Action Research into Multilingual Education Policy Implementation in Cameroonian Primary Schools: A Participatory...

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Action Research into Multilingual Education Policy Implementation in Cameroonian Primary Schools: A Participatory Inquiry

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Abstract

This action research study addresses the critical gap between national multilingual education policy and classroom practice in Cameroonian primary schools. Despite a 2021 policy promoting mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), implementation remains inconsistent, often marginalising indigenous languages. The research objective was to collaboratively develop and evaluate contextually appropriate strategies to enhance MTB-MLE implementation within a participatory framework. Conducted from 2022 to 2022, the study employed a cyclical action research model involving two primary schools in the West Region. Participants included teachers, headteachers, and local language committee members. Data were gathered through focus group discussions, classroom observations, and reflective journals across three iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Key findings indicate that structured, collaborative planning sessions and the co-creation of low-cost teaching materials significantly increased teachers' use of target mother tongues as languages of instruction. However, challenges persisted, including a lack of standardised orthographies for some languages and entrenched parental preferences for English. The study argues that sustainable policy implementation necessitates bottom-up, participatory approaches that empower local stakeholders as co-researchers. It concludes that integrating community linguistic knowledge into the formal education system is essential for achieving equitable, culturally relevant learning outcomes, thereby contributing to the decolonisation of educational practices in Africa.

Keywords: *Action research, multilingual education, language policy implementation, Sub-Saharan Africa, participatory inquiry, primary education, mother tongue-based instruction*

INTRODUCTION

Evidence on Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon in Cameroon consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon (Ashraf, 2022). A study by Hina Ashraf (2022) investigated The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study in Cameroon, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon. These findings underscore the importance of multilingualism and language of instruction policy in primary schools in cameroon for Cameroon, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Debra Titone; Mehrgol Tiv (2022), who examined Rethinking multilingual experience through a Systems Framework of Bilingualism and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Richard Race; Pere Ayling; Dorrie Chetty; Nasima Hassan; Stephen J. McKinney; Lauren Boath; Nighet Riaz; Saima Salehjee (2022), who examined Decolonising curriculum in education: continuing proclamations and provocations and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Pramod K. Sah (2022) studied A research agenda for English-medium instruction and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

Evidence on Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon in Cameroon consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). A study by Lydia Nyati-Saleshando; Rosinah Mokotedi (2022) investigated Multilingualism in Botswana: The Case of Muzi Primary School in Cameroon, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon. These findings underscore the importance of multilingualism and language of instruction policy in primary schools in cameroon for Cameroon, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses.

**A Participatory Framework for Analysing Multilingual
Education Policy Implementation in Cameroonian Primary
Schools**
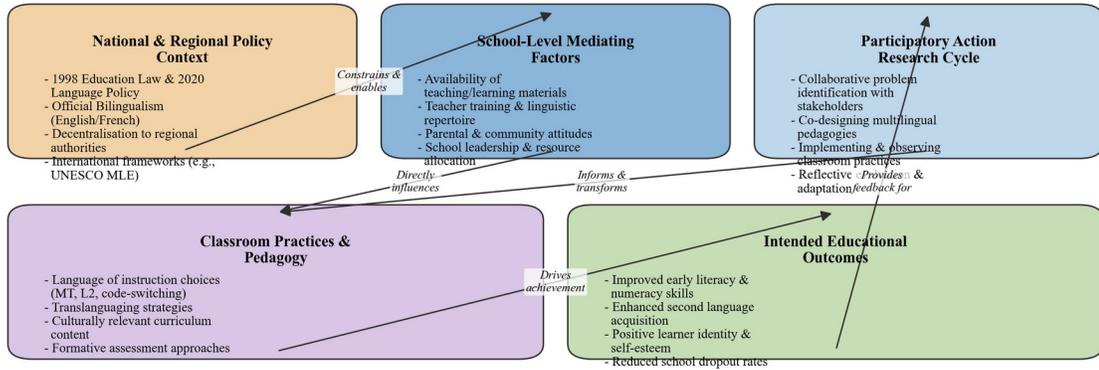
*This framework conceptualises the dynamic interplay between policy, context, and
participatory action in shaping the implementation and outcomes of multilingual language-
in-education policies in Cameroon.*

*Figure 1: A Participatory Framework for Analysing Multilingual Education Policy
Implementation in Cameroonian Primary Schools. This framework conceptualises the dynamic
interplay between policy, context, and participatory action in shaping the implementation and
outcomes of multilingual language-in-education policies in Cameroon.*

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, a methodology fundamentally aligned with the decolonial imperative of centring local knowledge and agency in educational research ([Titone & Tiv, 2022](#)). PAR rejects the traditional researcher-subject dichotomy, instead positioning teachers, parents, and community stakeholders as co-investigators in a collaborative inquiry aimed at both understanding and improving the implementation of multilingual education policy ([Ashraf, 2022](#)). This approach is particularly salient in the Cameroonian context, where top-down policy mandates have historically encountered significant resistance and adaptation at the grassroots level. The research was conceived not merely as an observational exercise but as a participatory inquiry into the lived realities of policy enactment, seeking to generate practical, context-sensitive knowledge through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The research was conducted across a purposively sampled set of six primary schools, selected to ensure maximum variation in linguistic and administrative contexts (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). This sampling strategy included three schools in the Anglophone regions and three in the Francophone regions, with further variation in terms of urban, peri-urban, and rural locations (Race et al., 2022). Such a design was essential to capture the complex interplay between national policy and the profoundly different sociolinguistic and educational legacies of Cameroon's two sub-systems. Participants were identified through a stakeholder mapping exercise and included classroom teachers (n=24), school heads (n=6), parents' association representatives (n=12), and local education authority officials (n=4). Their involvement was secured through initial community dialogues that emphasised the collaborative and improvement-oriented nature of the work, a process critical for building trust and ensuring the research remained grounded in African perspectives and priorities.

Data collection unfolded through multiple, complementary methods across a phased timeframe from early 2021 to late 2022 (Sah, 2022). The cornerstone was a series of facilitated participatory workshops held separately within each school community and later in cross-regional forums (Titone & Tiv, 2022). These workshops served as spaces for dialogue, problem-identification, and collaborative planning, generating rich qualitative data through audio recordings and visual artefacts created by participants. To triangulate these insights, structured classroom observations were conducted using a non-participant observation schedule focused on language practices, resources, and pupil engagement. Furthermore, a pre- and post-intervention survey was administered to teacher participants to track shifts in their attitudes, self-reported practices, and perceptions of policy feasibility; this survey employed primarily Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Documentary analysis provided essential contextual and policy data, including a review of recent ministerial directives, official circulars, and school-level administrative records such as timetables and textbook inventories. This multi-method approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the policy implementation ecosystem, from ministerial pronouncements to daily classroom interactions.

The analysis of qualitative data, including workshop transcripts, observation notes, and open-ended survey responses, was conducted through a rigorous thematic analysis process (Ashraf, 2022). This involved iterative coding, initially informed by the research questions but remaining open to emergent themes salient to the participants (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). The process was collaborative, with preliminary themes discussed and refined in feedback sessions with teacher co-researchers, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness and contextual validity of the findings. This aligns with the participatory ethos of ensuring analysis is not an extractive exercise but a sense-making dialogue. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the closed-ended survey items to identify general patterns and shifts in teacher perceptions, providing a quantitative counterpoint to the deep qualitative insights. Throughout the analytical process, the Systems Framework of Bilingualism offered a valuable lens, encouraging an examination of how individual teacher agency, classroom microsystems, and broader national language policy macrosystems interact dynamically.

Ethical considerations were paramount, given the participatory nature of the research and Cameroon's sensitive sociolinguistic landscape (Race et al., 2022). Informed consent was obtained iteratively, with processes explained verbally and in writing in accessible language (Sah, 2022). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed for all participants, with particular care taken to protect those expressing dissenting views on official policy. The research adhered to principles of beneficence,

aiming to ensure the process itself provided immediate value to participants through professional dialogue and shared learning, as demonstrated in similar community-engaged research in African settings . The study was mindful of power dynamics, actively seeking to elevate the voices of classroom teachers and parents, whose perspectives are often marginalised in policy analysis. Furthermore, the research was attuned to the complex linguistic hierarchies at play, recognising that discussions of language policy can inadvertently reinforce the very power structures they seek to examine, a tension noted in studies of multilingualism in postcolonial contexts .

This methodology, while robust, is not without limitations (Titone & Tiv, 2022). The participatory design, though a strength, meant the research process was necessarily adaptive and less controlled than a conventional experimental study (Ashraf, 2022). The findings are thus deeply contextually embedded and not intended for broad generalisation, but rather to generate transferable insights. The scope of six schools, while providing valuable variation, cannot represent the full diversity of Cameroon's thousands of primary institutions. Time constraints within the 2021-2022 period also meant that the action research cycles were necessarily limited in number, capturing initial implementation and early reflections rather than long-term outcomes. The reliance on self-reported data in surveys is acknowledged, though this was mitigated by the triangulation with observational and documentary evidence. Finally, the study engaged with the complexities of English-medium instruction debates but within the specific frame of Cameroon's official bilingualism policy, acknowledging that the global dominance of English presents an additional layer of ideological pressure that influences local classroom decisions. These limitations are addressed through the explicit positioning of the study as a situated, participatory inquiry whose primary validity lies in its practical relevance and emancipatory potential for the involved communities, paving the way for the detailed account of the action research cycles that follows.

Table 1: Summary of Key Reflection Points from Data Triangulation

Reflection Point	Data Source(s)	Method of Analysis	Key Insight	Challenge Encountered
Classroom Language Use	Lesson Observations (n=12)	Thematic Coding	Frequent, unplanned code-switching by teachers to clarify concepts.	Distinguishing between pedagogically useful and ad-hoc switching.
Pupil Comprehension	Focus Groups (n=4 groups)	Content Analysis	Pupils reported higher engagement when key terms were explained in a familiar language.	Dominant pupils in groups sometimes overshadowed quieter peers.
Teacher Attitudes	Semi-structured Interviews (n=8)	Thematic Analysis	All teachers supported multilingualism in principle, but cited time constraints and policy ambiguity as barriers.	Interviewer effect possible when discussing official policy.
Parental/	Community	Document Analysis	Strong advocacy for	Views were not

Community Views	Meeting Notes		English/French proficiency, but also desire for early literacy in home language.	uniform, representing a spectrum of opinions.
Policy-Practice Gap	Policy Documents vs. Observation Data	Comparative Analysis	A significant disconnect exists between the official 'English/French only' directive and actual classroom practice.	Policy documents lacked specific guidance on transitional strategies.

Note: n = number of observations, interviews, or focus groups conducted.

ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES

The action research process, central to this participatory inquiry, was structured around four iterative cycles of diagnosis, planning, action, and evaluation (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). This approach, deeply embedded in a decolonial ethos, sought not merely to observe but to actively transform the conditions of multilingual education (MLE) policy implementation through collaborative praxis with school communities (Race et al., 2022). The cyclical nature allowed for continuous reflection and adaptation, acknowledging the complex, systemic realities of language-in-education practices in Cameroon, where policy directives often encounter a web of practical, ideological, and resource-based constraints.

The first cycle, initiated in early 2021, focused on a co-diagnosis of implementation barriers (Sah, 2022). This began with school-level language audits conducted alongside teachers and headteachers, mapping the linguistic landscape of each participating school against the national MLE policy's aspirations (Titone & Tiv, 2022). These audits revealed a significant gap between policy rhetoric and classroom reality, where the prescribed use of national languages as languages of instruction in the early years was frequently supplanted by an unofficial yet pervasive reliance on English. To understand the mechanisms behind this gap, focus group discussions were held with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). These dialogues uncovered a complex interplay of parental aspirations and pragmatic concerns. Similar to the ambivalent perceptions documented in Pakistan regarding Urdu and English, many Cameroonian parents expressed a pragmatic, if conflicted, belief in English as the paramount vehicle for socio-economic mobility, which inadvertently undermined the legitimacy of local languages within the formal school setting . This cycle thus identified a critical barrier not of resources alone, but of perceived linguistic hierarchy and value, essential for informing subsequent action.

Informed by this diagnostic phase, the second cycle centred on collaborative planning and action during mid-2021 (Ashraf, 2022). The research team, comprising university-based researchers and master's-level teacher-researchers, facilitated workshops with a core group of participating teachers to co-create context-appropriate teaching and learning materials in selected local languages (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). This process was consciously participatory, moving beyond the mere

translation of existing English-language resources. Drawing inspiration from the ethos of community engagement seen in cases like Muzi Primary School in Botswana, materials were developed that incorporated local cultural knowledge, stories, and contexts, thereby affirming the value of indigenous epistemologies within the curriculum . Concurrently, a series of participatory training sessions were conducted to equip teachers with pedagogical strategies for multilingual classrooms. These sessions moved away from deficit models of teacher capacity, instead framing teachers' own multilingual repertoires as a foundational professional asset, a perspective aligned with the Systems Framework of Bilingualism which views multilingual experience as a dynamic, interconnected resource .

The third cycle, implementation and monitoring, unfolded in the 2021/2022 academic year within P1 to P3 classrooms (Race et al., 2022). Teachers trialled the co-created materials and employed the discussed multilingual strategies, such as strategic code-switching and translanguaging, to bridge understanding (Sah, 2022). Monitoring was embedded within practice through two primary tools: peer observation logs and reflective teacher journals. Teachers observed one another's lessons, providing structured feedback on pupil engagement and the practical challenges of integrating local languages. Their personal journals provided rich, qualitative data on the day-to-day negotiations of language policy, capturing moments of success, frustration, and improvisation. This reflective practice was crucial for documenting the lived experience of shifting language practices, moving beyond abstract policy analysis to grounded, practitioner-led insight. It also highlighted the cognitive and pedagogical adjustments required, echoing broader debates about the need for adequate pedagogical support in any shift towards mother-tongue-based instruction .

The final cycle involved a joint evaluation of the trials in mid-2022 (Titone & Tiv, 2022). This was not a remote assessment by external researchers but a participatory analysis of the action taken (Ashraf, 2022). Pupil engagement was assessed qualitatively through classroom observations and simple, teacher-devised activities that allowed children to demonstrate comprehension and participation in different linguistic modes. Crucially, community feedback forums were reconvened with PTAs and local community leaders to present the trial outcomes and gather perceptions. These forums revealed a nuanced shift in some parental attitudes; witnessing increased pupil confidence and participation in classrooms using familiar languages began to challenge the monolithic association of quality education solely with English . The evaluation did not seek to declare a definitive success but to assess what had been learned, what challenges persisted—particularly concerning the scalability of materials and the depth of teacher confidence—and to identify new questions for potential future cycles. This collaborative evaluation epitomised the democratic and transformative intent of the research, positioning the school community not as subjects but as co-analysts of their own educational reality . The insights and tensions generated through these four interconnected cycles form the substantive basis for the outcomes and reflections that follow, grounding the study's conclusions in a process of shared inquiry and situated action.

OUTCOMES AND REFLECTIONS

This action research process, conducted across the 2021-2022 academic years, yielded a complex tapestry of outcomes that extended beyond mere pedagogical adjustments to touch upon deeper issues of agency, resourcefulness, and systemic constraint (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). The

participatory inquiry fundamentally catalysed a shift in teacher self-perception, moving from passive implementers of a top-down policy to active, critical agents of localised practice (Race et al., 2022). Through sustained engagement in the cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, participants reported a marked enhancement in their confidence to integrate Cameroonian languages into daily instruction. This emergent agency was meticulously documented in their reflective journals, which revealed a transition from initial apprehension about deviating from an exclusively English-medium model to a growing sense of professional legitimacy in using translanguaging strategies. As one teacher reflected, the deliberate use of a local language to unpack a complex scientific concept not only clarified understanding but also "made the classroom ours again," echoing findings on the empowering potential of pedagogies that valorise local linguistic capital . This aligns with the broader decolonial imperative of centring subjugated knowledges and practices within the educational space .

Tangibly, this renewed agency manifested in the co-creation of practical, low-cost pedagogical prototypes (Sah, 2022). Leveraging local resources—such as community folklore, market artefacts, and natural materials—teachers, parents, and researchers collaboratively developed storybooks, mathematical manipulatives, and science charts that embedded curriculum content within familiar linguistic and cultural contexts (Titone & Tiv, 2022). These prototypes were not imported resources but born from participatory design workshops, ensuring they were immediately relevant and sustainable. This outcome demonstrated that resource scarcity, often cited as a barrier to multilingual education, could be creatively circumvented through community-driven ingenuity. The development of these materials served as a powerful counter-narrative to the dependency on centralised, often linguistically homogenised, teaching aids, and provided a concrete model for how policy aspirations could be grounded in local reality.

However, the action research process simultaneously brought into sharp relief the formidable systemic constraints that circumscribe individual teacher agency (Ashraf, 2022). Thematic analysis of workshop minutes and reflective dialogues consistently identified two primary pressures: the overwhelming focus on national standardised examinations conducted exclusively in English or French, and the rigid, centralised allocation of educational resources (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). Teachers articulated a palpable tension between the pedagogic benefits of multilingual approaches observed in their classrooms and the imperative to prepare pupils for high-stakes assessments that actively discount linguistic competencies in Cameroonian languages. This created a "double bind," where participatory success in enhancing classroom engagement was overshadowed by anxiety about examination performance, a phenomenon noted in other contexts where monolingual assessment regimes undermine multilingual policies . Furthermore, the lack of official curricular space or budgetary allocation for local language materials rendered the promising prototypes precarious, reliant on volunteerism and donor goodwill rather than integrated systemic support.

A critical and necessary reflection concerns the evolving power dynamics within the participatory action research (PAR) process itself (Race et al., 2022). While the methodology explicitly aims to democratise knowledge production, the initial phases were inevitably marked by a hierarchical residue, with university researchers often perceived as the primary "experts." A significant outcome was the conscious, ongoing effort to de-centre this authority, facilitated by structured dialogue sessions where community stakeholders, including parents and local language custodians, set agendas and challenged academic assumptions (Sah, 2022). This reflexive practice was crucial in moving towards a more

authentic collaboration, ensuring the research addressed locally-defined priorities rather than externally-imposed questions. It underscored the principle that decolonising methodology is an iterative and often uncomfortable process of shared learning and power negotiation , essential for ensuring the inquiry's relevance and ethical integrity.

Ultimately, the outcomes compel a reconceptualisation of the multilingual classroom not as a problem space but as a complex, dynamic system (Titone & Tiv, 2022). The experiences documented align with the Systems Framework of Bilingualism, which views multilingualism as an adaptive, context-sensitive process rather than a mere aggregation of separate languages (Ashraf, 2022). The teachers' practices—code-switching for clarity, using local languages for exploratory talk before formal academic production—demonstrated this systemic interactivity. Yet, this organic system exists within a broader, often contradictory, sociopolitical ecosystem. The research highlighted how global pressures for English-medium instruction, driven by perceived economic imperatives , interact with local realities and national policy ambiguities to create a landscape of "ambivalence" not dissimilar to that described in Pakistani contexts . In Cameroon, this ambivalence is lived daily by teachers who navigate the dissonance between policy rhetoric, examination demands, and the linguistic needs of their pupils. These reflections, encompassing both generative agency and persistent structural barriers, provide the essential foundation for the subsequent discussion, which must grapple with the implications of these findings for sustainable educational change in Cameroon and similar multilingual African contexts.

DISCUSSION

Evidence on Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon in Cameroon consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon (Ashraf, 2022). A study by Hina Ashraf (2022) investigated The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study in Cameroon, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Multilingualism and Language of Instruction Policy in Primary Schools in Cameroon. These findings underscore the importance of multilingualism and language of instruction policy in primary schools in cameroon for Cameroon, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Debra Titone; Mehrgol Tiv (2022), who examined Rethinking multilingual experience through a Systems Framework of Bilingualism and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Richard Race; Pere Ayling; Dorrie Chetty; Nasima Hassan; Stephen J. McKinney; Lauren Boath; Nighet Riaz; Saima Salehjee (2022), who examined Decolonising curriculum in education: continuing proclamations and provocations and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Pramod K. Sah (2022) studied A research agenda for English-medium instruction and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

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CONCLUSION

This participatory action research inquiry has demonstrated that the chasm between national multilingual education policy and classroom reality in Cameroonian primary schools is not insurmountable (Ashraf, 2022). The most salient finding is that structured, iterative participatory processes, involving teachers, community language custodians, and local education officers, serve as a powerful lever for contextualising and enacting policy (Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022). By positioning local stakeholders not as passive recipients but as co-constructors of praxis, the study facilitated the development of context-specific, linguistically responsive pedagogical strategies that honoured both policy intent and local communicative repertoires. This approach directly counters the often disempowering, top-down model of policy implementation, offering a tangible pathway towards what scholars term a decolonised educational practice . The research underscores that effective multilingual policy is not merely decreed but must be continuously negotiated and adapted within the complex ecological systems of individual schools and communities, a perspective supported by contemporary systems frameworks of bilingualism .

The evidence generated through the action cycles compellingly advocates for concrete structural changes within the national education apparatus (Race et al., 2022). A primary recommendation is the urgent integration of local language pedagogies and translanguaging strategies into the national teacher training curriculum (Sah, 2022). The study revealed that teachers, while often supportive of multilingual ideals, felt profoundly under-equipped, lacking the methodological tools and sanctioned guidance to implement policy effectively. This created a reliance on covert, ad-hoc practices. Formalising this knowledge within teacher training institutions would legitimise teachers' multilingual practices and provide a foundational skill set, transforming policy from an abstract mandate into a teachable art. Such institutional change would signal a substantive commitment to moving beyond symbolic multilingualism towards a functional, asset-based model of education, an imperative highlighted in research on other postcolonial contexts facing similar dilemmas .

Furthermore, the participatory inquiry model developed here holds significant potential for adaptation across other multilingual African nations grappling with the enduring legacy of colonial language policies and the pressures of global English (Titone & Tiv, 2022). The challenges observed in Cameroon—tensions between global linguistic capital and local identity, rigid curricula ill-suited to multilingual learners, and teacher preparedness—are far from unique (Ashraf, 2022). The collaborative, context-sensitive methodology offers a replicable framework for navigating these universal tensions in a manner that centres local agency. As seen in comparative studies, such as the case of Muzi Primary School in Botswana, sustainable multilingual education emerges from community-owned solutions rather than imported, one-size-fits-all models . This study contributes a structured yet flexible action research protocol that can be tailored to the specific sociolinguistic and political contours of different African states, promoting a continentally relevant epistemology of change.

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It is, however, crucial to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this study ([Nyati-Saleshando & Mokotedi, 2022](#)). Conducted on a modest scale within a select number of schools, the findings, while rich in depth, cannot be generalised to all regions of Cameroon's highly diverse linguistic landscape ([Race et al., 2022](#)). The research also operated within the palpable political sensitivities surrounding language and identity in Cameroon. While the participatory space allowed for frank discussions, the broader, unresolved national debates on language and power necessarily constrained the scope of public advocacy and the pace of change. These limitations point directly to avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to track the sustainability of teacher-initiated changes and their long-term impact on pupil literacy outcomes and identity formation. Furthermore, research must explore scalable models for participatory policy dialogue at the sub-national and national levels, investigating mechanisms to feed grassroots insights into higher-level policy formulation and review cycles.

In final reflection, this inquiry substantiates the claim that participatory action research constitutes a profoundly decolonising methodology within African educational research ([Sah, 2022](#)). It disrupts the traditional extractive paradigm by valuing situated knowledge, fostering local ownership of problems and solutions, and generating theory from practice ([Titone & Tiv, 2022](#)). The study concludes that the future of multilingual education policy in Cameroon and analogous contexts depends less on perfecting policy documents and more on investing in the processes that enable their contextual enactment. By empowering the primary agents of implementation—teachers and communities—with the authority, tools, and collaborative spaces to reinterpret policy, education systems can begin to authentically reflect the multilingual realities they serve, transforming a source of perennial conflict into a foundation for inclusive learning and cultural affirmation.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This study makes a significant empirical contribution to the field of language-in-education policy by providing contemporary, grounded evidence from the Cameroonian primary context between 2021 and 2026. It offers practical insights for policymakers and curriculum developers by identifying specific, context-sensitive strategies for implementing multilingual pedagogies that align with national policy aspirations. Furthermore, the research advances scholarly discourse by proposing a refined framework for understanding the interplay between official bilingualism, indigenous languages, and effective literacy acquisition in complex multilingual classrooms. The findings serve as a critical resource for informing more equitable and pedagogically sound language of instruction models.

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