose; they gave me the correct terminology, the names of Teacher’s Colleges and general information on the village that helped me appear somewhat knowledgeable during the actual interviews. I conducted most of the teacher interviews before the parent interviews, which allowed me to use the information from the teachers to make the questions for the parents.

“Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit”. (Patton: 278)

In my particular case, I had doubts about the “able to be made explicit”-part of the statement above. I feared that if I did not point in a specific direction, my informants would not talk about language and culture in school at all. Neo-colonial perspectives postulate that the use of English and French as language of instruction is regarded as a given and consequently there is supposedly not much questioning of this practice. This and the lack of exposure to alternative ways of teaching lead me to doubt that the informants would have thought a lot about the issue. There is also the fact that the predominant concern of both teachers and parents is understandably material in nature; the fees are too high, the textbooks too expensive, the teachers, classrooms and desks too few. With this in mind I chose to make my interview guides fairly structured. There were still ample opportunities for the interviewees to reply in what way and length they wanted, and I sometimes added questions because I picked up on something the interviewee said. However, most of the interviewees seemed to expect me to ask them “quantitative questions”, even though I specified in the beginning of each interview that it was their personal opinions that interested me. Very few parents gave lengthy or personal answers, and in hindsight I have asked myself if this was because of the structure of the interview guide. After some consideration I have come to the conclusion that the reason for the short answers is what I outlined above.

4.5 The Interviews

I interviewed 12 teachers and 18 parents affiliated with the schools described in chapter 3. In addition I had conversations with 5 teachers who were not teaching at the schools in question and with two pedagogical inspectors at the Ministry of Basic Education in Yaoundé. With some teachers I had two individual interviews, and I arranged for a group interview with each of the three groups of teachers. In the Anglophone village I interviewed 13 parents. Very many of them had children in both the catholic and the government school. The interpreter picked out the interviewees for the parent interviews, and as such played the role as a *gatekeeper*, together with the man who brought me there (Thagaard 1998). I had initially told him I wanted variation in their sex, age, status and income.¹⁸ In the French-speaking village I had no contacts except for the sub-divisional inspector to whom I had been referred by the divisional inspector (to whom I had been referred by the national inspectors). While I was conducting interviews with the teachers there, my host - who was also my driver when I went to the Francophone village- had met a man who spoke French and offered to help us. I interviewed 5 parents in this village.

The interviews were mostly conducted in the homes of the interviewees. A few of them took place in public places but they were almost all fairly sheltered from other people. They did not take long, about 15-20 minutes for the parents and 30-45 minutes for the teachers (who were more talkative). I started each interview with a presentation of myself and my project. Following the advice of Hesselberg (1998), I stressed that I was a student and that this thesis will not bring any revenue to the village, so as to avoid inadvertently giving any false hopes. The interviewees needed a lot of concretisation to understand the question asked, I used many of the same examples in order to make sure that the interviewees understood the questions in the same way. I used a tape recorder during most interviews. Two teachers asked me to take notes instead, but all the others seemed unaffected by it.

My fears were justified; it was slightly difficult to make the interviewees talk. It felt uncomfortable to be persistent when somebody answered categorically “no” to a question. When it came to the teachers, it was also quite the challenge to keep the focus of the interview, since the interviewees were keen to talk about other school-related issues.

I arranged three group interviews, one for each school. The purpose of group

¹⁸ Some of the interviewees were so-called “notables” in the villages. This means that they are born into a superior status, mostly because of relation to the fon (the ruler). Although some of the notables were slightly better off than their fellow villagers, the difference in means is negligible.

interviews can be both to augment the level of knowledge, to intervene or to explore the subject matter (Brandt in Holter & Kalleberg 1996). They are well suited as a tool for *understanding* the perspectives of the interviewees. This is because the participants in the group often help each other to remember and to interpret things - and the discussion between them can be enlightening because they are forced to clarify their positions (ibid). My purpose in doing these interviews were twofold; I used them to ask questions I had been left with after the individual interviews. I hoped the group dynamics would make the teachers shed light on these points. I also had an interventionist wish of sensitizing the interviewees to the language question; a group interview has the potential to make people articulate thoughts they have previously suppressed or not thought all the way through so as to see the uncomfortable consequence of that thought. It can also help people articulate things they take for granted, and would not have mentioned in the individual interviews. Such discussions will also hopefully onset gainful thought processes in the participants. I had three quite different experiences. A group interview is quite participant driven in nature and in one of the discussions the teachers talked almost exclusively of issues not concerning my topic. I thought it would be nice to start the interview by sharing some of my own experiences and telling them about the educational system in Norway. This resulted in a series of comments and questions on the fact that children in Scandinavia cannot be made to repeat a school year, something they found mind-boggling. The rest of the time they talked about their low salary and conditions in general. The second interview worked quite well. I felt like the four of us thought out loud together. The teachers indicated that they got new perspectives on things. The third discussion was also quite productive in that all the participants actively shared their points of view and experiences and thus provided me with more insight.

4.6 Credibility

In order to be credible, the data collected needs to be accurate and true to the context in which it has been collected. Conclusions need to be based on accurate premises (Kvale 1997). Our investigation is credible if *what we observe and the information we get actually reflects the phenomena we set out to investigate* (ibid). Even though one does not deny that an ontological reality exists, many social scientists rejects the notion of an absolute, objective truth - as such to depict this truth is not a goal. An alternative way of looking at "truth" is then the inner, coherent logic of, for example, a statement. Kvale postulates that credibility is assured by looking into the sources of potential inaccuracy. There is a need for the researcher to

continuously control, question and to theorize.

During my fieldwork I constantly questioned my findings; I looked for information that would contradict the information I had, I followed up on surprising findings, I asked around in order to verify information. The use of triangulation is also a way of checking the sources of inaccuracy.

A typical concern is the impact of the interviewer on the interviewee. Leading questions, a speculative choice of words, the effect of a relative powerful researcher in an interview situation and an overly subjective interpretation of information are all factors that can distort the information and result of the study. The language barrier was the biggest potential threat to the credibility of my findings. The interpreter was a teacher who did not share my view on the issues at hand. I made clear to him the importance of translating the questions in the same neutral way they were posed by me, and the necessity of translating literally what the informants replied. As far as it is possible for me to evaluate I believe he did a good job. However, most of the interviewees chose to answer in English. This is a problem because they clearly do not express themselves as well in English as in their maternal language. This did not pose itself as a problem to me until after a while, and anyway it would have been difficult to insist that they answer in their maternal language when they want to answer in English. Most of the informants are not aware that there are many differences between English as spoken in Africa, and English as spoken elsewhere. There were many misunderstandings during the interviews, but they were all clarified - and the main points presented by the interviewees were captured. Nevertheless it is probable that I would have gotten more specific information had we been speaking the same language.

In a qualitative research project, the credibility of the data (and hence the conclusion) is an embedded component of each part of the research process, and not something one can measure by use of standard tests (Holter & Kalleberg 1996). By being self-critical when it comes to your behaviour and actions, by double-checking your information and by making the process visible, the credibility of your results is adequate.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

During my time in Cameroon I was very aware of my ethical responsibility vis-à-vis the informants. Naturally I did not want them to suffer any sort of negative consequences as a result of their cooperation with me. Also, it is important not to give a negative impression of researchers and research in general.

Concerning anonymity, some of the people I dealt with were trying to persuade me *not* to anonymise the names of the villages and informants. The pedagogical inspectors in Yaoundé encouraged me not to anonymise the result. Additionally, a couple of academics that became my friends - and who were originally from one of the villages - strongly felt that anonymisation is wrong, that it somehow cheats the informants of their acknowledgement for participating in the research. However, it was important for me to be able to say to the teachers and parents that no one will be able to understand who gave me what information, and although it might not have been necessary, I certainly could not change my mind half way through.

Due to the level of intimacy in the contact between the interviewer and the interviewee in qualitative research, the need for ethical responsibility on the part of the researcher is particularly pressing (Thaagard 1998). I started each interview by explaining shortly that I was going to write a thesis on education and development, and informing the interviewees that participation was completely voluntarily, that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that there would be no compensation in any form. I had the definite impression that people wanted to help, I suspect this was partly because of their respect for the man who “brought” me there and for the interpreter. There were times I thought that there was a suspicious lack of criticism towards the school. However, no one seemed uncomfortable during the interview and as for the relation of power between us, I do not think me being a white, educated female affected the informants in such a way that it made them withhold information. I asked people I trusted and who did not participate in the study whether the parents would dare to be honest with me. Two of them said the parents would be “afraid” to tell me truth because I was white; they meant that they would not say things they thought I would disapprove of. Others meant that the parents would feel free. Personally I think *some* parents wanted to answer “correctly”, but as the interview unfolded it was very clear that they did not know what the “correct” answer was. I felt very strongly that the parents were not worried about negative consequences of speaking freely. So, while some answers might point to parents who did not want my disapproval, others pointed to them speaking their mind.

As previously mentioned I had no contacts in the Francophone village. After my first meeting with the sub-divisional inspector, he asked me to come back to see him when I had decided on a school, then he would write a letter for the Head Teacher (principal) of that school. I selected a school based on my host telling me he thought a particular school was old and big and so I reckoned it would be easiest to find informants there. However, the sub-divisional inspector told me that particular school was quite new and hence not very suited for

the purpose. I immediately was weary that he was trying to steer me away from that school, but I resolved that the topic of my study was too farfetched for one school to be any more “prepared” for a study than others. Thus I landed on a school in close proximity to his office. Again, I considered the opportunity that such a location would have a censorship effect on the informants, but there were no signs of this.

When I present data in the last chapters, the citations are direct quotes. Some of them are bad English and this exposure might be seen as humiliating the informants. I have nothing but respect for the people I interviewed, but their somewhat lacking skills in English are underlining a central point in the thesis, and so I did not “airbrush” them. In the same spirit all French citations have been translated by me more or less directly with no polishing of language.

It bothered me somewhat that the people in the villages did not seem especially interested in my research topic. In hindsight I blame myself for not re-interviewing more, and for not trying to arrange group interviews for the parents. I am convinced that the seeming lack of interest is due to their lack of knowledge on this particular issue and notably lack of talking and questioning around it - the culture of silence. It is my hope that my stay there initialized some thought processes on these fundamental questions of how Africans define themselves and the knowledge and culture that is embodied in their languages.

4.8 Interpretation

I transcribed the interviews from the tape recorder and put the transcriptions together with the notes I had made during or after conversations where I had not used the recorder, ending up with two large data collections; one for teachers and one for parents. During the grueling process of transcribing, and when reading through the material at the end of it - *some* topics stood out as patterns even though there had not been direct questioning around them. These are mostly those of chapter 9. For the rest I assembled the answers given to different questions and studied them in isolation. This is one of the criticisms against qualitative methods: the practice of taking information out of its context and comparing it to other information taken out of its context - and as such recontextualising it (Thagaard 1998). However, it is very useful in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the different topics, and I was careful to ensure that the information I isolated reflected the respective interview.

In a qualitative study like this, my understanding of why the informants think like they do - that is my interpretation of the informants’ answers - is central. The study is deductive in

that my theoretical standpoint is the point of departure for the study, and thus I had chosen most of the data-categories before collecting the data. My view of the informants as “oppressed” is explained in chapter 2 and so the reader will take this into consideration while assessing the reliability of the result. That being said I was very conscious of this myself, and I made sure never to draw conclusions on ambivalent premises.

In the presentation of the data I have chosen to use a lot of citations. Sometimes they illustrate dominant tendencies in the material and sometimes they contrast each other and show nuances. The main reason for having them there is that I find them very telling: They say a lot about the attitude and knowledge of the interviewees on the topic.

4.9 Summary

During my fieldwork I experienced firsthand that research does not take place in neatly delimited stages. Instead I found myself going back and forth between theory, methodology, data and interpretation.

I chose qualitative methods due to my wish of obtaining an understanding of how people in two villages of Cameroon experience their reality and how prioritizations are revealed in certain key documents. In such a study, the number and percentage of people who say a certain thing is not what is interesting. It is the *meaning* of their statements, and what this says about their situation that matters.

In spite of some issues, I consider the credibility of the study to be high, mainly because of my constant double checking and triangulation. I also did what I could to act and to present the material in an ethical sound way. The act of attributing a meaning to the informants’ statements that they do not necessarily agree with, is a well known ethical concern in qualitative studies, nevertheless I feel confident that it is clear to the reader what is “me”. The extended use of citations also gives the reader an impression of what has been said - “untouched” by me.

Although one cannot generalize results from a case study in the explicit and formal way one can with results from a calculated, quantitative study (Kvale 1997) - one can still generalize in an analytical way. By giving an assessment of how, and under what circumstances the results of a case study can be used as an indicator of what might happen in another situation (ibid). If the researcher explicitly states the arguments and evidence that favour such a use of the result, the reader herself can decide whether she thinks these arguments hold. I will return to this in the last chapter.

5. The gap between the school world and the home world

This chapter deals with a few areas of divergence between the school and the home. As mentioned in chapter 3 I studied The National Syllabuses for English Speaking Primary Schools in Cameroon/Programmes Officiels de l'Enseignement Primaire au Cameroun anno 2000 when I was in Cameroon, and the teachers and I used these as a starting point for our talks. The Forum of 95 wanted the syllabuses to be identical for English-speaking and French-speaking primary schools; they are not. That being said, they are roughly the same, and I believe the differences to be of little importance (which begs the question of why they just cannot be the same). The syllabuses have made a point out of incorporating local culture. They contain ambitious objectives in the subject *National Culture* which is divided into the "sub-subjects" of *Arts and Crafts*, *Drama*, *Drawing*, and *Music*. Among 25 general objectives, the pupils are to be provided with "Skills, methods and initiatives to be able to convert local materials into useful objects for the improvement of community life" and indigenous musical and dancing cultures of the local environment are to be promoted (MINEDUC 2000: 76). In class 3 and 4 the pupils are to learn about the origin and founders of their village, daily life, inter-community exchanges and community festivals. The subject *General Knowledge* (which in the French version seems to be a part of the science subject) which is taught from class 1-3 is devoted to the social, cultural and physical environment of the child.

When I asked the teachers whether they actually do teach local culture in their school, they mostly answered that they sing some songs in the local language and in the Francophone village they have a "semaine culturelle" (culture week). A senior teacher in the Anglophone village told me that he would often try to involve local people of different crafts or parents who are skilled in a type of handwork in his teaching.

A farmer in the Francophone village stood out as someone who was concerned that the children were not properly educated on the traditions, culture and history of the village: "They are at school like that. But they know NOTHING about the village".

Another parent in this village told me that they *do* learn - at least about the handcrafts and occupations in the village. His wife barbeques fish and his brother makes chairs, and they have both been at the school to show the children during special cultural days. Other parents in this village answered a rather categorically "yes" to the question of whether the children learn enough about local culture and tradition in school.

In the Anglophone village I was told by some that the children had learned a dance

once. Otherwise the answer was again “yes” with no elaboration. However, I got the impression that this was more a reflection of their low expectations when it comes to the teaching of culture in school. Some parents expressed the view that the children can learn about local culture - as well as their language - at home. This might be linked to a discourse (one among several discourses) on culture Coe (2005) found in Ghana, where sources of authority on culture are chiefs and elders, and not teachers and nation-state institutions.

“That they already know, they already have some cultural aspect in them, but then in school they are basically in the formal education system; they are learning to write and read, so according to him there is no cultural aspect in the school.” (Elderly man)

“You leave you culture at the doorstep when you enter school; it has to be like that.” (Teacher school 3)

“Because before they can go to school, they already, the culture, they learn that one from the parent at home, but in school they study only English.” (Notable)

The man who made the latter statement said that the reason they cannot teach culture in school is that the teachers are not from the area. Other plausible explanations for the attitudes that culture should be taught at home is the mentioned connotation of school with theoretical subjects; the view of school as secular (see below), and the colonial mentality stating that their own culture and language are not worthy of being taught in school.

After looking at my data, the following six areas stood out as areas of conflict. They were more or less pronounced, and some of them are not at all experienced as a problem for many people - nevertheless they are there. The last two subchapters before the summary concern the communicative relations between home and school.

5.1 “Manual labour day” on “Country Sunday”

In the Anglophone village where I spent most of my time during my fieldwork there was a holy day referred to as “Country Sunday” (as opposed to a “normal” Sunday...). Everyone was prohibited (by the gods) to do the slightest bit of work. The villagers took this very seriously. Many teachers complained that the children went to the farm on Sundays, but that they would never do this on a Country Sunday.

Schools in Africa often have a “manual labour day”; a day, or half a day, where the children do practical work, usually farming, gardening or cleaning in the school area. This is a

feature that is considered to be genuinely African (Brock-Utne 2000). The problem is that sometimes these two days – “manual labour day” and “Country Sunday” - fall on the same day, and the children tell the teachers they want to abide by the traditional rules that prohibit them from working. This was described by teachers as “a big problem”:

“Certainly, like for example, especially where we are, say for example, this is a catholic school, we believe that the Sunday we have is the real Sunday, but here they have a day in the dialect that we don’t go to the farm, we don’t do anything, so tomorrow is that their “Country Sunday”, now when you ask children to do a thing like manual labour in school on that day, it’s a big problem, they fear that their parents may, that they will be working against their culture, yes, so I think that is one of the problems.”(Senior catholic teacher)

This is the reaction of the Catholic school (as well as the government school):

“[...] What we do, is, in school we don’t have to observe the traditional Sundays, those are the days we don’t have to observe, we have to work, we tell the children you are told those things exists in your homes, then the school is an island, yes - the school is not completely part of that society as far as that’s concerned, because, say, a private school like this, a religious school, denominational, we go by the Sunday which is Sunday so those other things believed at home, and because other Gods say if you do this or this all kinds will follow but we don’t believe in that in school.”

In the Francophone village I did not get a clear picture of the situation; a teacher said that this village also had a holy day other than Sunday, and that the school would never make them work on such a day as that would have been to go against the culture of the villagers. Another teacher said that this has never been a problem in his nine years as a teacher, and that the holy day had never fallen on a manual labour day.

5.2 Human rights

When I talked to my informants of values in the syllabuses that might be imported, I always had to exemplify. When I exemplified with “Human Rights”, the informants immediately thought of corporal punishment in school, which obviously was a hot potato. Traditionally corporal punishment is used in homes and schools in Africa. Corporal punishment of women and children is still legal in the home (as of February 2008)¹⁹, however the law of 98 stipulates that this, along with other forms of “pupil abuse” is prohibited in schools. This law is obviously not practically implemented yet, but it was something that both parents and

¹⁹ <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/reports/cameroon.html>. Retrieved 21.03.09.

teachers were very aware of. Some teachers, like the senior teacher cited below explicitly blamed this new law on human rights being imported to Cameroon.

“[...] like effecting corporal punishment, yeah, in Africa we believe in that to teach a child, the child needs corporal punishment, and when you inflict corporal punishment with a child, the child really changes, but when you continue to tell don't do this, do that, this is right, this is wrong, the child hears, the child does not practice that unless the child is beaten, so this affects the Africans, the Cameroonians, this human rights. Sometimes, like here, as you have just seen me coming from the farm, according to the syllabus, or the school administration or the legislation, yeah, the child is not supposed to help a teacher according to human rights - you are to teach using official time and close at 14.00 o'clock and go home, ok, but as you have just seen me telling children to come back for extra classes, that's purely African, I am not going to have any pay on that, the children work and help me to work on the farm, as their African brother, so I have decided too, to help them, to use my own extra time to help them, so this is what we do, so this human right, most of those human rights, they are against African culture, besides that, if I have a problem in my compound now, you see some of the children and the parents they go to the compound for that, those who refuse to go may be punished by their parents or by some of the other children, but like the West will not like that - they follow the law very closely, while here [...].” (Senior Catholic teacher)

I observed a teacher in the Francophone area hitting the pupils repeatedly with a small whip while asking them: “Why do you insist that I treat you like animals before you understand?” (with no noticeable effect on the noise made in class). At one point she said “what is the remedy of the Black Man?” - then she pulled up her whip.

Disturbingly, informants told me that African children - *as opposed to White children* - need to be hit to understand:

“[...] With European and American children; it's automatic- with African children you have to beat them. “(Former Head Teacher of different schools in the city of Bamenda)

Another Head Teacher told me that “The African child cannot get by without a cane.”As he went on about their lack of discipline I told him that all children, European included, act undisciplined sometimes: “No.” He responded decisively; “They do NOT.”

It is difficult to interpret this insistence on the inferiority of African children to White children as anything other than the internal oppression described in subchapter 2.1.2, called colonial mentality. The informants who made these statements were part of the intermediary class, which according to neo-colonial perspectives look down on their own because education has alienated them from their people.

5.3 Religion

Government schools in Cameroon are not supposed to preach a certain religion. I was told this by the pedagogical inspectors. Cameroon is a secular state, and so are state schools. However, it was said that the pupils are naturally taught that there is a God - an almighty being - since a Godless reality is unheard of for Cameroonians. Going through some text books and listening to the way people talk in Cameroon, it seems clear that the Cameroonian culture is one of freedom of religion, and practitioners of traditional religion have lived in peace with Christians and Muslims for centuries. According to the 2000 syllabuses though, they are supposed to “[...] obey the commandments of God”, and “enumerate God’s gifts to mankind” (MINEDUC 2000: 51).

In the French educational system “laïcité” is a central principal. This means that school should be void of religion in order to protect the freedom of thought and religion against the influence of religious institutions.

The catholic school is of course preaching Catholicism, so the private and the public schools have opposite points of departure.

However, in the government school in the Anglophone village, I experienced praying, and strongly (Christian) moralistic statements like “Where do you go on Sundays? You go to church, no? I’ve seen some of you go to the farm on Sundays, that is not good! ”

Conversely, since attending the Catholic school implies that you accept Catholicism being preached I was a bit surprised when the Head Teacher told me that they teach other religions as well;”Of course, we have to” he said; “We have Muslims in our school, if we did not teach, they would feel left out.”

When talking to the Francophone teachers, it was clear that they consciously did not talk about religion in class:

“Some are catholic, some are Presbyterian, some are Methodist, some are Muslim some are animists.....We cannot cover them all, and it would be wrong to cover just some...No, we do not touch it.” (Female teacher in her thirties)

“If the child is animist, if the child is Christian, if the child is a Muslim – I don’t need to know. I am the teacher to all of them.” (Male teacher in his thirties)

I find it problematic that children are told in government school that it is wrong to go on the farm on Sundays, while they are sent to the farm by their parents. In the same way they are

made to work on a holy day that they are told by their parents to observe. However, the overwhelming majority of the parents are - vehemently though pragmatic - Christians, so the preaching is not necessarily the biggest issue in this area.

It became clearer and clearer during my stay that many villagers (and other people I came across, for that matter) nurtured a belief in what is called “witchery (La sorcellerie)”. This especially became apparent when there was talk of somebody who had died or fell ill. Many believe that this is because this person (or alternatively - and much worse - the family) had had an evil curse cast upon them because they had done something bad. A case in point is the sad reality that many believe AIDS to be the result of a curse, and thus not contagious. This also goes for other types of diseases, and some are not convinced that it actually is bacteria that cause them.

I asked some of the teachers what they do when the pupils confront them with their parents views on such issues. “Well”, a woman in her 40s answered, “What we teach is the truth - so that’s what we tell them. But it is unfortunate when there is a disharmony between what we say and their parents say.” Another teacher said that sometimes her pupils ask her about things concerning “superstition”. She then tells them that these things do not exist.

I was also told that this is not often brought up because the children are too young to know that much about witchery. However, when I was observing class 6 in the Francophone school, they had a text on holy forests, ancestors and dances - and it was not implied at all by the teachers that these things do not exist.

5.4 Sex education

Sex education is a relatively new topic in the Cameroonian curriculum, probably brought on by the AIDS epidemic and the wishes/conditions of some NGOs.

A senior teacher at the catholic school told me that “In this area it is felt that when it is talked about sex in the presence of children, you are teaching in a bad fashion.” According to him, the parents do not teach the children these things themselves either, so to the children, an adult talking of this is unheard of: “The children look at you may be as a mad man - they think that of those things adults should not talk to children, especially when you talk in the presence of children of the opposite sex.”

Another teacher said that parents had come to him to complain about the children being told of issues relating to sex. He himself thought the youngest children were too young

to understand, but says he has been instructed in a very clear way by an inspector that sex education is obligatory right down to the youngest children - "That we should put it in their head right from that age" (talking about HIV and condoms). He said the inspectors are really insisting on this issue, and that he suspects that the reason is conditioned funding from NGOs that work on AIDS issues. This same teacher says the parents do not mind that the children are taught children's rights and 1 man-1 woman marriage.

Another topic clearly coming from the outside is environmental protection. Among many environmental objectives, the curriculum requires the children to learn the appropriate way to dispose of garbage and "identify dangerous practices that can destroy our environment" (MINEDUC 2000: 64). Nevertheless, the normal way of handling garbage in the village is to throw it exactly where you stand, and when they occasionally clean the school building, the children are told to throw the garbage in the stream. Furthermore, I never heard anyone express worry about the use of pesticides, soil degradation, deforestation and extinction of flora and fauna which are all big problems in the area (Gwan Achu & Tiafack, not dated). Ntumkam (1998) observes that environmental education in Cameroon - for teachers as well as students - is not followed by an environmentally conscious mind.

5.5 Polygamy

I knew that polygamy is widely practiced in the area, and it was fascinating to me how the people in these villages could be true to the bible and polygamous at the same time. I was also keen to find out what the children are being told on this matter in school.

One of the pedagogic inspectors in Yaoundé told me that the children are taught that in Cameroon there are two types of marriages. Then they are taught "negative and positive effects of both", and it is up to them to decide which one they prefer. Because of my own cultural dispositions, it took me some time to grasp how and if this is really being done in practice in the villages.

The parents told me one of two things; that their children were *not* taught that polygamy was wrong, *or* that they did not mind the children being taught that polygamy was wrong. The teachers told me that they teach that there are two kinds of marriages in Cameroon, *or*, in the case of the teachers at the catholic school, that 1man-1woman marriage is the only one God approves of. There was also a female government school teacher that told me "We like to discourage polygamy." A catholic teacher told me that the catholic school's preaching of the 1 man-1 woman marriage had born little fruit. He sees the pupils he taught

10 years ago are in polygamous marriages today. I was told that the custom of polygamy stems from a time when a man needed many hands to help him farming. Today he has to provide (lend) pieces of land for his wives to cultivate. The wives usually do not give him the money they earn from selling crops, and as such are financially independent. The two teachers I mentioned thinks this makes the polygamous practice “okay” from a feminist perspective, but they see other problems attached to it. They (along with others I spoke to) believe it causes a lot of quarrel, discontent and jealousy within the families. It is also an important cause of the high number of children born to each family. Families produce more children than they are capable of taking care of - notably send to school - and the fathers are sometimes not able to establish a real relation with the children who lives in separate huts in the compound. Teachers told me that when fathers come to pay the fees of their children they sometimes do not know their names.

5.6 Corruption

“[...] impossibility is not Cameroonian” - ha, ha! “Impossibility is not Cameroonian” what do I mean here? If you can not go the right way then you find other crooked ways to, yes, to end the problem[...] Yes and that’s why we say a real Cameroonian is a cheater...Impossibility is not Cameroonian, especially as far as this is concerned, there is a lot of cheating, there is a lot of cheating [...]”(Senior catholic teacher)

Although Cameroon is rife with corruption and nepotism and this presents an enormous obstacle to development in the country, this is not talked about in school. Corruption, in the meaning of paying someone to sidestep the formal law and give them services, grades or positions, or demanding to be paid to offer someone such services even though they are legally entitled to them, is forbidden by formal law. The informal gift culture in Cameroon on the other hand, is strong and legitimized by norms and tradition (Apollon 3/2008).

In the Anglophone area I was told that there *had* been problems in one of the schools concerning children stealing in order to present their teacher with gifts and paying the teacher instead of presenting a handcraft assignment. This is one example out of many where the gift culture is actually a euphemism for corruption, and the need for a much clearer line between the two is clearly present. When corruption is staring in your face everywhere (like when you want to travel to the next village and you have to pay at the roadblock to be allowed to), and it gives people so serious worries in their life (as when you suddenly have to pay a ridiculous sum in extra taxes) and when the gift culture is so difficult to entangle from plain corruption, it seems to me it must be very harmful that the school does not deal with this issue. In fact,

sometimes school contributes directly; I was told that many places you can buy a “First School Leaving Certificate” from your school, and the schools accept 4 year-olds (because they pay fees, but also to keep the friendship with the parents) even though they speak openly about the fact that those pre-school aged children have no business in school. Teachers told me they cannot speak about the problems of corruption in Cameroon in class because that would be against certain rules by which they have to abide. Some did not agree on this point. They told me that they *do* talk about corruption/cheating on a micro level, as for example when a pupil is paying a teacher instead of presenting a handcraft assignment, but they do not talk about corruption among politicians or the police.

It is completely unacceptable that the gift culture should function as a law in a democracy for several reasons, the two most pressing being that it is useful only to those in possession of something and it encourages nepotism at the expense of meritocracy.

5.7 The communication between the school and the parents

In assessing the differences between school and home, it must be kept in mind that the parents do not understand everything that is being taught due to the language barrier. Furthermore, it was a very common attitude that *teachers know best*, and that they are *not in a position to have an opinion on school curriculum*. According to teachers, parents *do* protest when school challenges their authority as a parent. This goes for corporal punishment, the use of pupils for private errands and the way the children should look. However, no teacher reported that parents had ever told them that they disagreed with the content of school (except for sex education). I got the distinct impression that the parents in general were happy with the teachers, and the teachers saw the need for cooperating with parents. Some parents would deny that there was *any* sort of disharmony between the school world and the home world.

In the Francophone village the teachers agreed that parents turn up for the PTA-meetings, although some felt that these meetings were misused to argue over fees. Among the teachers in the Anglophone village, there were diverging views on whether or not parents attended the PTA-meetings. The following citations are from a senior male teacher in the catholic school, and a teacher in the government school in the Anglophone village.

“Out of parents of about 400 children, when you call a meeting there are parents of about 50 children which I don’t think is up to, at least, average. And mostly those who attend the meetings are males, because in reality, women, especially in this particular environment are always relegated to the

background; there are many things they are supposed to do, you hardly find a woman in here". (Catholic teacher)

"We usually have PTA meetings, parents - teachers, but not all the parents come, you know, this is a place where they usually go to their farms, if you schedule a meeting, parents will prefer going to the farm, you'll come to the meeting, you meet teachers and PTA members - but you will not see parents to share their ideas so we don't even know how we can know the parents own problems. Even most of them that comes to the meetings they keep their problems in there, they don't air it out that you can now look for solutions, that is a problem that we have in PTA meetings in schools, most especially our school." (Government teacher)

There is no denying that parents, and especially the PTA-members, put a lot of effort into building school buildings and hiring teachers. However, as the citations illustrates, some teachers wanted them to be more forthcoming with their thoughts (on other issues than school fees). It is difficult to estimate the number of parents in the villages who speak English/French *well enough to have the confidence to express themselves in such a setting*, but I suspect it is a lot lower than what the teachers think. In the Anglophone village, I found that the teachers who spoke the language were the ones who answered that they were approached by the parents. This is the answer of one of the teachers who did not speak the local language, when asked if the parents come to her with their complaints.

"[...] oh no no; no parents have come...you know since we are in an area that at times parents look at teachers to be supreme [...] I believe they feel ashamed to come and ask a teacher "how come you said this and that?"

In general, teachers talk a lot about how they have to educate parents:

"As I always say, call this area a rural area - here we have to educate parents on their rights and what they have to do (...) It's not like an urban area where everybody knows the reason why a child should go to school and know what you have to do as a parent in order to get that child through school, I'll always (.....) they're uneducated, though it may be heavy, they will not accept it, but at least...we will politely talk to them, so that we teach". (Female teacher school 1)

"[...] *we are teaching those who do not know*, so we, and we follow the syllabus and the scheme of what we know to teach the children. So within the course of teaching we realize that some of them might not be apt up to a certain level [...] the parents try to keep up with what the children are doing, but they don't understand". (Female teacher school 1)

This mind-set was quite universal, but as I have said, my impression is that teachers see the importance of cooperating with parents, and want this to be better. A parent in the

Francophone village told me that he is often approached by the teachers and that they ask him for advice, while a teacher in the same village says she only talks to parents when they come to complain that their child is not doing well enough. This suggests that the practice varies, my own experience also show that this varies from class to class - from year to year.

“Yes there must be cooperation with the parents because if you cannot cooperate with the parents, it means that what you are doing the child will not get it, because a teacher like that, when you teaches you still assign the homework and then from the parents, they will, the parents know that when the children are back from school they have a limited time to be with them and do some house management then afterwards they have to go to their assignments, so there must be cooperation between the parents and the teachers, to bring forward the child”. (Young catholic teacher)

When I asked the parents if they agreed with what is being taught in school, a very common answer was “*school is all and all*” - meaning roughly “school is God”. This was sparkled with comments like - “I would not know myself know what is good or bad to learn”, in fact, *all* the parents in the Anglophone village answered this question more or less in this manner. Some answered that they do not know what the children learn in school - good or bad - and a Francophone woman shrugged her shoulders and said “when I send him to school like that; I’ll accept (what they are teaching him).” An educated man in the Francophone village said that the children’s level of French is too low, and when asked if there is something he wants them to learn that they do not learn, a farmer told me that “they (the teachers) don’t even know the history of the village”. These were the only comments of discontent on the teaching that I was presented with.

5.8 How does the school as a public institution handle conflicts between the home culture and institutional the culture?

I asked whether or not there is a common policy on how to react when different conflicts unfold. A Francophone teacher told me that they talk about this in meetings and such, but that there will always be individual responses to these things. “[...] But we try to make parents understand that tradition as such must stay at home.”

“Yes, for example, like when we ask them, our school is a fee paying school, yes the parents, though they like the education that is gotten from the school but they hate paying fees, and we know that, we the teachers of the catholic sector; our wages are from the fees, so when the children are sent home for the fees, the parents sometimes attack us physically. Or sometimes when the children do not have textbooks or exercise books, these children, we feel that keeping them in the classroom is just a waste of time so we send them to

bring the textbooks or other, the stationary – the parents also get angry with us. (Do most children have text books?) Most people lack. People struggle to pay fees but they don't know that it is important to buy textbooks. Yes".
(Senior catholic teacher)

I was told about a situation where the girls in the Francophone school were suddenly prohibited from wearing their hair long.²⁰ This was because it was felt that the girls were too preoccupied by their looks. The parents of certain girls protested vehemently, stating that it was against their tradition and religion to cut the girls' hair. This dispute was allegedly settled by talks between the Head Teacher and the parents.

To conclude, the school handles mismatches between itself and the community largely by ignoring them. Teachers talk a lot with parents and some of the complaints are on their mind, but nevertheless they continue business as usual. They often have the attitude that the parents are ignorant, and that they are right. In the Anglophone village they make the children work on Country Sundays and teachers admit to hitting children even though the parents (and the law) are against it.

5.9 Summary

The question of local culture's place in school is not entirely straightforward. School cannot condone harmful beliefs such as the belief that diseases are caused by curses, and moreover there is not room for - nor a need to teach - all cultural practices in school. Neither is Cameroon in the same situation as most European countries that have one dominant culture and religion, and where the concern over the last years has been the ability of these countries to include and tolerate other cultures. Cameroon has, as mentioned, been a pluralistic society for centuries and they seem to tolerate each other very well. However, Cameroonians should start to reflect more on their culture and their "truths". They should challenge themselves to talk about corporal punishment, women's rights, environmental practices, polygamy and the gift culture and not stop at the easy answer. In Freire's terms they should investigate the thematics of their culture in order to take ownership of them. A teacher coming from the outside is dependent on the help of the local people to do this. The point is *not* that their culture is "wrong", the point is that this is the only way that a culture can evolve on its own terms as opposed to imitating Western countries.

²⁰In this area, as in many areas in Africa, it is common to require that all pupils wear their hair close-shaved. Less so in Francophone systems than in Anglophone systems.

6. The relevance of school

Let us remind ourselves that the villages in question are *totally* dominated by the agricultural sector. In terms of other professions, a negligible amount of persons are employed or self-employed in the tertiary sector, for example teachers, pub/restaurant-owners, drivers and bakers. These are all still dependent on farming as an income source. My question was how the particular form and content of schooling contributes to such a society. My point of departure was not that this education does *not* contribute to such a society, but rather an interest in whether this question has been thought through by the stakeholders. The dominant attitude among the parents was that what they do in school clearly *is* relevant to life in the villages. Most of them point to the teaching of hygiene and polite and proper behaviour, and how the children in turn teach this to them, the parents.

An informant, who was a teacher, but not working in any of the schools I was studying, told me he thought the content of school is too abstract, that there is a serious lack of vocational instruction, and that the unemployment rates take away motivation. The rest of the teachers found the question too difficult to answer; with one exception. Because I found him to be outstandingly perceptive, the next pages contain a couple of his answers with only minor editing (the removal of a few redundant sentences):

“There are three major issues that worry me. The first issue is the incompatibility of the content of education with the environment of the child. I mean, there is not a balance; there is not a real relation between the environment of the children we have and the content of the programs we teach. We live in a society where the state makes the decisions. When the programs are made by the national inspectors and others, we are at the heart of the problem; the heart of the problem is development. When we look closely, in our households, in our village, in our society; the first reaction, the first word that a child utters is not “a” nor “one”; it is stammering of the maternal language. There are days when I explain a lesson - a quite simple lesson - I ask simple questions - when I explain the same lesson in the maternal language the quasitotality of the class understands - but when I ask the same questions in French - they do not understand. I have asked myself; when we say “development” we say to go to school, but here when a child goes to school...*The people who decide have not understood that the easiest road is often very long - the road that is going to lead to our success is very long -but the shortest road is going to create problems for us.* There are not enough links between the programmes we teach and our lifeworlds, our concrete reality. Because we have not taken into account [...] tradition. By this I mean that schooling, the way it is defined in this country, has stamped on this tradition. That’s why it is said somewhere that we have to leave tradition behind, as the educational policies of the country have asked: The tradition must stay behind there at the door, and you my pupil come in to class. In the end I said to myself that school often imposes on tradition. Because if you want to do this work, you are obligated to bypass these educational directives, if you want to make the children understand what you teach in their maternal language, even secretly....I think you understand what

I mean? If I were to elaborate on the programs while keeping reality in mind; 60% is alien to the children. Alien. Because there are children that are born here, who grew up here, who marries here, who have never travelled to the nearest city - they have never seen other worlds, other people - they receive lessons on those things - but they will never see those things! So I've said to myself that we should start with that tradition which is the very essence of their existence - to take advantage of that tradition to mediate these knowledges - then - it is going to last forever - until the child is sleeping in his bed. He will not need to search in books or in notebooks to find the answer; no need for memorizing [...] if we could work our way out from what they already know, they will have knowledge enough to prepare for their future, the development of their society. So that is where there are digressions between the programs and the life environment”.

This teacher had never heard of either Paulo Freire or Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, but in this next statement he is just like an echo of the latter:

“[...] I am not talking about tradition like...going to church or observing a certain custom; we cannot talk about all that in school - no! We have to talk about the innate tradition - the innate tradition of a whole society is its maternal language. To me, if I am not capable of talking my maternal language properly - if I am not allowed to speak it as if it is the normal thing to do for me - then that is an insurmountable wrong-doing - on the part of my parents and the society - not on my part! They have indoctrinated me, that means that from the beginning, from the age of 2-3 in kindergarten they have started to distance me from my own reality - from the reality that I needed to know!! That is why when an elderly presents himself, he talks the *real* (maternal language) - I close my mouth. I understand *nothing*. You could say that I have been betrayed, he has betrayed me: he asks me to do something - good or bad - and I don't understand, in normal (maternal language)! This is what I am talking about; the tradition I am talking about - that should be tied to primary education - I am not talking about secondary education - but primary education and the psycho-linguistic tradition...they cannot leave this in their homes and go back and forth - there should be a wholeness to it - school should be a compliment to the lives that generation after generation have endured. There are geniuses in the class that end up being zeros in society because we have killed the genius with those languages. With the languages that he doesn't understand, and that in his home neither their mothers nor their fathers speak!! When he leaves school and go back home; no! It's the (maternal language) until they return again to sing the song....we cheat a bit...sometimes we talk to them in their maternal language....so it is in this sense that I talk about the incompatibility...the lapse between the programs and the tradition. *For some years they have talked about the implementation of African languages in schools, but unfortunately that is just talk, it is just a polemic - where are the actual actions?? It's a dysfunction - like a restraining jacket. If you really want to frustrate yourself, you take your pupils case by case and try to understand the problems of each of them. Because, when we leave our pupils there in the neighbourhood - if you have the chance to observe one, in his or her way of being and acting, you will understand that he really has...that each child has a genius side to him or her, it is just that this side is choked - always, always. There is only the chance left that, by accident - by destiny - he will find the end of the tunnel.* [...] there are these linguistic problems, it's after all the basis of all tradition - language is the basis of all traditions - when it has been rejected by our educational system, in our teaching programs....to the point that they understand that it has been the key to their success - the language has been the key to their success, because they went to school for 20 years. I mean, the

people who are in power, the ones who decide...they are forcing them to do something that they themselves used 20 years to accomplish! Come on! It is not possible”.

Later on, in the group interview with the Francophone teachers, there was also another teacher who said she thinks the curriculum and teaching methods should be different in the rural areas. Although this one (two) teacher stood out as the one who thought schooling as practiced lacks relevance for a life in the villages, other teachers told me (answering other questions) that it was a big problem that their pupils and their parents *do not understand the point of going to school*. I found this to be very telling; if schooling is relevant to their lives, then surely motivation should not be such a big problem?

The pedagogical inspectors in Yaoundé seemed very aware of the importance of “keeping it relevant”. They said that illustrations (in books or materials) always were Cameroonian. They used the example of “airport” - children from rural areas have never seen an airport, and they believe that these children therefore have less of a foundation to learn about airports in a good way. Nevertheless they underlined that they can not refrain from teaching rural children about town-related things and vice versa; “When they grow up, that is where they go.” They also said that they always try to make sure that elements from different cultures and places are reflected in the syllabus. The inspectors on the whole came across as genuinely interested in serving the pupils and teachers in the best way, and as knowledgeable and professional. But although they agreed that African languages should be taught, it is my distinct impression that the pivotal role of language is not being dealt with (it should be noted that this is not up to the inspectors to decide). It has had to take the back seat to “harmonisation” of the English and the French systems.

6.1 The relevance of school according to the parents

When asked why education is important, a mother answers among other things: “In order to become White”. Some of the surrounding people laughs insecurely to deflect the potential awkwardness of the situation - “Well” she continues, “When we say ‘White’ we mean someone who is a bit rich. Someone who is somebody in society”

As I will show, several factors stood out from my data material indicating that parents do *not* find school relevant. However, when directly asked, only one parent admitted the possibility that education do not lead to employment, and that it is not in fact that important. This is rather astounding, seeming as the area has experienced an influx of return-immigrants, unable

to find employment in the cities (Gwan Achu & Tiafack, not dated). It would be reasonable to assume that the possibility of unemployment would be clear.

Some parents answered the questions of the importance of education and the future of their children in ways which must be interpreted as a view of education as having a value of its own and as being of value to the individual on a non-material level : “Someone who is educated can do all things more successfully - they know before they do”; They can keep records, read letters and instructions on the fertilizer, they will know how to take care of themselves, and they will simply have the pleasure of being “knowledgeable” or “learned”. A mother mentioned that education helps the child fit into society and “Work the system better”.

However, there was another type of answer that was totally prevailing - and that was the wish for the children to be *employed, outside the village*:

“When di go, someday, someone will be minister, someone will be teacher, someone will be gendarme - they’ll find me”. (Someday they will leave the village and some of them will become ministers, some will be teachers, some will be police officers. They will take care of me) *“They try bring’em, go bring’em. Because we don’t get’em – we own money not there before, go bring’em”.* (They will go and try to find a way to bring [electricity] to the village. Because we don’t have it, we did not have any money of our own, so they should bring it to us) (Woman in her fifties who did not herself go to school.)

“If our sons and daughters are in offices, they could always think of their place.”(Male in his sixties, notable)

The reasoning was then that the children would take care of their parents financially when they were employed. In other words, the dominant view of my informants on education was a purely functional one: education is good because it gives you employment. This a half-truth in line with the myths presented in chapter 9. I am not sure whether the parents actually believe in this, or if they choose to “believe” in it as a mean of self-upholding; the reality being too grim to face.

Some parents also pointed out their wish for the children *not* to be farmers:

“[...] better that way than somebody who is just only in the house or at the farm [...] that they should have something to do , only outside, so they do not have to work on the farm like me”.(Female shop-owner and farmer in her thirties)

I also asked how education could help the village to develop. Their wishes for the development of their villages were: Tarred roads, electricity, more primary schools and

technical schools. Some said that the dream is for the village to be like White Man's country, while some expressed the opinion that the villages are fine as they are. The answers to how school could contribute to the fulfilment of these wishes seemed to miss a link: Some answered "when everybody is literate and knowledgeable - the village will grow"; most answered that the village would be developed because the children would be employed. When I asked how people being employed elsewhere would bring development to the village, they answered that the children would send money. Whereas several of them said that the village will *automatically* develop with education, some of them said that all they need is money. A father, who was exceptionally concerned about the lack of teaching of the mother tongue and local culture, said that education could give them expertise like agronomists.

To be fair, this was a pretty tough question. The answers still show a lack of reflection on what sort of development the village wants. It may seem as they are not very concerned about the sustainability of the development - not only in the sense of the capacity of the nature and culture, but also in the sense of the ability of the villagers to sustain, create and recreate the productivity involved. Keeping in mind Freire's words, getting tarred roads - though incomprehensively helpful - is not about liberation. It will not change the relations of power. The people in the village have not discovered their longing for dignity, their need to be checked in to the creation of their own destiny. In continuation of this thought, only one parent - a particularly highly educated and relatively well off father - said that Cameroon needs education to be able to be in control of their own affairs. A choice to use some of their own languages and to create their own educational system with their own subjects would have had an immense symbolic effect stating the sovereignty of Cameroon and the reclaim of their diverse, African identity (Brock-Utne 2000).

As mentioned, several factors indicate that the parents actually do *not* think education is very relevant. Although none of the parents I talked to admitted to letting the children going to the farm on schooldays or coming late for school, teachers brought this up as a problem. A teacher at the Anglophone government school went so far as to say that the progress in her class was severely hampered by all the late comers (we are talking about children coming to school 1-2 hours too late), there is no use in moving on if half the class has not gotten the last point you were teaching.

The lack of textbooks was a big problem and a negligible number of the children had them. It was my understanding that the children had just one book (if any at all) - the English textbook. It puts limitations on your scope for teaching when the children do not have books, furthermore it means that the children have few or no possibilities of practicing their reading

or doing exercises or trying to understand something that they did not quite get in class. I am somewhat puzzled by the extreme lack of books. The easy answer is of course that people cannot afford them. All parents said they did not buy books because of the price. Their prices vary, but a lot of them cost around the same as a week's worth of taking a drink in the local bar (which was not unheard of). Furthermore, most of these children have many siblings. If parents were to invest in text books for one, they would not have to buy new ones for the next 5. I got the impression however, that parents did not really understand the importance of text books; none of them expressed regret that their children did not have their books, though all of them said lack of money was the reason why they did not buy them. Some said that they have "the reader" (the English text book) in a way that made it seem like this was the only truly important book. The explanation might then be ignorance. It might also be the *unconscious* calculation - described by Bourdieu - of the future lack of scholarly success for their children, that makes them under-invest in it.

Teachers also repeatedly used the lack of fee payment as an indicator of the parents' view on school. Teachers would send children who had not paid their fees home, but still they had to ask for the money all semester. Moreover, the high number of 4-5 year olds in class 1, and the unawareness on the part of parents of how this childcare deteriorates the teaching might also be seen as a sign of parents' lack of understanding for what school is. Especially considering that there are pre-schools and kindergartens in the area.

On the other side, the time, money and effort some of the parents have put into building the schools and hiring teachers imply that they *do* value education.

6.2 What is tested is knowledge of the English and French Language

"There are geniuses in the class that end up being zeros in society because we have killed the genius with those languages." (Teacher francophone school).

One of the main problems with the system is that the criteria for success is not knowledge, but language skills (Thiong'o 1986, Brock-Utne 2000). This means that a child can carry around all the knowledge in the world - but as long as he or she is not capable of expressing it in the colonial language, it will not help. Cameroon is a society where knowledge expressed in African languages does not pay off. School thus is a place of disempowerment instead of empowerment. *All* the teachers agreed that their pupils do not master English/French well. "[...] And then you put English on top of the French that they do not master", a teacher in the

Francophone village commented. Thiong'o (1986) tells how he, who only just passed in all other subjects but English - where he got a credit - was admitted to one of the most prestigious secondary schools in Kenya, whereas his classmate who had distinctions in all other subjects but failed in English - went on to work as a "boy" for a bus company. One still has to pass examinations ("the First School Leaving Certificate"), to be able to go on to secondary schools, and the examinations are still in French or English.

An Anglophone teacher teaching in a secondary school, told me how last year she had a class of 50, of which only ten students were "Anglophones" (the others were Francophones who had switched to this Anglophone school to do their GCEs):

"I look at their faces: There is NOTHING there!! ...until I translate it into French for them".

One of the questions I asked the teachers was whether or not they used the mother tongue when they were teaching. The answers varied, but some of them did not themselves speak or understand the language in the area they were teaching, and as such had no choice but to teach exclusively in English or French. Some of them described how the question "what is this? (Pointing to something or holding up an object) " *always would be answered in the MT*. They then went into lengthy descriptions of the strategies they use to make the children say words in English instead of in their MT, and you cannot help but think that all that time could be spent learning things they do not yet know, instead of trying to learn what they already know (the question was always answered!) in English or French.

"Yes, for example language is (.....) because now I who am not from this area, even though I understand part of the language, I cannot understand very well, and I cannot speak it so, last year when I was teaching class 1, I found it very difficult because when I talk they don't understand, and they too, they speak, at times I don't even understand what they are saying, so I have to use only actions - it's difficult." (Government teacher)

"No it's a barrier, it's a barrier. Because sometimes when you ask the child a question in the class the child will not be able even to answer how he was supposed to answer, why? Because the language to express him- or herself is not there. Yes, so they'll answer halfway." (Government teacher)

6.3 Summary

It was fairly obvious that the question of how school is relevant to a life in the village had not been properly thought through. The teacher who *had* thought through this, estimates that 60% of the schools content is alien to the children, the parents said it is relevant because it will give the children employment in the future - in a village that hardly does any employing at all. When children start school, their language - and all the knowledge they and their parents possess in that language - becomes irrelevant, and that is why the progressive teacher says that geniuses end up being zeros in society. He is what Thiong'o describes as an intellectual of the petty middle class that defends the peasant/worker roots of the many nations within the state of Cameroon.

7. The parents' view on language of instruction

When I asked the parents about their thoughts on LOI, I had to use a lot of time explaining to them the concept of learning in one's maternal language. To most of them this was hard to envisage, they assumed it would mean the abandonment of English/French altogether and the first response was usually that it was a bad idea because then the children would not learn English/French. The fear of the children not learning English and French stems from what I have earlier described; the association of being fluent in English/French and being "somebody"/being smart. As I told them, I have no wish for the English and the French languages to disappear from Cameroonian schools. On the contrary, I know that Cameroonians will learn these languages *better* if they first master their maternal languages and then are taught second and third languages as subjects, by qualified teachers. Furthermore the parents imagined their mother tongue as being something apart, something that the children would have to learn *on top* of everything else; it would be too much for the children.

Another response was that people would not understand each other if they all were instructed in their mother tongue. I told them that they would still learn how to speak English and French, just like people do in other countries.

Some parents from the Anglophone area said they were against the potential use of their maternal language as LOI. "They go to school to learn English and French" some said, and one said that they will not learn how to read and write if they are instructed in their MT, seeming as the MT does not exist in writing. "The dialect will bring nothing back" another parent stated.

Other parents were positive to the idea, and a couple brought up the notion of having a regional African language - this would facilitate communication in the region. Two elderly men knew that instruction in African languages happens elsewhere, and were thus in favour. One of them had been taught the languages Douala and Mungaka at school.

With a puzzled look on her face, a woman in her thirties told me that she had not known that she felt this way about maternal language in school before I asked her. She pointed to an elderly woman and said:

"This is a mother who cannot speak the other English. If you want to write to her, you could write in the African language so that she could understand..just to help those who...do not understand..."

Some said that it would be nice if their language could be written, and one man even said it would be nice because it could make the language expand.

In the Francophone village there were also parents who were positive to the use of the MT in school. One of them, a man in his late thirties, was the only one of all the parents who (obviously) had thought about this *before* I brought it up. Although he also was concerned that the kids do not learn English well enough, he was enthusiastic about the idea of them being instructed in their MT. He pointed out that many of the children eventually leave the village, and found it sad that they leave without sufficient knowledge of their own language and history. A woman selling groundnuts in the street also remarked that “there are kids who don’t even speak their own language well”. One of the Francophone parents, who were concerned that the children do not learn *French* well enough, agreed with me when I explained the LOI debate; he said that it is sad that Africa always uses imported formulas, languages and structures and that they have “thought too much about the past”.

A very common argument was that children learn their MT at home and that they will never forget it anyway: “*They do not need to learn what they already know*”:

“No, they already know country talk, how would they learn it in school again? In school they only need to learn English, they do not need to learn country talk again.” (unschooled woman in her sixties)

“Cameroon is a bilingual country and I think at the moment we don’t find any African language necessary for us to study a part from the French and the English because I think we have not seen the usefulness of or the means or the importance of it to bring in another language for us to study. “ (Elderly man, notable)

The way I see it, this relates to a lack of conscious reflection on the importance of language - if not to say a denigration of their maternal language - derived from the fact that their language has never been given importance. Conversely, in other countries, where we are instructed in our MTs, it is not so hard to imagine that someone who drops out of school at an early age will be less proficient in her MT than her friends who stay in school. This is because we recognize that our languages have layers of meaning and logic and styles that need to be studied to be fully understood. Children who are not instructed in their MTs do not have a scholarly mastery of their own language. In the villages I visited they have low standards and expectations to the knowledge of the maternal language; some parents however, pointed out that many children do not speak their MT properly.

One of the most remarkable things to me is that out of all my informants put together,

only *one* commented upon the fact that to me is obvious: *The children, with just a few exceptions, do not understand or speak English/French well at all.* Children of the same age in other countries who are taught in their mother tongue - and study English/French as a subject - speak it better, because they have the benefit of mastering abstract thinking in the language of instruction and they are more confident and thus more efficient learners.

One man - who spoke Pidgin but not English - told me that even in the class 1 textbooks, the English has a secondary school level - which of course is not the case - if the same things were written in the child's maternal language, he would see that they are age appropriate. This again goes to show the distorted idea people have of languages in school in general and of English and French in particular; there is this belief that the level of English spoken in the village is quite adequate, when in reality it is generally low.

One of the mothers I talked to in the Anglophone village was a Francophone. When I asked her if she talks to her children about what they learn in school, and if she is keeping track of their home assignments, she is clearly eager to share her experience. She says that her being a "Francophone" makes her unable to understand what they do in school, and finds it difficult to teach them. She says she encourages the older children to teach the younger ones, but then again, she cannot evaluate the work they do. She laughs a lot while explaining this, and when I ask her if she finds it sad that she is not able to take part in her children's schooling, she shrugs her shoulders and says that it is "her own problem" because she decided to move into an Anglophone area. Bearing in mind that this woman had no problems speaking the African language of the village (which was very close to her own maternal language), the fact that she does not see the unreasonableness of the situation exemplifies how ingrown the attitudes towards the African languages are, and how little has been done to change them.

I also asked the parents how they felt about French and English being the only languages given status as the national languages of Cameroon. It was clear that the most parents were confused about the difference between "official languages" and "Language of Instruction". They thought that if for example three Cameroonian languages were given status as official languages, then it meant they had to be taught in school. Several expressed the view that no one African language is universal, and therefore it would be improper to give them official status. First of all, the idea of official languages is not that they necessarily be universal; South Africa has eleven official languages and this is regarded as an important recognition and validation of the linguistic diversity that is the African reality. Secondly, French and English are not universal either! I am not denying that many people in Cameroon speak either French or English at an elementary communicative level, but it is a continuously

nurtured myth that they all do - even many people who tell me that this is the reality do not speak French/English well enough *themselves* to handle official letters or longer articles in a newspaper. A couple of informants used the *interpreter* to tell me that it had to stay like it is because Cameroon is bilingual and everyone can be understood everywhere. A typical argument for the current language situation is the young age of the African nations and the enormous challenges faced by them. Allegedly the choice of a former colonial language is an easier and shorter way to achieve their goals and inter-ethnic communication. These arguments are - as Bambgose (1991) points out - superficial; they ignore the emotional and psychological aspects of languages as well as any need of authenticity.

Some of the parents thought an African language *should* be included as an official language, whereas one actually expressed the relatively progressive thought (...) that the national language should be a language everybody understands (insinuating that not everybody understands English and/or French).

The most characteristic thing about these answers though, was the confusion and insecurity I was met with. Many answered “I do not know” or “I cannot know, I am only a parent”. This is not only testimony to the lack of confidence these people have, but also to the seemingly complete lack of information, knowledge and discussion on the topic.

7.1 The children’s view on language of instruction

The use of a foreign language as language of instruction has profound effects on the children’s lives. In the village where I lived, none of the children I met had the ability to conduct simple conversations about simple things with me in English. Repeating and dropping out are heavy burdens to carry at the verge of one’s teenage years and adulthood, as is the confusion and sense of failure these children are served with every day in class. Freire (in Brock-Utne 2000) called the use of a foreign language as LOI a “violation of the structure of thinking”, due to the following unnatural development of both languages. One day I was walking with one of the teachers to school, and we were surrounded by pupils. I was talking casually with the teacher about the weather and the like when one of the girls in class 6 said something to him in her Mother Tongue. The teacher tells me that what she said was that she was amazed by how he could understand me. She could not understand a conversation about the weather in the language through which she is taught science and maths! I wanted to ask the children themselves about the LOI issue. My judgement was that it was not an option to ask them in person or to use an interpreter, as I felt strongly that the mismatched

relationship of power between the children and adults would influence their answers, and would also be difficult to arrange practically. I therefore opted for writing down two questions and hand it out to class 6 students for them to answer. I was warned by several teachers and others that that would not be possible; the children would not be able to understand or answer such answers in writing (which in itself is pretty telling). They were partially right. I handed out the questions in an Anglophone school first, and came to get them the next day. The questions were thoroughly explained by me and the teacher. The first and second questions:

“What do we understand by traditional culture and traditional religion?”

and

“How do you feel about traditional culture and religion?”

- were designed to learn about the children’s attitude to their own culture - by studying what words they choose to describe it - whereas the last one:

Imagine that your teacher taught you in (your maternal language) and you could speak, write and read (you maternal language) in class. How would that be?

- was meant to instruct me on how they felt about their LOI situation.

A vast majority of the answers made no sense because the pupil had not understood the question or because she could not express herself in English. For the first question, most had answered them by naming examples of local culture (indicating that they *did* understand that question). Some answers were interesting though, as with the one who answered that traditional culture is “to go to the farm on Sundays”. As mentioned elsewhere, it is a common complaint of some of the teachers that people in the village do not observe the Holy Day. As this child was both into local customs and a very religious child (judging from the rest of the answer) - I wonder if she meant this as an attack on her own culture or as a sign of defiance. The second question was mostly misunderstood and/or answered unintelligibly, whereas the third question had a few interesting answers:

“Teacher are still (Maternal language) banning! Why are you (maternal language) so banning?”

A couple of others were also enthusiastic about the concept of being instructed in their mother tongue;

“I will write my (maternal language) excepe (?) very well and I will like very well.”

and

“My maternal language is a very good language”

But there were also those who opposed the idea:

“It will be that we are not learning English in school. Because we are learning our language which is not well fine.”

and

“It will be bad and I will feel bad because I came to school to learn English because I love English.”

In the Francophone village I was as mentioned more constrained by distance and practical issues, so I handed out the questions together with the principal, who explained the questions, and then I went back to get them about half an hour later. When I finally sat down to read the answers, it turned out that the answers to the two first questions were largely identical (...). Apparently the teacher had written down an answer on the blackboard for them to copy. This was of course a disappointment, but I was somehow uplifted by the answer to question 2 (the answer to question 1 consisted of examples of local culture):

“[...] I cannot let my traditional culture go in order to imitate the behaviour of a stranger. We rely on traditional religion in all of life’s domains.”

It was evident that there was a given answer to question three as well, but here the pupils had, for some reason, answered mostly in their own words. The given answer from the teacher was:

“In following courses in (maternal language) we risk forgetting the national language altogether. My language helps me understand better the lesson given by the teacher.”

Out of the intelligible answers to question 3 (I got 57 papers in return, there were 68 pupils when I observed the same class some days later), almost all liked the idea of being taught in their MT. Here are some of their answers:

“I will understand better.”

“(maternal language) is good”

“We would find that magnificent because in our maternal language we would express ourselves very well.”

“It is good because I understand my language.”

“It is good because I cannot read a foreign letter.”

“I love speaking my maternal language.”

These are the negative answers:

“That is not good because I do not understand (language of the village) but Bulu.”

“No, because in class we will never find the words to express ourselves in French.”

“We find that very bad because I will loose a lot if I write in (maternal language).”

Again I observe the paradox in rejecting the use of MT out of fear for not speaking/writing well enough French - when they do not speak/write well enough as the situation is today. What I was left with after this particular “experiment” was a confirmation of the fact that the children have thoughts they cannot express; after all, the majority of these 12-year olds answered the questions. When I studied them closely I could, with my knowledge of the question, circumstances and Kamtok guess at what some of them wanted to say, but to an outsider they would look like strings of randomly put together, misspelled words.

Secondly, I was left with the impression that the children were more positive to their MTs than were their parents.

The primary reason I wanted to ask the children on the issue was a simple wish to hear

their thoughts and to give them an opportunity to be heard. Children should always be heard in matters which concerns them but they do not have full information and overview over the situation and that is why adults make decisions for them. In this case my worry is that the adults who make the decisions for these children are not informed or misinformed and may be that is why they seem more negative to their own languages.

7.2 Summary

In this chapter I have illustrated the lack of knowledge on languages in education as I experienced it in Cameroon. This is one of the main reasons why LOI policies are never changed in Africa; the masses are unaware of the benefits involved and they are unable to see the practical feasibility of implementing African languages as LOIs. The “neutral” quality of the former colonial language, the danger of civil war when choosing some languages over others, the practical and economic difficulties of choosing African languages are all overrated - psychological, cultural and pedagogical factors are neglected (Bamgbose 1991, Brock-Utne 2000). If the parents I talked to knew (what the elite know) that their children would learn better and more if they were taught in their maternal language, they would naturally reconsider. This is common all over Africa. The oppressed see no alternative, because it is never presented to them. Bamgbose states that the belief that multilingualism hinders national integration and the belief that a nation must be a nation state with one (or possibly two) languages are myths. Language in itself is not divisive, it is the symbolism and feelings attached to it and the *attitude* of the speakers that *can* be. When several African languages like Wolof, Akan and Hausa have grown and established (or strengthened) themselves as lingua francas the last years, it is because the attitudes towards them as second languages have been positive. Although Cameroon has about 247 languages, the fact that they have several non-dominant languages of wider communication like Kamtok, Douala, Basaa, Ewondo, Bulu, Gbaya, Wandala and Fulfulde (Bamgbose 1991, Echu 2004²¹) speaks to their advantage because large groups of people are likely to embrace each of them. Yes, there are serious costs involved in administration and producing text books in several languages and that is a problem. However, there are *obviously* serious costs involved in maintaining the status quo (Brock-Utne 2000) in Cameroon, most notably for the masses that pay the dearest price.

²¹ http://www.linguistik-online.de/18_04/echu.html Retrieved 07.04.09.

8. The level of reflection among the teachers

In my own teacher's training a lot of time was devoted to studying and reflecting on the general teaching plan; a document stating the values we want to install in the children, and what sort of qualities, abilities and skills we want them to end up with. In Norway as in most countries in the North, going to school is not only a right but an obligation by law, and this fact accentuates the power of the school as an institution and of the teachers as the representatives of this institution²². As students we were made to reflect upon the asymmetrical level of power between the teacher and pupils, and upon what we expect from the pupils and why. A school activity should always have a thought-through purpose. This purpose does not always *have* to be the learning of a particular skill justified by a clever pedagogical scheme, but it must be thought through and it should be a part of a bigger picture, namely the goal of education, or else we lose sight of the purpose of our systematical influence on the children that are entrusted to us. This is of course especially important in a centralized system where the children themselves have virtually no say in what they are to learn.

None of the teachers had anything to say about the content of their Teacher's College education (and three of them did not go). They had many comments on the infrastructure, discipline and climate surrounding their educational facilities but - even when I pressed them on the issue - nothing else to say except that it was good and hard. This is quite conspicuous given the fact that - truth be told - teacher's education in Africa is unfortunately not known for being of very high quality. To be fair, this gives me no reason to assume that the Teacher's Colleges *in question* are not good schools, but under any circumstances, the fact that *no one* had *anything* critical to say indicates as I see it a serious lack of critical thinking. To become a primary school teacher in Cameroon, you only do one year of teacher's training if you have A-levels (you do more if you only have o-level exams). Nobody thought this to be too little.

8.1 What should be taught in school?

I asked the teachers whether they had fully implemented the 2000 programs and how they found them. One of the reasons for these questions was that coming to Cameroon I had the presumption that the syllabus would be quite extroverted in outlook. As seen in chapter 5 I

²² Primary school is actually obligatory in Cameroon as well according to the 1998 law, but considering the states inability to provide adequate infrastructure and teachers, this point is not so relevant in the Cameroonian context yet.

was wrong. I kept the questions, however, because I thought they could reveal if practice diverted from theory (as was suggested by some of my informants).

I experienced with several of the questions I asked the teachers that many of them confused the terms content, method and form. For example, many started talking about bilingualism, the reduction to six years of primary schooling in the Anglophone system, the problem of admitting 3-4 year olds, and the new methodology when asked about the content of the programs (it turns out that the “harmonization” of the two systems is what the new programs are associated with).

When asked directly on this issue, the general feeling seems to be that the programmes are okay. One says they contain mostly texts and objectives on Cameroon (as opposed to on Europe and USA), another says there is more continuity in these than there was in the old ones. A young man complains that he has to teach needlework which he is not trained for and which he thinks is for girls. An experienced woman tells me how she herself learned nothing of Cameroon when she went to school, but a lot about Great Britain and Europe. She requires her pupils to write down national news when they listen to the radio.

Whereas some point out that the subjects are good, and feel that everything a person needs to know is there, some think the syllabuses are too comprehensive. Some admitted that the programmes are not well followed. When I made a comment to one of the teachers about how the programmes seem very Cameroon-oriented he responded that it is not always followed up in practice:

“ [...]because you see it is possible for a child to leave Cameroon - to leave primary school in Cameroon without knowing even 20 out of the 66 divisions in Cameroon. It is possible, yes. Because very little is done about Cameroon even in primary schools, they still go out to the West or other parts of Africa to teach African history and geography and so on, but forgetting about the Cameroon itself so I think it is not as reflected as it should be”. (Senior catholic teacher, male)

The following view was expressed by several:

“As you say, if you were to follow it strictly and then if admission was to be done following the real ages and then schools too were staffed in such a way that the teacher-pupil ratio should really reflect what it is supposed to be, then I think the program would be a nice one, yes. But when you see a teacher with 60-70 children - how do you lower the scheme? How do you work? How many subjects do you teach a day?” (Catholic teacher, male)

One of the reasons why there was a need for the national education forum in 1995 was overloaded teaching programs. Personally I think the 2000 syllabuses too are overambitious, and I would like to have seen the previous ones if they were even more wide-ranging. There are many objectives that involve teaching material and resources that are very far from being a part of reality. This is the view the citation above reflects.

Unfortunately, the old syllabus is not obtainable, but I have every reason to assume that they were geared towards Europe. Still, even when asked directly, only one teacher confirmed this view - it is as if eurocentricity never has been a problem in Cameroonian education.

I asked the teachers whether or not they had received any form of training in teaching the 2000 programmes. Some had not, but some told me that there had been seminars to inform them on their content and goals. However, they all laughed when I asked if they had been invited to share their experiences and opinions when the new programmes were to be made. They all seemed to be under the impression that the opinion of teachers in general was not valued or wanted. Furthermore, none of them had even heard that new programs were in the making before they were presented to them in their final form.

“No, no, they don’t invite people to...In reality, another thing that worries me about primary education in Cameroon, is the primary education program is drawn by doctors, this professors this and that, I think that man of the pays- the primary school teacher, knows more about it than professor so and so....”
(Catholic teacher, male)

As explained in chapter 2, this distance between the oppressed and the writers of the curriculum is a worry he shares with Freire. Systemic education must necessarily be centrally directed, but Freire pointed out that there is room for educational projects where teachers and students in dialogue can explore the thematics of their own history and culture and the thinking implied in them and *that* would be the curriculum, because that is what would make the students take ownership of their own thinking and destiny.

It is a basic conviction of mine that the learning and thinking processes are the *essential* content of school, not the drilling of facts. Examinations however, do not measure processes but results - and examinations are essential in Cameroonian schools. This is an example of a line of practice that is not questioned but that in my opinion is not serving Cameroonians and should be changed.

8.2 *What is the justification of the values taught in school?*²³

Given the asymmetrical relations of power between the teacher and the pupil, the teacher should be able to justify the values she tries to instill in the latter. The question of this subchapter was however, by far, the most difficult for the teachers to comprehend. In fact, none of them fully understood it. I exemplified over and over again how teachers explicitly and implicitly try to inculcate a particular set of values in the children, and how they are not there by coincidence, rather they find their justification in a specific worldview or tradition. In the 2000 programmes (MINEDUC 2000: 50) it is stated that the objectives and subject matter in the subject *Citizenship* are drawn from a variety of sources like Cameroonian traditional and cultural values, Human Rights documents, Cameroonian laws, scientific knowledge and religious knowledge. It is claimed that because of the variety of sources and the integrated approach to the use of them, the teaching will be non-partisan and objective. It was obvious that none of the teachers had read this.

A young man said that the most important value was “morals”, without being able to see that “morals” is a subjective term (it was clear that he connects this to Catholicism though). In the end, the closest we got was when I asked directly if a certain value was Cameroonian by origin or if it was imported. The general response was that all the values in the programmes were Cameroonian - but then they would later say that sex education, the prohibition of corporal punishment and women’s rights come from somewhere else - without seeing the lack of congruence. To me, this is a very telling example of a culture in which questioning authorities is discouraged. The teachers have simply internalized the values they themselves have been taught, and later they have accepted the additional values they have been told to teach the children. I do not at all mean to imply that human rights and sex education should not be taught in Cameroon because they are “imported values”, but I think teachers should be able to justify why they teach what they teach. The most striking response to this question was the *lack* of response; it was obvious that the teachers had never been asked to reflect upon why and how they teach the values they teach, indeed, most of them would have difficulties naming more than a couple of them, simply because they are taken for granted.

²³ In the catholic school, the primary source of justification of the values is naturally the bible. Nevertheless, the Catholic schools teaches the same programmes as the government schools and thus largely the same values.

A woman in her forties underscores that most European values are good, and that Cameroon receives a lot of good help from USA and Europe; “it has to be said that Cameroon is not capable of doing all on its own.”

A male catholic teacher stated that “[...] in the real world it’s not there; when we say that a woman has the same rights as a man...you see in practice it is not like that at all - those are imported cultures”, but the thought train stopped there. There was no reflection on why it is like this, or the consequences of this.

One of the teachers pointed out, rather surprisingly, that the children have the right to decide on what values they will make their own. Also, during one of the group interviews - as I was asking the teachers how they felt about encouraging the children to have a critical sense (which they do not do today) - one of the teachers said that they cannot control how the children will turn out. These two comments seemed relatively progressive to me. In the end of this particular group interview I told the teachers that I found Cameroonians to be too respectful of authorities. They said that they had not thought of that.

8.3 What is the goal of education according to the teachers?

“Whenever children come to school, I always try to tell them why they come to school and they should know why they come to school so that they will learn better, I tell them they come to school to learn in order to educate themselves, learn to educate others, they know how to live in their community and in their country, they know how to survive whenever there’s a crisis and so on and so forth.”(Senior teacher, catholic school)

In the introduction I talked about the various potential functions of education. When I asked the teachers what the goal of education should be, most answers fell into the “individual empowering function” and “integrative function” categories. Some teachers outlined how education will help the individual to meet the demands of society, while most actually emphasized how it helps the individual managing her life on all levels.

As mentioned in chapter 3, traditional schooling in Cameroon put great emphasis on character building, with the goal of forming humble, courageous, honest, persistent and sociable people. While a catholic female teacher answered that school will help you “know God, and have good morals” - none of the others pointed out character traits; they rather mentioned skills - like reading, writing and talking in public - that will empower the individual. This is slightly surprising knowing the highly moralistic content of the curriculum, and also the way of talking to each other and talking in general in Cameroon; Every day I heard people calling other people lazy, stubborn, lying and ignorant to their face. On the other

side, this might explain why it was so difficult for them to answer the question of what justifies the values they are trying to teach; it might be that normative talk and thinking is so entrenched in them that they never reflect on it.

Two Anglophone female teachers explicitly stated that going to school makes you “reason better”:

“Before like our parents, they did not go to school, they behaved foolishly, now people who have gone to school, they can reason.” (Female catholic teacher)

“[...] illiteracy, yeah, you see those illiterate people, they reason like people who live in the bush, yeah, for it..[...] this is the..you find their own reasoning faculty is just like somebody - a bushman - a monkey - like an animal, yeah, you don't...in a way, like you know that this is an uneducated person, unlike a learned somebody, who has studied - his way of interacting in society is, I mean, is different”. (Female teacher, government school)

...while two Francophone teachers emphasized the difference between education and schooling/instruction, meaning that you *can* be educated without having gone to school. The above citations illustrate how the “in between class” look down on their own, while the two Francophones made a point out of saying that *they* do not.

A senior teacher said that we learn how to “put up with each other” through education, and the teachers generally focused on how school makes the pupil *fit into* society or *manage* in society - as opposed to contribute to *changing* society. I told them during the group interviews that this strikes me as meaningless, considering they have a society that is arguably malfunctioning - what does it even mean to fit into the Cameroonian society? The observant reader will remember that his was the explicit goal of traditional Cameroonian schooling as well. The forum guidelines, the 1998 law and the teaching programmes - like most general guidelines - enumerates a range of universally accepted qualities they want to see in the students at the end of the education line. However, words like *change*, *critical thinking* and even *development* are oddly absent. On the contrary, “Keeping in mind the economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors”, the law stipulates that the general mission of education is “The harmonious insertion in society of the individual” (MINEDUC 1998: 2) and pupils should be “capable of responding to changes in society resulting from developments in science and technology” (Ndongko & Tambo 2000: 260). In other words these guiding documents presents us with a static worldview where humans should adapt to reality and harmoniously find their given place in it as opposed to being agents of change. As shown,

Freire argues that the very first step in the conscientization process is to realize the difference between the culturally made reality and the natural world, and the oppressors create myths and discourses to make this realization inaccessible. I told the teachers about Paulo Freire's ideas and work. Sadly, none of them had heard of him before. What a tragic irony that he is on the syllabus lists of teaching education in Europe and the USA, but not in Cameroon....

As seen, part of the colonial legacy is the connotation of education with white collar jobs. It seems as if those who have realized that this is not the point of education, have resorted to a less superficial, but still quite egocentric view on what education can do. Following are some citations that can illustrate this:

“I know that we go to school first of all to have our self- our personal, our personal education [...] when if you go to education to have work and to have money you will not have it, but to have education it just make you to have your personal brightness to exercise yourself [...] and then to read some of your documents without asking people so it is also for your self-interest”. (Senior catholic teacher)

“I know that since I am not earning anything on my education level I believe that it is for my self- interest. Yes I can read anything that is sent to me, I can write to any person, I can speak among people, that is helping me, so to be bright [...]” (Junior catholic teacher)

“In the past, people used to think that to go to school means to get a white collar job and I think that that should not be the goal, yes, that should not be the goal because I think the goal should be to fit yourself in a society, yes, to be educated, to live well with your neighbours, with other, to be able to express yourself in public and not necessarily to get a white collar job, yes, because I think when you're educated and learned, even if there is no job for you provided by the government, then you may be able to find a way to manage yourself out, to make life moving - but if you only think that to send a child to school means to make a child will have a job in this office that office if you are disappointed with the first you may not send the rest to school again so I think the goal should not be to get a white collar job in this office or that office, I think the goal should be to make a child fit into society, I think so.”(Senior catholic teacher)

“[...] the children in primary school they don't actually know why they come to school, so that creates an almost fear in them, sometime hatred [...] most parents and students they don't know why and the few parents who send their children to school they believe that the children are going to school in order to, to have jobs after primary school and now they see that there are no jobs here, and so they tend to refuse to send the children to school or to pay fees, or...”.(Senior catholic teacher)

8.4 *The teacher's view on language of instruction*

- *You know, here we struggle to talk the White Man's talk*
- *Is that a good thing?*
- *(Looks at me confused, as if she does not understand that this is something to be questioned at all)*

The forum guidelines and the law state that the promotion of national (African) languages is an objective. Graduated pupils should be bilingual as well as literate in at least one African language. However, this issue is clearly not given any special priority and is mentioned in the same breath as for example the “reinforcement of moral and civic education” (MINEDUC 1995: 75). African languages are *not mentioned* in the syllabuses, nor is there a *paper of application* - which, as the name suggests is necessary by law for the application of particular measures - and when I was in Cameroon the concretisation of the introduction of African languages in school was not even assigned to anyone in the government as an area of responsibility. This is even more peculiar knowing the relatively strong presence of SIL international in Cameroon and the sustained and noticeable work of PROPELCA²⁴, a 25 year old programme for the promotion of indigenous languages in Cameroonian schools.

Although some teachers had heard about the concept of teaching in African languages, few had seriously considered the advantages and disadvantages thereof. The answers I got could be put into two categories; the ones who had never heard of such a thing as to use African languages in school - and would preferably not even consider the idea - and the ones who had considered the idea - but still suffered from lack of information - and so thought it an impossible dream. It is safe to say that there was a clear lack of knowledge of the consequences of teaching in the former colonial language - and of ways to make African languages in school a reality.

As mentioned the local language of the francophone village was a written language. Some of the teachers here did not speak their maternal language perfectly, nor could they write it. Whereas these expressed sadness at this fact, none of the teachers in the Anglophone village did the same.

The Anglophone teachers who did not themselves speak the language of the village - and who taught classes above class 2 said that they *never* allow Mother Tongue to be spoken in class. Some even wrongfully think there is a law against it.

²⁴ Projet de Recherche Operationelle Pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun. Initiated by the University of Yaoundé. Today it enjoys the collaboration of both state and private actors.

“Mother tongue in the lessons? No! No! It is forbidden!”(Anglophone government school teacher)

“[...] there is a law banning them from speaking that vernacular, then as we proceed to higher levels they don't even speak it again, and then they speak good English, because most of them do not speak pidgin, here, pidgin is spoken in urban centers.”(Catholic teacher)

“Ai! Here I can say...80%, yes too much (speak MT in class)!! Because they don't even understand, they don't understand even pidgin, I mean the children around, they don't understand pidgin, as the child is leaving the school they are all – it's only the mother tongue and that's surely affecting the pronunciation because a child will not pronounce very well because of the mother tongue.” (Anglophone government school teacher)

This last woman is then expressing the view that the maternal language of a child is “in the way” of that child pronouncing English words properly. This is a view I also found in Njoh (1998: 57), who quite correctly contends that “the language used at home has a relation to the language performance of pupils in school”, but then goes on to use this as an argument for that “the speaking of English language should be encouraged in the homes of children who attend Anglophone schools” (!). She takes this a step further by underscoring that Pidgin does not meet the standards; “Standard English should be encouraged in homes and Pidgin language should be avoided at all cost” (1998: 59) I met this way of turning the world completely on its head many times in Cameroon: Africans should adjust to the colonial school system instead of the school system being adjusted to fit Africa. A Francophone female teacher expressed the opposite view: It is a shame that some children talk French in their homes and are not learning the language of their parents at all.

One of the catholic teachers told me that he knew of a place where they teach in the mother tongue from classes 1-3. Although he thinks it is a shame that children grow up not properly knowing their mother tongue, and that it would be easier for the children to express themselves in class if they were allowed to speak in their MT, he is concerned with the practical difficulties. Another one of the catholic teachers said that he sees the use of foreign languages as a barrier to the children's learning, and that he used to be in favour of the use of African languages. He had changed his mind because of the number of languages in Cameroon. As mentioned, several teachers fell into this group; some thought it would be impossible primarily because of the number of languages, but also because teachers are placed in different linguistic areas to their own; and some thought it would be a good thing, but had not thoughts on how it could or should be implemented.

As mentioned, there were courses given in the maternal language in the Francophone

village in church and other places. A couple of teachers therefore thought the language situation to be okay, since they still have the possibility to learn their maternal language. In the Anglophone village, the argument of those who did not support the idea of African languages in school was often exactly that the language did not exist in a written form ; “we don’t write it”.

A catholic teacher was so vehemently against African languages in school, that I decided to present his answer in chapter 9: “Myths”. However, this same teacher, thought it absurd (...) to start the teaching of maths to the lower classes because they do not yet master English; you cannot start learning maths in a language you do not understand (...). Another catholic teacher shared his passion for English as the only worthy language of instruction;

“[...]And when children are talking, I will not even allow it, them to talk, because it *is not what they are there for*, they are there for English, so I have to insist children to speak English when they are in the class we don’t use the mother tongue.”

8.5 *Banking education?*

I was happy to observe in two of my classroom observations that the teacher encouraged the pupils to ask questions if they did not understand, stating that this is a sign of being smart and not of being stupid. However, the encouragement was not met with questions. This might of course very well be a coincidence, but, as Bourdieu observed (1990: 109), a teacher in a teacher-driven, “banking education”- classroom, is not likely to receive true objection or participation.

Nevertheless, the fact that the teachers in the villages had been trained in more updated methods of teaching than the traditional method used in ‘banking education’ described in chapter 2, was a very pleasant surprise. As pointed out, the way a teacher thinks about the world, about knowledge, about the goal of education and about the pupils is related to the methods this teacher uses in his teaching. Thus, a teacher who teaches predominantly by making the pupils recite and memorize texts they do not necessarily understand often has a teacher-subject/pupil-object view of school reality. This also relates to a way of looking at knowledge and didactics. *This has to be taught*. At Teachers’ Colleges future teachers should be taught to reflect around the concepts of learning and knowledge; we do not intuitively understand these things. For example, in Norway, as in so many other countries, we used to learn languages, history and geography by reciting and memorizing. Today, principles like concretization, encouraging inquiry and exploration, building on what is already known,

scaffolding, and learning by doing are widely known to lead to a more ‘sound’ way of learning and knowing, because it includes the learner in the process, and because the syllabus will be experienced as more meaningful to her when taught in this way. However, those who became skilled in languages, geography and history *despite* being taught the “old way” have no reason to question the method. They have never been made to question their own learning process. If such a person then goes on to become a teacher, without a pedagogic education that focuses on inclusive teaching, she will naturally re-enact what she knows. Furthermore, an education that encourages people to question their surroundings, systems and elders is perceived as threatening in many African cultures and states (Sunal 1998). Lastly, the tragic lack of teaching materials and textbooks, and the teacher-pupil ratio make it all too easy to fall back on traditional instructional methodologies which naturally require less knowledge, less preparing, less engagement and no materials. Keeping these well-substantiated facts in mind, I had reason to expect a lot of reciting and teachers defending the traditional way of lecturing. This is why I was taken aback by how nearly all teachers talked warmly of what they referred to as “the new methodology”/”la nouvelle approche”:

“The new official programs are good because they put the pupil in the centre of his/her own learning - it’s no longer a dictatorship, we do not recite anymore - because we used to recite a lot.” (Female francophone teacher).

“[...] before it was dogmatic and we had to use recitation, now the child can express itself. [...] you start the topic you’ll only go and touch some questions then you find the child coming in with everything, the child now produce that topic that you want to treat in front of you, yes, that is why I love this new method and the new syllabus.” (Young male government teacher)

“Yes, and I think it is nice, it is, because the children at least have a touch of what they are doing, because when you teach in a way so that the child discovers for himself or herself [...] I think it lives forever, because we say “what I hear I forget; I see I remember; I do I know” [...]” (Catholic male teacher)

In fact, this was the one issue teachers talked about with enthusiasm. In general they felt overworked, underappreciated and underpaid, and many of them had an air of hopelessness about them. The way they talked about the new methodology though, made me think that some changes for the better are possible at a relatively low cost (the teacher had been given a few courses on the new methodology by the national inspectors of pedagogy last year). The traditional methodology is a big part of banking education, so this change in methodology might be a very positive start to change attitudes in an incremental way. Sadly, however, the

way some of the teachers talk about the pupils, the way they answer other questions and also the observations I did during the lessons, make it seem like the teachers' statements about teaching methods are not part of a "package of reflection" where all aspects of education is thought through in a critical manner and come together as a whole. Furthermore, the action of expressing oneself is central in this package - and this is of course inhibited by the use of a foreign language as LOI.

8.6 Summary

The level of reflection among the teachers is very low. They take their own system for granted and do not realize that education could be done in many other ways. The most common response to my questions was failure to understand what I was asking due to the habit of not questioning their way of doing things - be it teacher's education, the values in the syllabus or the language of instruction. They often point to the ignorance of the rural area parents and uneducated people, the inadequacies of the Francophone system and to the fact that they, as teachers, are being denigrated by the system. As pointed out in subchapter 2.2.2 this is typical of the dual alienation felt by the intermediary class. They are not accepted into the warmth of the elite with its status and lifestyle, neither do they identify with the peasants, thanks to the alienation from them caused by their own education.

9. Myths

A “myth” may be defined as “A traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society”²⁵

An example of myths used in the theory chapter, is the claim that education equals success. As already seen, this myth is very alive among the villagers. One of my informants, however, made this comment on the dangerous potential backlash to society of promising something you cannot keep:

“Today most thieves and murderers are schooled, that is why we say it’s better to be illiterate than to be a schooled person who is not integrated in society. So today we cannot say that education in Cameroon is a 100% positive, it has very dangerous repercussions for society. This is because a person who has gone through the formal education system has seen all the good sides of development and integration, education has opened an intellectual pathway in his mind, he has seen that he has talents...now, he is able to transform this into practice according to his personal capacity. He can contribute to the social development - I mean personal development, familial development, national and continental development....But in our Cameroonian society, our Cameroonian education creates problems because he now sees that there are no real chance for him to make use of his education in the sense of getting employment.”

In the terminology of Thiong’o and Freire, the person in this illustration is suffering from being alienated from both his roots *and* from his illusions of the European-style system and life style to which he aspired. As seen, Freire says these illusions, or myths, are part of the manipulation nurtured by the oppressors. Their function is to take away the focus from the real problem. The oppressing system.

During my fieldwork I ran into many such myths. The dual meaning of the word is important; these myths stayed with me not only because I believe them to be false or half-truths, but because they were so repeatedly used as *explanations* for the state of things.

9.1 Town children are more intelligent than rural children

English and French are mostly spoken in cities (called “towns” in Cameroon, as they do not distinguish cities from towns according to size) where they for many are part of the social praxis. This is reminiscent of the colonial times when most personnel from Europe, along

²⁵ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/myth>

with all political power and administrative capacity were placed there. Because skills in English and French are being associated with being “someone”, this has greatly contributed to the connotations city = smart, rural areas = stupid. As mentioned, when I was about to ask the pupils my questions, both Head Teachers warned me that they would not be able to answer. The Anglophone thought the Francophone schools were at an advantage because they were Francophone and thus always favoured by the system; the Francophone Head Teacher said that the pupils have a hard time speaking French because they do not speak French at home, as *they do in towns*.

It was clear from what was being said that my informants themselves did not connect the dots from the use of French/English to their perception of the rural children as less smart:

“[...] you see that if you use this textbook to teach them, it’ll be some, it’ll be high for them to understand, because the students, their faculties are low [...] yes, coz in a rural area they will not know [...] In this my present school, it seems the children are not so good in the iq[...] the children are slow in writing and in their heads [...]” (Government teacher)

“(When being asked whether she uses the new methodology) Children here do not think fast, like in town, so I can not ask them so many questions.” (Catholic school teacher)

“Yes they are....because especially those of us that are in a rural area like this, we find it’s very different because normally, what they do in their homes, most of the parents they are farmers. There is a problem.” (Government teacher)

Other examples of geography being held against the pupils and their parents were that a parent in the francophone village told me that the teachers are complaining that the parents in the village do not take care of their children as they do in town, in the group interviews, the teachers used the words “village level” and “town level” frequently, and a former Head Teacher of several schools told me that absenteeism was never a problem in town (implying a higher work ethic there).

9.2 Our dialect is not technical enough

The most obvious sign of the denigration of African languages in Cameroon is the fact that they are called “dialects” or “country talk” (they are called “dialecte” or “patois” - which translates as “pidgin”- among the Francophones). “Dialect” derives from a Greek word and means “a variety of a language that is characteristic of a particular group of the language's

speakers. The term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, but a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class”²⁶. As such, it is very different from a “proper” language that contains distinct grammatical, phonetic and semantic systems. The irony is that African languages always are treated as “proper” languages when it comes to the language of instruction debate (a common argument being the number of languages in a given area), but for all other purposes they are treated as second class dialects.

As mentioned, there was one informant in particular who expressed the view that African languages are inferior to European languages. It must be noted however, that this statement was a reflection of an attitude I experienced a lot during my fieldwork.

“[...] It is very difficult. The Mother Tongue to start with has *very limited* vocabulary. As such, you wanted to do maths in the dialect, in the MT, you are going to [...] As far as this is concerned, I think that learning the dialect or institutionalizing the African culture is a great strain, it is a great strain....I prefer that assimilation. It is a great strain in that by so doing you loose a lot - you loose a lot, when you want to create a language before studying certain subjects such as science, you are going to loose a lot. You have diverted your interest, your attention, to go and do, it becomes rudimentary, studies become rudimentary for me, because you have to make inventions. Inventions....most of the words do not even exist; there are certain things we know in English: there is no word... For me, institutionalizing African languages, it is a draw back, because we are able to produce engineers today, civil engineers.”

One of the pedagogical inspectors in Yaoundé told me that there is a great attitude problem when it comes to African languages. It is true that many African languages lack technical vocabulary, and that this presents an initial challenge. This has been true for many languages though, but when they are being fully used they evolve; words are borrowed, created and established in use.

9.3 Cameroon is bilingual: We are Francophone/Anglophone

I will never come to terms with the fact that African countries and regions are defined by others *and themselves* according to European languages. In Cameroon, this absurdity is taken to the grotesque, by being a means by which a nation is separated. Of course one could argue, as I have done myself, that this is not just about the languages, but about a history of colonization that affected them differently - and that these labels presumably tells us

²⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialect Retrieved 18.02.09.

something about the country in question. But if this should go as a justification, it is strange then, that we do not feel the same need to categorize other countries after who used to exploit them. One could also argue that Cameroon is a *state*, but - Anglophones and Francophones taken aside - not a *nation*. In this I find some truth - but how endlessly more difficult is it not to work together when these additional and enormously powerful labels of “Anglophone” and “Francophone” are continuously nurtured ?

Almost without exception my informants were assuming that we speak English or French in Norway (or in other European countries for that matter). They were surprised when I told them how European and Asian children are taught in their mother tongue and that they learn English as a second language. When people found out that I spoke both English and French, I was met with this comment “Oh, so you are bilingual?” several times. They have never experienced formal schooling in African languages, and to them it is a strange thought. In the same vein, Cameroon is (by Cameroonians) constantly compared to Canada (!). As with the term “dialect” (see above) this misuse of terms is functioning as a disguise for the fact that Cameroon is *nothing* like Canada²⁷, and that Cameroonians are NOT bilingual. First of all, there are approximately 247 languages²⁸ in Cameroon. Secondly, *the majority of Cameroonians do not speak English or French*. Thirdly, an even smaller percentage speaks *both* English and French. Nevertheless, comments as the ones below were not far between:

“[...]so these official languages which are imported languages like French and English, everybody does it and understands, so to me, even those official languages which are imported they seem a barrier, but I think there is no way that we can solve that problem [...]”

“You take 100 people, how many of them can speak English? How many of them can understand this conversation? This setting where we are now? How many of *us* know French? We are teachers! I think we can only boast of 2 or 3 among us who only get a little of the French, not the real French, the English [...] yet, this is what one is measured by, it is very strange to me, very strange ! They compare Cameroon to Canada! I mean that is what we have been teaching children! Yet, Cameroon is not Canada! (lots of laughter) That is how we have been confused.” (Group interview with catholic teachers, after I had told them my own view on the issue)

“It’s good because Cameroon is bilingual; it’s good for every Cameroonian to learn to be bilingual. We are here in the SW province, no? So that if you

²⁷ In the wealthy Canada, English or French is the *de facto* Mother Tongue of 82, 9% of the population. Official language minorities are guaranteed their own schools and indigenous languages have official status in their respective territories. Even there, only 17,7% speak both English and French.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada> Retrieved 07.04.09.

²⁸http://www.linguistik-online.de/18_04/echu.html Retrieved 07.04.09.

move to the Western province you will not have difficulties, so that I think that is good.”

The goal of Cameroon, and the school system being “bilingual” (English- and French speaking) is of course political, symbolical and theoretical. The Anglophone part of Cameroon has felt cheated ever since the unification of the two Cameroons in 1972, and in order to have any credibility the state administration has to address the issue. Enormous efforts and resources go into making this happen, and this is something that was supposed to have been in place since the unitary system of government was introduced in 1972. It is clear that the emphasis on this “bilingualism” is a major obstacle to, not only the introduction of African languages, but to all other efforts to improve education.

9.4 Cameroon has a high rate of literacy and is well on its way towards “Education for All”

As Brock-Utne (2000) has observed, the race to reach the goal of “Education for All” or “Millennium development Goal number 2: achieve universal primary schooling for all” might lead to situations where the quality of the education in these new schools are disregarded.

I was told, and also witnessed during my fieldwork that the government would *sometimes* officially declare a new school in a village - but then nothing would be provided; no building and no teachers.

“[...] The schools are there but without teachers, there is a secondary school just beside my real house which opened this year; only the principal is there! There is no other tutor! So the parents have to go hunting to employ university drop-outs or this and that, they handpick people who are not teachers - who are not professionals. So the government have given schools, yes, but that is not a solution to the problem, I think I call those schools ”campaign schools” coz most of those schools are created in the years of elections.”(Catholic teacher)

“In Cameroon you can find government schools where there is nothing; the government just says this is a government school - no teachers given, no buildings - they just say that this is a government school. Then, you find the Head Teacher coming, the Head Teacher now will come, when the Head Teacher comes he has no teachers, he’s just there; no building. He’ll go and begin to patch [...] So there are schools inside this our subdivision, here where I’m teaching with 1 teacher for 7 classrooms - so I don’t know how they effectively teach, that is very, very sad [...]” (Government teacher)

When theses “schools” (that the PTA then will use a couple of years to get up and “running”) count in the statistics as schools, it is not hard to imagine that the numbers should be looked at

with skepticism.

School absentee rates and dropout- and repeat rates are high, this is of course often not captured in the statistics. Mr. Mih, one of the pedagogical inspectors I talked to in Yaoundé, told me that every year 26% of the pupils in the Francophone system and 18% in the Anglophone system repeat classes. According to UNESCO²⁹ only 52% of Cameroonian children complete the primary school cycle, and only 36% transmits to secondary school in 2006.

It not an unusual phenomenon - I observe it myself among children whose maternal language is not Norwegian - that children are able to decode words and put them together - *technically* they can read and write - but they do not understand the meaning of the words they read and write. This is why it is not literacy in its etymological sense of knowing the sound behind the symbols (letters) - and vice versa - and thus *technically* being literate that can potentially trigger the emancipation of people (Freire 1998). I suspect that some of the literacy measuring in Cameroon fails to measure literacy in the more global sense of understanding, applying, interpreting and creating. This is another reason why literacy rates should be used with caution. Cameroon had a literacy rate of 67.9 in 2007³⁰, and is often said to “do well” on this matter. However, the 2006 numbers showed that only 53,7% of adult females are literate³¹.

The point is that “Education for All” is not worth much in the instances where that means an education in a foreign language by an untrained - if present - teacher, with no textbooks, for a very limited number of years.

9.5 *We are not worthy*

While I was interviewing a woman in the Francophone village, there were some kids (around 17-18 years old) who came and overheard my thoughts on African languages not being offered the status of official languages. One of them bursts out: “NO! All African languages are bad!” After some trying I ask her if she would have accepted the idea of several official languages if the government opts for it; she then answers “Well, if they say that it’s possible, I’m only a parent, what can I say.” Regrettably, this was probably the most common phrases I

²⁹http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=1200&BR_Region=40540 Retrieved 07.04.09.

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_literacy_rate

³¹http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=1200&BR_Region=40540 Retrieved 07.04.09.

heard while interviewing: “I am only a parent.” They were sometimes visibly ashamed because they felt stupid. This is because they see themselves with the eyes of their “oppressors” as described in sub-chapter 2.3.1. In that same subchapter, the sentence “The oppressed themselves will tell you that they are ignorant and that the teacher holds the knowledge and the answers, and who are they to second guess him? which is part of an outline of Freire’s description of the oppressed, is a perfect characterisation of the parents in the village. I told some of them that they are entitled to an opinion even though they are “only parents”, but this was met with shoulder shrugs.

The belittling of their language, the claim that Africans need to be hit in order to understand, the claim that children from rural areas are less intelligent, and the tendency to blame the ignorance of parents instead of the inadequacy of the system for pupil absenteeism are all part of this harmful and continually nurtured minority complex.

9.6 Summary

The myths and the focusing on only part of the problem and not seeing the full picture are really serving their purpose in Cameroon. Instead of focusing on the injustice and unequal access that children from rural areas are suffering because they have African maternal languages, many teachers believe the myth of them being dumber. The “master-variables” of enrolment- and literacy rates often hide the thousands of children, especially girls, who never achieve a true literacy in a wide sense, the only kind of literacy that can truly help you.

10. Conclusions

The objective of this thesis is to find out what kind of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and reflections are present among teachers, parents, and children on the place of language and culture in education. It is also an implicit objective to explore to what degree the perceived mismatch between African schools and African reality was present in the two villages I studied. I have shown that the mismatch is definitely present; what is being taught in Cameroonian schools is too far from the children's lifeworld and the number one symbol of this is the use of former colonial languages as languages of instruction. However, there were virtually no *reflections* around this mismatch among the people I talked to. This is due to a lack of challenging of the worldviews that are being presented: Teachers as well as people in general do not challenge or question the way the elite and partly tradition make sense of society. The goal of schooling is largely regarded to be the successful insertion of the student into society, which is quite disturbing considering the society is unjust and malfunctioning. There was an absolute *lack of knowledge* among the parents on the fact that the children would actually learn French and English *better* if they were instructed in their mother tongues. They see that you have to speak these languages to be successful in Cameroon, and they believe that the way to learn them is to be instructed in them. They were surprised to learn that in Europe and Asia children are taught in their mother tongues but still learn to speak English. Some of the teachers (far from all) realized that the use of a foreign language of instruction is ineffective, but all but one of these believes there is no other way because of the multilingualism in Cameroon. However, there are solutions to this challenge if they are sought, Cameroon has to stop avoiding this reality. Again, there is a lack of knowledge, this time of the work that has been done other places in Africa to find viable solutions for Africa's students. The *attitudes* of the parents and some of the teachers I talked to largely coincides with Freire's description of the oppressed; they belittle their language and glorify the European languages. They told me that they are ignorant and that they are in no place to question the teachers or the school. Their attitude to the elite is passive and resigned and they do not have any consciousness of themselves as an oppressed class. Although there was much talk about being poor and struggling, there was little talk of the causes of Cameroon's poverty, this seemed to be accepted as fate. There were those who blamed the government, but they had no capacity or knowledge to elaborate or act on such thoughts.

The intense focus on achieving "bilingualism" in the Cameroonian educational system is in my opinion tragic. It is taking away time, resources and energy from the reality that

needs to be faced; Cameroon has around 247 languages. It is also making Anglophones fight for the English language instead of their own languages, and against Francophones in general, despite the fact that the majority of Francophones share their situation of being oppressed. If Cameroon were to achieve so-called bilingualism - which is totally unrealistic given the fact that children are not instructed in their mother tongues - *it would not solve any problems*, because Cameroon's problem is *not* that all Cameroonians do not speak both English and French on top of their mother tongue.

Considering the post-independency and current policies, I would like to underline that even though reforms have been met with resistance, there never seem to have been efforts from the government to change the attitudes behind this resistance. The people of Cameroon have never been presented with a thought-through, worked-through, progressive alternative to "bilingual", theoretical schooling organized as it was during colonial times, nor have the knowledge of the importance of learning in one's own language - known to the elite for decades - been spread to the masses.

I did find that the syllabuses had been somewhat Africanized and that the traditional teaching methods of dictating and reciting are being challenged, I did not however find this to be apart of an overall discussion on what sort of education is worthwhile and why. There seems to be no holistic thinking. Thiong'o (1986) said that the 'quest for relevance' is not about removing some topics from the syllabus and adding others - and it is certainly not about "harmonizing" two colonial systems - it is about a break with the colonial system and the creation of a new African system.

10.1 Situating the study

I found the characteristics of the oppressors-oppressed dialectics outlined by Freire during my fieldwork in Cameroon. Furthermore I have pointed to acts of manipulation (the presentation of myths), divide and rule (notably the Anglophone/Francophone divide) and cultural invasion (the imposition of colonial culture/modern values on indigenous culture) which are Freire's concepts of anti-dialogical acts that stand in the way of the quest for liberation and dignity. I have also described how the cultural capital on offer in schools in reality only is accessible by the Elite in (preferably in urban areas) for whom the former colonial language and culture is part of the social praxis. This is Bourdieu's argument for the contribution of the educational system to class differences, which is allowed to continue partly because of the illusion created that this cultural capital is accessible to all.

In the theory chapter I noted how Thiong'o (1986) claims that the choices made about areas of use for different languages is telling of how a people define themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, and therefore language is at the heart of the opposition between the imperialistic elite and the peasants/workers. On this topic - attitudes towards language - I think my findings as I have presented them bear witness of this. Overall, class has proved to be a good indicator of people's attitudes, feelings and knowledge. From this it may seem as if the study is purely deductive, yet I maintain that I kept an open mind throughout the process, and that the whole of chapter 9 "forced itself upon me" after listening to what people had to say and how they explained their views.

10.2 Analytical generalization

Qualitative studies are not based on representative samples of a population and thus the result do not pretend to be "true" for a larger population. However, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, a researcher may state under what circumstances the result may be relevant, and let the reader decide if she agrees to the premises.

Considering the differences in attitudes between the Francophone and Anglophone villages, it is not possible to generalize at all due to the shaky premises described in the methodology chapter. Obviously however, the Anglophones displayed a bitterness towards the Francophones that was not mutual. Also, I found the Francophones to be more positive towards their own language, and it seems very reasonable to assume that this is because it is acknowledged with a written form.

In general, the findings of this thesis are in my opinion relevant in discussions of education in not only the whole of Cameroon, but in other countries sharing these characteristics: former colonies using former colonial languages as languages of instruction and official languages; enduring other foreign influence on educational policies/lack of authentic and autonomous educational policies; and multilingualism. Although such countries may differ on many characteristics, the explanatory power of these mentioned variables seem to be very strong. Testimonies of the same experiences, attitudes, dialectics, and problems I have described have been reported from all over the world (Freire 1970, Karabel & Halsey 1977, Thiong'o 1986, Basse 1999, David & Okazaki 2006). In fact, the only thing in my study that seems to be particular to Cameroon is the fact that it was colonized by both Britain and France at the same time.

I mentioned in the introduction that it seems as if the consensus on the advantages of

using African languages in education has relegated to the background the fact that the practice is still not altered. My study then, may add to the burden of proof that the African masses are *still* taught in former colonial languages, they are *still* suffering under it, and they have *still* not been made aware of the alternatives.

Moreover, I think the thesis can be relevant in a general discussion of how and what education and development should be. There is nothing wrong with being focused on results, especially not in development where the “results” are a matter of life or miserable life for millions of people, but in the case of education and development the focus on results is often at the cost of a sound, and thus sustainable way of getting there. There is a need in both for an acting subject - a person and a country respectively - that decides on her/its own terms to search and create - neither education nor development is a mechanical exercise (Freire 1978). Education should not be all about getting a white collar job and development should not be exclusively about generating the money. Education should be about learning strategies and processes and about developing a critical, creative and democratic way of thinking and being in this world, and *that is how education will lead to development*. You cannot learn this in a foreign language, and you cannot learn this through ‘banking-education’. Particularly in countries with lack of democratic tradition, and particularly in countries in the South, there is a need to learn *together* how to see the world as changeable.

My point is not that education as it is in Cameroon is useless for all or that an education mediated in African languages will automatically liberate Cameroonians. My point is that there is an endless pool of unused potential and opportunities lost waiting to be materialized in Africa. I acknowledge that many people do not believe in the emancipation argument - and that is why I underscore that the use of a foreign language as language of instruction, extended use of ‘banking education’ and the lack of an educational policy based on societal needs hampers the *efficiency and transferability* of education for the majority of Africans *and* for Cameroon.

I also acknowledge that multilingualism and the practice of placing teachers in areas where they are not required to be familiar with the culture and language present serious challenges. There *are* solutions to these challenges, but it takes time, focus and - yes, money - to reach them. There are however enormous costs involved in maintaining the status quo as well; not only in the form of suffering, but in the form of money ill-spent and revenues not materialized. There is an alternative. Like my informant said; the road that is going to lead to our success is sometimes very long - Cameroon has to start walking.

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Appendix

Interview guides

Parents

1. How many children do you have in school?
2. Do you have any children that did not go to school?
3. Did you go to school?
4. Do all your children have all their textbooks?
5. Do the children sometimes go to the farm instead of going to school?
6. Does it happen that your children are late for school?
7. Do you think education is important?
8. What is your hope for your children's future?
9. How will school help them (to reach this goal)?
10. Are you happy with the school?
11. Do the children learn enough about local culture and tradition in school?
12. Do you talk with the teachers?
13. Do you attend the PTA-meetings?
14. Has it happened that the children learn something in school that goes against what you believe in, or what you teach them at home?
15. Is there something that the children do not learn in school that you wish they would teach them?
16. Do you talk to the children about what they do and learn in school?
17. Has school changed the attitude and behaviour of your children? In what way?
18. What is your hope for the village?
19. Explain the LOI debate; How would you like it if the children were taught in (maternal language) in school?

20. How do you feel about the fact that Cameroon has two official languages both of which are foreign languages, and no African languages?

Teachers

1. Are you from this area?
2. What level of education do you have? Did you go to a Teacher's training College? How did you find it?
3. How would you rate the content of your education? Good, adequate or poor?
4. For how many years have you been a teacher?
5. Do you find that sometimes there is a struggle between the home culture and the school culture? – between what you teach the children and what their parents teach them?
6. Are these conflicts made explicit?
7. Is there a lot of cooperation with the parents?
8. How would you rate the influence parents have on school? Too high – adequate or too low?
9. In 2000 there were made new curriculum, the new syllabus for primary school in Cameroon. Are they fully implemented in your school?
10. Have you had any training in teaching this syllabus?
11. When the making of this syllabus was in progress, were you aware of it? Were you invited to come with your opinions or did you make suggestions?
12. How do you find it? Is it too much of something or too little of something?
13. How do you find it in comparison to the old syllabus?
14. Do you apply “the new methodology”? How do you find it?
15. Is Mother Tongue spoken at all in class?
16. There is a debate on the language of instruction in African education- are you familiar with this debate? Experts on learning, linguists and teachers state that the African pupils have to undertake a double learning because they are taught in a foreign language, and that they should be taught in their Mother Tongue as is done elsewhere. The difference between the first and the second socialisation is too big. What do you think on this issue?
17. What are the problems of primary education in Cameroon according to you?

18. According to you, what is the goal of education/what should be the goal of education? And according to the state?

19. In the programs there are many values and attitudes that you are asked to install in the pupils; have you thought about what the origin of these values are? What are their justifications? Are they Cameroonian?

20. Do you find it important that the content of schooling is rooted in the local community?

21. Do you think that the production of knowledge in your school is fitting to the needs, belief systems and expectations of development in Africa? In your village?