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1 Introduction: The Problem of Sociocultural Backgrounds (SCBs) and Quality Teacher Education (QTE) in Cameroon, Africa

This first chapter provides (1.1) general background to quality teacher education (QTE) reforms in Cameroon, Africa, which is followed by a preliminary presentation (1.2) of the pedagogical reform principles underlying some educational projects implemented in the EEC missionary station in Mbouo-Bandjoun in the West of Cameroon. The chapter introduces (1.3) the empiric problem of the significance of actors' sociocultural backgrounds (SCBs) for QTE in Cameroon, (1.4) the research questions, objectives, and scope. It also describes the (1.5) researcher's motivations and the significance of the investigation. The chapter ends by highlighting the book's general (1.6) organization.

1.1 Introductory remarks about QTE reforms in Cameroon, Africa

It is generally agreed that a quality teacher education improves the quality of teaching and learning processes (UNESCO, 2015). Quality teacher education in Africa, especially Cameroon, consists of institutional reforms for quality teacher training. In this perspective, the quality teacher education reforms in Cameroon predominantly concerned the quantitative provision and the improvement of human resources (trained teachers) to respond to economic and educational policies of ruralization after independence (Fonkeng, 2007) to cover up the deficit of teachers after the economic crisis of 1985 (SPEC¹, 1992; Tchombe, 1999; UNESCO, 2005; Fonkeng, 2007), to redefine the role of education in the development of democratic values and participation in a global world after the crisis period of struggle for democracy in 1991/1992 (education forum, 1995, education law, 1998), and to adapt to and harmonize the education concerning the demand of the internal and the global market (Bologna Process).

1 SPEC: Secrétariat Permanent de l'Enseignement Catholique (Permanent Secretariat of Catholic Education)

These political, economic, and social contexts of this structural evolution triggered educational paradigms of the literary civilization (IPAM², 1978, p. 17), the nationalization of education and its provision for all (UNESCO, 1972; IPAR³, 1969) as well as democracy and development (Biya, 1987/2018), globalization and millennium development goals (UNESCO, 2005). Subsequent teaching and learning orientations were, respectively, an instruction or a literacy development (IPAM, 1978, p. 157), a new pedagogical approach, NAP (Hamani, 2005), an objective-based pedagogical approach, OPP (IPAM, 1978) and recently, a competency-based approach, APC (Françoise Cros et al., 2009). In all these teacher education reforms, the top-down approach has remained the dominant orientation through the ideally promoted values and the paradigm of the learner-centered pedagogy present in educational discourses from NAP to APC as well as throughout the Active and Participative Pedagogy (PAP) and the Active and Creative Pedagogy (PAC) in the state as well as in some private educational organizations (SPEC, 1992; OEPP⁴, 2002).

Considering this general observation, teacher education reform in Cameroon appears to be much more an institutional phenomenon (Tchombe, 1999) than a substantial change of-and-in practice endeavor (Kokemohr, 1990; 2014). The initiating, conceptualizing, and implementing actors of these reform endeavors seem to be those from the top level of the educational institutions. For instance, Mapto Kengne (1998-2013, p. 5) pointed out that: “Teachers are not consulted on the various adjustments made to the educational system.” (own translation)⁵ Decision-makers seem to play a dominant role in these teacher education reforms.

This hierarchical orientation and dominance of educational reform endeavors depict the top-down mono-logical character of formal education. Kokemohr (2018, p.149) portrayed an example of a simplified structure of Germany's linear system of education in the 19th century, which consisted of three hierarchical levels. The top-level entails *Ethics* intending to provide educational ideas of a good life for all, *Sciences* aiming at providing a proven body of knowledge, and *Psychology* providing teaching and learning methods. The mid-level translates these into educational knowledge and skills conceived as education goals. The bottom level is the transmission level of knowledge consisting of classroom teaching-learning activities. This simpli-

2 IPAM: Institut Pédagogique Africain et Malgache (Pedagogical Institut of Africa and Madagascar)

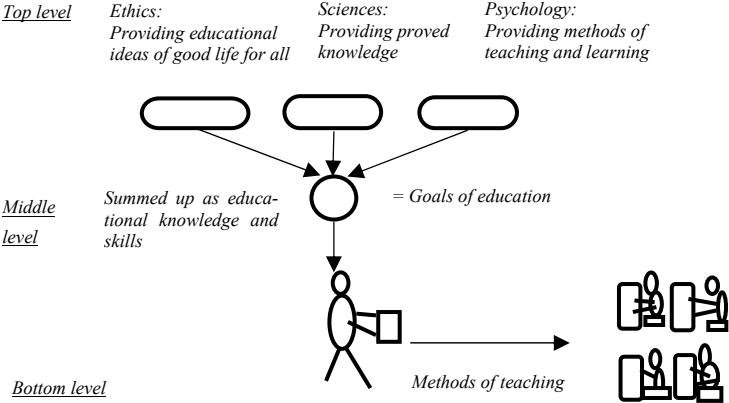
3 IPAR: Institut Pédagogique à Vocation Rurale

4 OEPP: Organisation de l'Enseignement Privé Protestant (Organization of Protestant Private Education)

5 Unless indicated otherwise, all the translations are author's translation. The indication “own translation” is used throughout the text purposely.

fied example of the structure of the German formal education from the 19th century also applies to African and Cameroonian educational systems.

Figure 1: Top-down structure of formal educational systems



(Source: author, adapted after Kokemohr, 2018, p.149)

After the failure of the 1848/49 revolution, there was an attempt in Germany by the king (Hartmann et al., 1974, pp. 54-56) “to control the threat of social contingency by political and cultural administration and by military means simultaneously. As a result, a suitable system for controlling education was developed by some obedient pedagogues giving birth to a conservative paradigm of didactics focusing on a giving social, economic and political order” (Kokemohr et al., 2018, p. 128). According to Kokemohr “the idea was to define all parameters and methods of teaching-learning at school given the production of obedient people ready to accept the desired knowledge and the desired social behavior” (ibid., p. 129).

Similarly, the three hierarchical levels shown in the above chart seem to depict Cameroon’s general educational paradigm, where the teacher-learner interaction has remained mono-logically construed and reproduced concerning reforms in practice (Foaleng, 2010, pp. 14-15), even though the power relationship has become increasingly complex considering the globalization influence of the liberal economy and the social order (Bologna Process, UNESCO principles of education, UN’s millennium development goals). This top-down power relationship seems to promote a receptive development of teachers and learners in the sense that the former adopts a receptive attitude toward educational reforms provided at the upper and the middle levels (Kokemohr et al., 2018), whereas the latter are recipients of the body of knowledge the former transmits within the mono-logical system of education

at the bottom level (Kokemohr et al., 2018; Kā Mana, 2012a; Fonssi, 2012; 2018; Moukoko, 2012).

This linear and top-down power relation seems to persist in some reforms endeavored by private education organizations, such as the EEC and the Catholic Education Boards (reviewed in chapter 3). Therefore, teaching-learning interaction processes remained “beautiful principles” and had very little to do with observable field practice processes (Fonssi, 2011, pp. 14-15; 2018, p. 24). Moreover, Fonssi himself voiced this critique when he presented the pedagogical principles he described as fundamentals of the UEC, even though he portrayed them as “socle” or “souffle novateur des ambitions” (Fonssi, 2012, pp. 12-15). The educational or pedagogical reform principles seem most often so “beautifully” prescribed that they tend to assume automaticity in bringing about changes or improvements in practice. Thus, a failure in practice appears to be attributed to this dichotomist discourse of theory versus practice, like in the following claim of Fonssi (*ibid.*, p. 15): “Everything happened as if on the one hand the principles were abstractly affirmed in their majesty while on the other hand, the practice was royally outside their empire.”

The question is: In how far can the gap between some ideally formulated pedagogical reform principles and the field practice characterize reform criticism in the dichotomist discourse mode of good versus bad teaching-learning paradigms within cooperative educational relations sustaining the contradiction of cultures as a base for educational discourse (Kokemohr et al., 1990)? To reflect on this structure of power relations in cooperative reform endeavors, the work discusses the following critique of Kā Mana (2012a, pp. 64-65) of the projects Réseau Ecole et Développement (RED) and Comité d’Etudes et de Réflexion Pédagogiques (CERP) in comparison to the program Dynamisation Fonctionnelle des Objectifs Pédagogiques (DYFOP). He submits that:

In the [RED] project, as in the CERP dynamics, it is also necessary to highlight the important weight of two German pedagogues whose theories have tended to break the dynamics of local creativity to the point of appearing in the eyes of some as a new form of domination that does not say its name. Whether about the pedagogue Hans Bühler during RED or Rainer Kokemohr during CERP dynamics, the suspicion of a foreign theoretical hold in Cameroon could not be broken (own translation).

The problem is not in how far this observation might be true or false, for the statement itself somehow claims to “mettre en lumière” some presuppositions of ‘briser,’ of ‘domination’ and the ‘soupçon’ of ‘mainmise.’” The author of this work would, thus, like to highlight the simplistic mode of criticism in place in the context of the cooperative educational project development evolving complex sociocultural (also economic and somehow political) background issues. His interpretation is that the different EEC educational

reform projects developed in cooperation with some German scholars and German protestant funding organizations, such as EZE-EED Bread for the World, are portrayed as suffering from this cooperation. The reason is that they are perceived on the backgrounds of colonial history, determining a black-white worldview leading to the interpretation of a world-self-relation, depicted as a contradiction of the good versus the bad, the local versus the foreign. This criticism seems to be reinforced in the latter relationship since Kā Mana claims the following as the first force of the project DYFOP in comparison to the others above-mentioned: “Moukouri Edeme placed his project [DYFOP] under the sign of local research, with local ‘intelligence’ doing local work on local realities” (ibid., p. 65). The DYFOP project succeeded in simplifying the understanding of educational, pedagogical, and didactic goals. It endeavored to classify these goals, objectives and aims into notional subcategories to facilitate the bottom level of teaching and learning interaction (systematization of curricula using some flowcharts).

However, one could object to the critique, for it dealt very little with the so-called local realities but rather tried to highlight objective-oriented pedagogies originating from the history of the birth of German⁶ didactics and the American military education experiences taken over by educational systems under the influence of the growing liberal economy. Meanwhile, the CERP project interested social communities for it researched family histories, socio-cultural backgrounds of some actors of the EP (Kokemohr, 1996a; 1996b; 1997) and attempted a change in the dynamics of the classroom, the school, and the school society’s interaction (Kokemohr, 1999a; Foaleng, 2005; Fonsi, 2018). The discourse of foreign versus local is here constructed on the backgrounds of the colonial history of relationship (black-white worldview) still hunting North-South relationships, where the so-called local endeavor is ideally praised, and the so-called foreign is suspiciously portrayed, even though generally perceived as prestigious in the everyday social and educational life.

Even though the local-versus-foreign criticism underlined the suspicion of domination of the former by the latter (as appears in Kā Mana’s observation mentioned above), most of the cooperative educational projects involving a North-South partnership (within this example of a church context as well as within governments contexts) seem to be based on the prestigious character of “the foreign” and the strategic economic perspective (Kokemohr, 2015). The local is considered an ideal identity construction and claim (like presupposed in Kā Mana’s appreciation mentioned above of DYFOP). In other words, it appears to be an issue of reputation (prestige) and money (funding), which are put forward to justify the tendency to want “white” partners in an educational project instead of aiming at a joint struggle to tack-

6 See the above-mentioned chart, developed in Rainer Kokemohr (2018).

le educational problems. A German scholar talking about his experience in Cameroon recounted an exchange he had with one of his Cameroonian partners. The following is the passage of the story he shared.

Why do you need to have “whites” in the project? “That’s always good when you want to get the money,” he told me. His argument was, “Euhmm, euhmm, yes, we need “whites,” then that’s better acknowledged here, and that’s the way to get money.” There was not anyone who did not argue, “we need that for the project.” He never said that. //Reputation and money//Reputation and money (extract from the transcript of an interview with RK, own translation).

In this discussion involving North-South partners (Kokemohr, 1999a), reputation and money appear to have played a significant role in motivating cooperative projects and the subsequent interaction processes of their development. The research question is: How could this and other power relation features of the sociocultural backgrounds of the participants have influenced the development processes of the pedagogical reform projects in Cameroon, Africa? This study, therefore, focuses on the case of the EEC teacher education reform projects developed in Mbouo-Bandjoun in the Western region of Cameroon. Chapters 3 to 5 of this work provide further details on the projects' institutional, philosophical, and pedagogical development processes. The paragraphs below provide general backgrounds of the EEC educational development in Cameroon and underline the pedagogical reform experiences in Mbouo-Bandjoun, which are further reconstructed in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

1.2 Preliminary Backgrounds of the Pedagogical Reform Principles of the UEC

The EEC has founded many primary and secondary schools in Cameroon to contribute to the state’s engagement in providing a good education for pupils and students. In developing teaching and learning in its schools, the EEC supported pedagogical research projects and actions in education. In collaboration and cooperation with European church funds and universities, the EEC educational board developed such projects to improve its educational quality by regularly organizing in-service teacher training programs at the Centre Polyvalent de Formation (CPF) in Mbouo-Bandjoun in the western region of the country.

In 1991, after some years of observation of the Cameroonian educational system and field research (in schools and school communities), an experimental pedagogical project of intensive in-service teacher training was launched in EP, a primary church school in Mbouo (Kokemohr, 1990; Kenmogne and Kokemohr, 1993; Foaleng, 2005). A research team conducted

the project from the University of Hamburg, led by Rainer Kokemohr, in collaboration with professionals from the EEC, led by Jean-Blaise Kenmogne. The program CERP dealt with the questions: “How can one awaken and liberate the learners' intellectual, affective, cognitive and social potentialities to make them creative in tackling present and future problems and challenges?” (Kokemohr, 1999a, p. 5). How can one awaken and liberate the inner creativity of each learner? To answer these questions, a pedagogical approach based on three principles was developed and experimented with within the Ecole Pilote de Mbouo. These pedagogical principles⁷ include the *principe d'interaction*, the *principe des sens divers*, and the *principe de la responsabilité réciproque* (see also Kokemohr, 2002a; 2014).

First, the *Principe d'interaction* was understood as the freedom to interact, reflect, and discuss a target pedagogical problem of common concern. Such freedom at the base of pedagogical action should be a commodity to all participants (learners and teachers), the teacher monitoring the discussion as a partner of the learners in the pedagogical context of teaching-learning. Learners in such a context are active partners and immerse themselves fully in search of an explanation of a phenomenon, argumentation, an opinion, or a resolution of a pedagogical problem. Thus, lessons should be phrased in an interesting pedagogical problem that triggers the learners' potentialities in a quest for solutions (Moukoko, 2012).

Second, the *Principe des sens divers* is developed around the paradigm of problem-oriented pedagogy. There are many ways, routes, possibilities, methods, and perspectives to explain, argue, or resolve a pedagogical, didactic problem. In contrast to the traditional teaching-learning approach, where the teacher provides the knowledge on a pedagogical subject (*sense unique*), the *Principe des sens divers* states diversity in approaching a pedagogical problem that is a common concern of mostly the learners, the teachers only being monitors of the pedagogical context of teaching-learning. There is no prior, ready-made solution, explanation, or argumentation that the teachers⁸ transfer to the learners for memorization. The teachers rather contribute to the debate as members/partners of the group discussion or as facilitators of the learning process and context.

The *Principe d'interaction* helps trigger the students' intellectual, affective, cognitive, and social potentialities to reflect on solutions concerning a target pedagogy creatively. Hence, the *Principe d'interaction* is a prerequisite to the *Principe des sens divers* since the freedom to interact makes learners more active and use their potential to create solutions. Learners are actively immersed in knowledge construction and contribute to the process by indi-

7 More about the conditions, the circumstances, and some practical experiences of these reform ideas further reconstructed and discussed in chapter 4 of this work.

8 This is here considered as the only instance of authority of a knowledge detention.

vidual potentialities triggered by the freedom the pedagogical context of teaching-learning provides.

The last principle is the *Principe de responsabilité réciproque*, which completes the other two components to set up a collegial social context that engages all participants. Reciprocal responsibility reinforces the solidarity within the group members (class) to integrate them into the given social context with a common goal and vision. It relies on reciprocal criticism and acceptance, such as a democratic principle of freedom of a society to participate in an ongoing discussion on a given problem of common concern.

These pedagogical principles have proven successful at the EP (Kokemohr, 2002a; 2014), where the church decided to put the approach forward to train its teachers accordingly, creating a teacher training college named Institut de Pédagogie pour Sociétés en Mutation (IPSOM) in 2005. This institution initially aimed at training teachers at the primary school level. However, it was turned into training teachers at the secondary school level due to the state regulations regarding higher private training institutions⁹ (Foaleng, 2005). IPSOM started its experimental academic year on October 3, 2005, with five students enrolled in four disciplines of specialization: English-, French-, history-, geography- and mathematics didactics. Five other students later joined to reach the number ten of the first IPSOM students (Foaleng, 2005). The EP was transformed into the Ecole de Référence (ER) from this time on.

This training is based on innovative pedagogical principles (above defined) for a more autonomous learner-centered education (Kokemohr, 2009; 2011). In 2010, with the state's liberalization of the medical training sector, the church created the UEC with two other faculties: the Faculty of Agronomy and Environmental Sciences (FASE) and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMSS). IPSOM became the Faculty of Sciences of Education (FSE), and the School of Theology in Ndoungué became the Faculty of Protestant Theology and Religious Sciences (FTPSR). These institutions were developed within the Cameroonian context and a top-down approach to teaching and learning culture. In many ways, this new dynamic of teacher education based on socio-constructivist principles, even though promising, has been challenging both teachers and students who had to learn to build knowledge together. The act of building knowledge together seems to be compromised and helped by some features of the sociocultural backgrounds of teachers, learners, and administrative staff involved in the process.

9 More on this is discussed in chapter 5 on the institutional framework of the pedagogical reform projects of the EEC in Mbouo-Bandjoun, West Cameroon.

1.3 Empiric Introduction to the Problem of the Study

The study uses an extract from the transcript of the introductory phase (1mn:17s) of an international colloquium¹⁰ in 2008 at IPSOM to provide an introductory framework for the problem of the significance of the actors' SCBs for a quality teacher education (QTE) in Cameroon. The colloquium served as a scientific follow-up reflection on the project IPSOM. This empiric material was chosen because it appears to be an authentic academic set-up or setting that gathered students, teachers-researchers, German cooperation scholars, and university administrators to discuss adequate teaching-learning methods and philosophy at IPSOM. Therefore, its analysis might reveal instances or occurrences that somehow depict features of SCBs that could inform about the everyday life of the project.

Excerpt from the transcript of the opening speech of the colloquium at IPSOM (February 2008):

Monsieur Jacques (MJ): ah, euhm, euh, ah pour tout ce que nous aurons à faire pendant cette journée/euh! ah! Merci à tous les professeurs à tous les collègues pour tous les exposés que vous avez préparés et je crois tout simplement que le Seigneur conduit les travaux et que nous mettions à profit ce temps que nous nous sommes donné pour cet atelier. J'espère de tout cœur que nous arriverons à la fin de ces quatre jours de travaux à des perspectives qui permettraient vraiment euh! non seulement d'avoir des réponses aux questions qui se posent et que nous nous sommes posées à travers les différents exposés que nous allons partager mais que nous pourrions euh! ouvrir des nouvelles perspectives euh! que nous pourrions ouvrir des nouvelles dynamiques qui donnent vraiment à l'IPSOM, euh! de retrouver euh! l'esprit de retrouver le euh! rêve que nous portons et qui permet effectivement à l'IPSOM de garder son originalité et pourquoi pas comme nous avons toujours rêvé de proposer des démarches aux autres fondateurs euh! même l'Etat, euh! pour que l'enseignement devienne quelque chose que ce que nous vivons maintenant. C'est le vœu que je formule de tout cœur, euh! à l'ouverture de cet atelier. Merci à vous, merci à toutes et merci à tous. //Tous: (applaudissements dans la salle)

The author, in the following, attempts to do a micro-analysis of this extract with an emphasis on language use.¹¹ The first sentence of Monsieur Jacques displays four different instances of enunciation devices.

10 The colloquium gathered African/Cameroonian education specialists (from the Democratic Republic of Congo, IPSOM, and University of Yaoundé), joined by colleagues from Germany (the University of Hamburg, Ruhr University of Bochum).

11 With the term language use, the use of specific tenses, the enunciation system, the deictic markers, metaphors and/or other figures of style are meant. This notion is further discussed in the second section of the theory in chapter 1 below,

- (3) The listeners: identifiable in the language use such as “*merci à tous les professeurs à tous les collègues, pour tous les exposés que vous avez préparé*” (thanks to all the professors, to all the colleagues, For all the reports that you have prepared);
- (2) A connection to a high normative instance of *le Seigneur* (the Lord);
- (1) The speaker “*je*” (I); and the presence of
- (4) an “inclusive” “*nous*” representing both “*vous*” and “*je*” (3 and 1) that is, *you* and *I* form an “inclusive we” refers to all the participants in the workshop, including Monsieur Jacques.

In short, Monsieur Jacques (“*je*” in 1) in connection with a high normative instance “*le Seigneur*” (2), talks to “*tous les professeurs*” “*vous*” (3). The object of the speech is not clearly stated since he uses vague referents (a) “*pour tout ce que nous aurons à faire*” (what exactly are 3 and 1 are going to do?), (b) “*pour tous les exposés que vous avez préparés*” (which reports? on which topic or theme?). He further refers to “*les travaux*” (what work?) and “*atelier*” (but atelier of what?). Nothing is mentioned about the topic or the theme that is the object of the “*atelier*,” the “*travaux*,” and the “*exposés*.” What is mentioned is rather the schedule “*pendant cette journée, à la fin de ces quatre jours de travaux*” (during this day, at the end of these four days of work). Moreover, as participants of the colloquium, the students of IPSOM are not explicitly mentioned in this introductory speech of MJ. Could he have assumed that by saying, “*pour tout ce que nous aurons à faire pendant cette journée*” (for all that we will do during this day), he also included the students in this inclusive “*we*”? Or could the presence of the students as participants in the workshop implicitly be meant in the last utterances of MJ: (“*Merci à vous, merci à toutes et merci à tous*”)?

However, one can identify some references to the different “roles” that Monsieur Jacques assigns or attributes to the different instances by reading the tenses and corresponding modes he uses.

Reference 1: “*Merci à tous les professeurs pour les exposés que vous avez préparés*” (“thanks to all the professors for the communications that you have prepared”).

Using the past tense (“*avez préparés*”) in the indicative mode, Monsieur Jacques recalls the task performed by the professors, which consisted of preparing the different communications in the workshop.

Reference 2: “*que le Seigneur conduit les travaux*.”
(that the Lord conducts the works).

under pragma-linguistic micro-analysis, especially the inference analysis in the perspective of Kokemohr (2002b, 2019), as discussed in the methodology chapter 7 of this work.