

# An Evaluation of Academic Performance Among Learners Enrolled in The Special Bilingual Education Programme At the Secondary School Level in Cameroon

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## ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the academic performance of learners enrolled in the Special Bilingual Education Programme at the secondary school level in Cameroon. The research aimed to investigate how bilingual education influences learners' academic outcomes, identify challenges affecting performance, and provide recommendations for enhancing the programme's effectiveness. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative analysis of academic records with qualitative data collected through interviews and questionnaires administered to students, teachers, and school administrators. Findings revealed that while learners in the programme generally demonstrated satisfactory performance, disparities existed across subjects, with language proficiency significantly influencing overall achievement. Key challenges identified included limited instructional resources, teacher preparedness, and difficulties in balancing bilingual curricula. The study concludes that targeted pedagogical interventions, teacher training in bilingual instruction, and the provision of adequate learning materials are critical for improving academic outcomes in the Special Bilingual Education Programme. The results have implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to enhancing bilingual education in Cameroon.

**Keywords:** evaluation; academic performance; learners; special bilingual education; programme

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of bilingualism seems to have been neglected in the context of Cameroon amid its importance within educational circles. On paper, Cameroon is bicultural and bilingual, using English and French as languages of instruction and communication. We are very familiar with the common saying that "Cameroon is bilingual, but the Cameroonians are not bilingual". There exists a gap between the real and the expectations in the field. Cameroon is the only other bilingual country in Africa, speaking English and French. Cameroon and Canada, both bilingual countries, are direct opposites as far as the speaking of English and French is concerned. In Cameroon, two out of the ten regions of the country speak English, and the other eight regions are French-speaking, whereas in Canada, one province is French-speaking, while thirteen others are English-speaking. It is only the Quebec province that is entirely French-speaking. Because of the lackadaisical nature of policymakers in the handling of Bilingualism in Cameroon, it has affected the educational policy. According to Achankeng (2014, P.3), educational policy is *a plan of action, rules, regulations, or laws governing education in a given country. It is a plan for the activities of education that are put in place by a given country for immediate execution or for future*

*execution; a statement of ideals, guidelines laid down principles; a course of action; or a code of conduct for education in a given country. It can equally be summarized as the signpost in a given country... education policies are the principles and government policy-making in the educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws that govern the operation of education systems.*

The education policy of Cameroon is found not in one compendium but rather in a series of laws and texts: Presidential and Prime Ministerial decrees, arêtes, orders, circulars, and decisions. For this reason, some people think that Cameroon does not have an educational policy. The 1995 forum on education, which moved the duration of primary education from seven (7) to six (6); the modified syllabuses; and finally, the 1998 Law, which implemented the proposals of the National forum on education, are some of the aspects of government policy on education.

As far as the geographical and linguistic situation of Cameroon is concerned, Cameroon is situated at the heart of the African continent. Cameroon is a triangle with a surface area of 475.000km<sup>2</sup> with a population of about 17.463.836 million inhabitants, from the results of the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) general population census

and housing held in November 2005. In order of importance, the population of the ten (10) administrative regions is as follows: Far-North: 3.111.792, Centre: 3.098.044, Littoral (2.510.216), Northwest: 1.728.953 West 1.720.047, North: (1.687.859), Southwest 1.316.079, Adamawa (884.289), East (771.755), and South (634.855). At the moment, the population of the Republic of Cameroon is estimated at about 25 million inhabitants. Cameroon is surrounded by Nigeria in the West, Chad in the Northeast, and the Central African Republic in the east, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo in the South. We can distinguish four great (04) geographical regions: the coastal region, the forest region of the South, the mountains of the West, and the savannah of the North.

Bilingualism is a national educational policy in Cameroon. It is a priority for the state of Cameroon because it spreads into legal and legislative frameworks. First, the Revised Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon of the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1996, states in its preamble that *“the state shall guarantee the child's right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory.”* The entry age into Nursery education is fixed at 4 and 6 in the primary. In the year 2000, primary education was made free or gratuitous to enable every child the opportunity of attaining at least the primary education level. But this decree also says that families must pay for uniforms, books, health insurance, and registration fees for their children in public primary schools. This implies that every child has the right to education, which is one of the fundamental rights of a child as stated in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989. Other rights of the child include: the right to protection, nationality, name, nutrition, freedom of speech, to mention a few.

Second, the National Forum on Education held at the Yaoundé Conference Centre in 1995 laid the basis for Law No. 98/004 of the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1998, laying down guidelines of education in Cameroon, which clearly confirmed the place of bilingualism and evaluation in the education system of Cameroon. Section 3 of this 1998 law provides that the state shall institute bilingualism at all levels of education as a factor of National Unity and Integration.

This implies that the teaching and learning of the official languages (English and French) are to be used as languages of instruction in our schools beginning from the nursery school level, primary and secondary levels, right up to higher education. Section 6 of this same law stipulates that the state shall guarantee the right of every child to education. Concerning evaluation, sections 30, 37, and 39 give guidelines on the process of constant evaluation and research on the educational system and the vital role teachers play to bring about quality education. Section 30: on evaluation of the educational system and research in evaluation; *“the state shall evaluate the educational system regularly”*.

Section 37 provides that *“Teachers shall be the principal guarantors of the quality of education. In this capacity, he/she shall be entitled, within the limit of the means available, to suitable living and working conditions as well as to the appropriate initial and continuing training”*.

The law of the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1998 provides in its article 39 that “teachers are bound to teach, educate, provide educational guidance, promote the quest for scientific knowledge, carry out assessment and be of moral rectitude”. Teachers, according to Farrant (1989), are the models of all the children or learners. They look up to him and accept as gospel truth all that is said by the teacher. He is an educator and moral instructor whose behaviour should be exemplary and worthy of being emulated by pupils or learners. As a result, the teacher not only teaches, but must also evaluate what he has taught so that he is sure that all learners have understood the contents of the materials, lesson, and unit or course, as the case may be.

The educational system of Cameroon is a centralized system with merits and demerits. The merits of the system include: Firstly, its functional structures exist and cover the entire national territory. Secondly, the use of French and English as official languages for instruction and communication is an added advantage (asset) to the citizens, who are open to the world. Thirdly, several investors are present in the sector of education due to the liberalization of the quality of education in Cameroon. (Achankeng, 2014). The Cameroon educational system is made up of two sub-systems: The English-speaking (Anglophone) and the French-speaking (Francophone). English is dominant in the two Northwest and Southwest region while it is dominantly used in the rest of the 8 regions of Cameroon. The bilingual schools now exist in all the regions of Cameroon.

Among the demerits, Achankeng (2014) mentions that, firstly, learners' individual needs are not considered during evaluations. Consequently, children with special needs are not provided with the necessary facilities and structures adapted to their disabilities (longer time to sit for exams; special equipment and infrastructure). Secondly, both teachers and pupils lack textbooks to enhance quality learning. Thirdly, there is an insufficient and uneven distribution of teachers. Fourthly, it has been noticed that there are poor learning and working conditions for learners and teachers. Basic education is far from being made available to all children of school-going age in some areas of the national territory. This is because most parents still discriminate 'girls from boys' education as girls indulge in early marriages, internal efficiency remains low at all levels due to courses emanating from various stakeholders who neglect their role; and joblessness is the order of the day with school leavers at all levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). This same law of 1998 describes the Cameroon educational system in its articles 15, 16, 1nd 17, and the summary is given below in this table.

**TABLE 1:** The Cameroon educational system in its articles 15, 16, and 17.

French-speaking sub-system			Anglophone sub-system		
Level	Class	Certificate	Level	Class	Certificate
First	Sixieme		First	Form 1	
Second	Cinquieme		Second	Form 2	
Third	Quatrieme		Third	Form 3	
Fourth	Troisieme	BEPC	Fourth	Form 4	
Fifth	Seconde	Probatoire	Fifth	Form 5	GCE- OL
Sixth	Premiere		Sixth	Lower Sixth Form	
Seventh	Termiale	Baccalaureat	Seventh	Upper Sixth Form	GCE A-L

Source: Echu (2012) Bilinguisme officiel au Cameroun : Etude linguistique et sociologique.

We notice from this table that the secondary education level bears aspects of the two sub-systems, with many similarities in terms of duration of studies, but a few differences exist. For example, in the Anglophone sub-system, there is no official examination taken in the lower sixth class. In the French-speaking sub-system, the “Probatoire” examination is often set by the Baccalaureate board, and it is said to have hindered the progress of many learners who often register a high rate of failure. For this reason, many learners often rush to neighbouring countries such as Gabon, Chad, and Niger, and so on, to sit for this Baccalaureate Examination, which has been suspended or does not even exist in French-speaking countries in Africa, as most of them think it is easier for them to succeed there than in Cameroon. The law of 1998 on education in Cameroon, as well as the National Forum on Education of 1995, both suggested in their final reports that the “Probatoire” examinations taken in “classe de première” should be suppressed. To date, this recommendation has not yet been implemented by the education authorities who handle examination matters in the Ministry of Secondary Education.

The Law of 1998 to lay down the Guidelines on Education also provides that the Cameroon educational system is organized as follows: At the moment, the Cameroon educational system comprises two sub-systems: English-speaking and French-speaking. The English-speaking sub-system covers mainly the Northwest and the Southwest regions, but we also find English-speaking schools in the dominantly French-speaking regions and major towns besides these two regions. Post-primary education is made up of two sections in the two sub-systems: A Rural Artisan section in which learners are trained in new techniques such as Masonry, Carpentry and joinery, electricity, etc., and the Home Economics centres (Cookery, knitting, needle work) etc. The Certificate obtained at the end of training in these SAR/SM Centres is the “Attestation of successful completion of the course for two years. This form of training enables learners who abandoned studies after the level of the primary education or the first cycle of the secondary education, to acquire skills and competences for professional insertion or to further studies to obtain the CAP Certificate (Certificat d’Aptitudes Professionnelles).

Secondary education is made up of two cycles in each sub-system (Anglophone and French-speaking). In the French-speaking sub-system, the first cycle of the Secondary Technical Education takes four years (4) of studies and ends with obtaining the end-of-first-cycle Certificate or the Professional Aptitude Certificate (CAP) in the secondary technical education.

The second cycle lasts three (3) years and ends with obtaining the baccalaureate Technic or General. In the Anglophone sub-system, the first cycle comprises and takes five years and ends by obtaining the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level (G.C.E. O-L), and the second cycle lasts for two years (2) and ends by obtaining the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (G.C.E. A-L).

Higher education comprises various and diversified durations of studies, which vary from two (2) to seven (7) years or more. These trainings are more organized by the Ministry of Higher education but trainings which are vocational in nature are organized by the technical department of the institute attached to the University and Ministry. The Law of 2001 explains the situation in greater detail. This demonstrates that the system needs some readjustments to meet these challenges.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization) is the specialized organ of the United Nations (the UN) whose purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights, along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the UN charter. UNESCO has 196 member states and nine associate members who pursue the objectives of the organization through five main programmes: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and information and communication. The aim is to “contribute to the building of peace, eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education science, culture, information and communication, quality education for all and lifelong learning; addressing emerging social and ethical challenges, fostering cultural diversity, culture of peace building, inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication.

Pedagogic supervisions are ensured by the General Inspectorate in charge of Education (IGE). This structure has carried out a number of curricula reforms, which are still continuing today. Pursuant to the National Forum on Education held in 1995 and the subsequent promulgation into law of the law laying down the guidelines for education in 1998, new contents were introduced in the year 2000, which adopted the idea of Pedagogy by Objectives (PPO). It became operational in the school year 2001 – 2002. At the primary school level, the policy of collective promotions was instituted in the year 2004 -2005. Also, there was an evolution from the new pedagogic approach (NAP), the new vision of evaluation, to the Competency-Based Approach (CBA): At the beginning of this Millennium, as Cameroon chooses to become an emergent nation by 2035, its secondary education sector faces many challenges: it should offer quality training and education to most Cameroonians within a context marked by large classes in the primary education; prepare youth for smooth insertion into a more demanding job market worldwide, through a pertinent teaching – learning process.

Training schools have significantly evolved in their conception and implementation of the CBA. A school that was mostly based on contextualized knowledge acquisition has given room, all over the world, for a school that aims to empower learners to help them cope with complex and diversified real-life situations. Instead of a school cut off from society, we now have a school deeply rooted in a society that takes into consideration/account sustainable development, local knowledge, and cultures.

The Competency-Based approach (CBA) introduced into the Cameroon educational system focuses on the principles of learner-centered, multiple intelligence, collaboration, and action-oriented pedagogy. The typical classroom in Cameroon has learners who come from diverse backgrounds, and this new approach is meant to address this variety and bring about the inclusion of all the different learners in the classrooms. The implementation of the CBA and the ideology of the new school, prescribed by the 1998 law to lay down the guidelines for education in Cameroon, and the necessity for socio-professional insertion require the adoption of a new pedagogic paradigm for the development of syllabuses relating to the Competency Based Approach with an entry through real-life situations.

The new syllabuses for secondary education are in line with the implementation of the provisions of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (DSCE), which, by the year 2020, specified the minimum amount of knowledge that each child is supposed to possess by the time they leave the first cycle of secondary education. The new syllabuses define essential competencies that should be acquired by learners within the first cycle of secondary education in terms of knowledge, know-how, and attitudes. They equally define the framework that will enable teachers to organize pedagogic activities.

The new pedagogic approach of teaching is based on inferential thinking/thought, so as to improve the quality and efficiency of the Cameroon school. School here is conceived as a framework of common life, adapted to the requirements of a more active pedagogic approach centered on the learner, in which the teacher plays the role of facilitator. It takes into consideration the resources of the environment in the teaching- learning activities, which must be tackled in the form of problem situations. This approach was rejected by many teachers and could not be generalized since it did not take into account the specificities of the Anglophone sub-system of education in conformity with the 1998 law on education.

Focus is now turned towards the new vision of evaluation. The implementation/ institution of programmes of study (curricula) centered on objectives was done in a context characterized by a high rate of repetition, absence of the taking into account of the Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), in their evaluation system, and a culture of failure which appeared to be dominant characteristic of the evaluation system.

Quality education has become a major preoccupation of most members of the education community in most African countries and to the general public in the world at large, and it goes in line with the idea of education for all as formulated during the Dakar (Senegal) education forum.

The term 'quality' is familiar to all people, but it remains ambiguous. One of its facets tends to see it developed on the basis of the measurement of the academic achievement of learners. This aspect does not exhaust the concept of quality, but it has the advantage of banalizing the idea that the passage in school must be translated by the learner's achievements. The level of achievements (acquisitions) becomes, therefore, a major preoccupation because, apart from the information which it gives on the efficiency of an educational system, taking into account the means consecrated in it. It equally provides information on human capital, which is essential for the development of Cameroon. This explains, no doubt, the rapid development of evaluation across the world since the 1990s, aimed at measuring the level of achievement of learners. (Rapport PASEC Cameroon, 2007- 'Le défi de scolarisation').

After the uprisings orchestrated by the teachers and lawyers in the north west and south west regions of Cameroon since the 2016-2017 school year, concertation and consultations were made to resolve the issues raised, including that of bilingualism and the holding of the major national dialogue: The Major National Dialogue (MND), convened by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency President Paul Biya, held in the Yaoundé Conference Centre from the 30<sup>th</sup> September to the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019, under the Chairmanship of Chief Dr Dion Ngute, Prime Minister, Head of Government.

As a prelude to the dialogue proper, the Prime Minister, Head of Government, held some Pre-dialogue consultations with the view to determine not only the most suitable framework for this dialogue, but to solicit contributions and opinions from a broad spectrum of Cameroonians including those who continue to perpetrate acts of violence and terror across the country, notably in the Northwest and Southwest regions.

Participants at the Major National Dialogue (MND) brainstormed on eight (8) main themes highlighted in the message of the Head of State, namely: bilingualism, cultural diversity and social cohesion; the educational system; the judicial system; the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; the reconstruction and development of conflict-affected areas; the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants; the role of the diaspora in the crisis and in national development; and decentralization and local development.

## THEORETICAL LITERATURE

### Jean Piaget (1896–1980): Cognitive Constructivism as an Individual Perspective

Jean Piaget, a Swiss developmental psychologist, conceptualized knowledge development from a cognitive and holistic perspective, emphasizing that learners actively construct knowledge through multiple channels such as reading, listening, exploration, and lived experience. His theory of cognitive constructivism emerged as a response to behaviorist and early information-processing theories of learning, which viewed learners largely as passive recipients of stimuli (Lowenthal & Muth, 2008). Within the information-processing framework, learning is understood as a sequence in which learners perceive stimuli, encode them into meaningful information, store them in memory, and retrieve them for later use. However, Piaget extended this view by arguing that learners are not merely processors of information but active constructors of knowledge who continuously modify existing cognitive structures to solve problems and develop increasingly sophisticated understanding (Schunk, 2020). Cognitive constructivism, therefore conceptualizes learning as the result of individuals' interactions with their environment, shaped by prior knowledge and personal experience. According to Piaget, intellectual development occurs through two complementary processes: adaptation and organization. Adaptation involves assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation occurs when learners integrate new information into existing cognitive frameworks, whereas accommodation takes place when learners modify their existing schemas to account for new or conflicting information (Slavin, 2022).

Schemas, organized units of knowledge, play a central role in Piaget's theory. They allow individuals to interpret experiences efficiently and facilitate higher-order cognitive processes. As noted by Byrnes (1996), schemas or prior knowledge structures organize experience in ways that enhance

information processing, comprehension, and recall. Contemporary researchers reaffirm that schema-based learning improves problem-solving and conceptual understanding by enabling learners to connect new information meaningfully to existing knowledge (Ormrod et al., 2023). Piaget's cognitive constructivism emphasizes how individuals actively process, organize, and relate new information to what they already know, highlighting the learner's central role in knowledge construction rather than passive reception.

### Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934): Sociocultural Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, introduced the sociocultural constructivist perspective, emphasizing the fundamental role of social and cultural interactions in learning and knowledge construction. Vygotsky argued that learning is inherently contextual and occurs through interaction with others within the cultural environments where knowledge is applied (Vygotsky, 1978). His theory highlights the mediation of cognitive development through language, social interaction, and cultural tools. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory assumes that constructivism is rooted in the interrelationship between language, thought, and society. From this perspective, learning is not an individual, isolated process but a socially mediated activity. Pure social constructivists maintain that learning occurs through the co-construction of meaning during social interactions within cultural contexts, particularly through language (Lowenthal & Muth, 2008; Schunk, 2020).

In classrooms grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, knowledge is not transmitted directly from the teacher to learners; rather, it is actively constructed in the learners' minds through guided interaction and collaboration (Ormrod et al., 2023). Teachers play a facilitative role by creating learning environments that encourage dialogue, cooperation, and shared meaning-making. The key characteristics of a social constructivist classroom include: the collaborative construction of meaning; close monitoring of learners' perspectives, thinking processes, and emotions by the teacher; reciprocal teaching and learning relationships where both teachers and learners engage in social interaction; and a curriculum and physical learning environment that reflects learners' interests and cultural backgrounds (Fosnot, 2013; Schunk, 2020).

These characteristics emphasize that knowledge does not reside solely within the individual mind but is shaped by social and physical contexts. Social constructivism, therefore underscores the significant contributions of teachers, peers, and the broader learning community to learners' cognitive development.

### Tools of Sociocultural Constructivism

Four major instructional tools facilitate learning within the sociocultural constructivist framework: scaffolding, cognitive apprenticeship, tutoring, and cooperative learning.

**(a) Scaffolding**

Scaffolding involves adjusting the level of instructional support provided to learners. As learners' competence increases, the teacher gradually reduces assistance, allowing learners to assume greater responsibility for their learning. Support is provided when necessary and withdrawn when learners demonstrate independence (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Ormrod et al., 2023).

**(b) Cognitive Apprenticeship**

Cognitive apprenticeship is an instructional approach in which teachers support learners in acquiring culturally valued skills through modeling, coaching, and guided practice. The concept of apprenticeship emphasizes active participation and the situated nature of learning within authentic contexts (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991; Dennen & Burner, 2021).

**(c) Tutoring**

Tutoring represents a basic form of cognitive apprenticeship and may occur between an adult and a learner or between a more skilled and a less skilled peer. Peer tutoring, in particular, has been shown to be effective in supporting struggling learners and promoting academic achievement through guided interaction (Topping, 2017).

**(d) Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is based on group interaction, shared experiences, and collaborative problem-solving. Activities in cooperative learning integrate principles from multiple intelligences theory, mastery learning, critical thinking, and communication skills. Effective implementation requires strong teacher commitment and careful structuring of group tasks. Learners also benefit from observational learning by modeling behaviors demonstrated by teachers and peers (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2020; Slavin, 2021).

**Core Propositions of Constructivism**

From both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, constructivism is characterized by three primary propositions. First, the purpose of learning influences what is learned and which experiences learners draw upon to construct new understandings. Second, knowledge evolves through social negotiation, whether individually or collaboratively. Third, exposure to alternative viewpoints and additional information enables learners to test, refine, and reconstruct their understanding, leading to more viable and coherent knowledge structures (Fosnot, 2013; Schunk, 2020).

**Jerome Bruner and Constructivist Theory**

In addition to Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner is a prominent psychologist associated with the constructivist tradition. Bruner's work aligns closely with cognitive constructivism, which emphasizes how individuals actively construct knowledge by integrating new information with existing cognitive structures (Bruner, 1960; Piaget, 1972). Like Piaget, Bruner focused on individual cognitive processes and the ways learners organize

and reorganize knowledge internally. Bruner's theoretical framework is grounded in the idea that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current or prior knowledge (Bruner, 1961). From this perspective, instruction should not be limited to the transmission of information; rather, it should facilitate learners' active engagement with content. Consequently, the role of the instructor is to design learning experiences that encourage learners to discover principles by themselves through exploration and inquiry. Teaching and learning, therefore, become interactive and participatory processes.

Bruner proposed three key principles of instruction. First, instruction should be concerned with experiences and contexts that make learners willing and able to learn, a concept referred to as readiness. Second, instruction should be structured in a way that allows learners to grasp complex ideas easily, which Bruner described as the spiral curriculum, where core concepts are revisited and expanded progressively. Third, instruction should be designed to promote extrapolation, enabling learners to go beyond the information given and apply knowledge to new situations (Bruner, 1960). A central instructional strategy associated with Bruner's cognitive constructivism is discovery learning. In discovery learning, teachers present learners with examples and problems, guiding them to identify patterns, relationships, and underlying principles independently (Bruner, 1961). Through this approach, learners actively engage with subject matter until they discover the structure of the discipline.

Bruner also emphasized the importance of understanding the structure of a subject. Subject structure refers to the fundamental ideas, relationships, and patterns that organize knowledge within a discipline (Bruner, 1960). According to Bruner, learning becomes more meaningful, transferable, and memorable when learners focus on these underlying structures rather than isolated facts. This principle has significant implications for classroom practice.

In applying Bruner's instructional techniques, teachers may first present examples and non-examples of a concept. For instance, when teaching the concept of mammals, examples may include humans, kangaroos, whales, cats, and dolphins, while non-examples may include chickens, fish, and penguins. Second, teachers should help learners identify connections among concepts by asking guiding questions, using diagrams, outlines, and summaries. Third, teachers may pose open-ended questions that encourage learners to search for answers independently, such as "How could the human hand be improved?" or "What is the relationship between the area of one tile and the area of the entire floor?" Finally, learners should be encouraged to make intuitive guesses, for example, by inferring the meaning of a word from its context rather than being given a direct definition.

Beyond Bruner's contributions, several core principles of constructivism underpin the teaching-learning process. Knowledge is actively constructed by individuals rather than passively received. Learning occurs as individuals attempt to make sense of their experiences and the world around them. It is both an individual and social process, shaped by interactions with others and the environment (Fosnot, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is also a self-regulated and organizational process. Individuals learn at different rates due to inherent characteristics, such as cognitive abilities, as well as environmental factors, including social interaction and cultural context. New experiences are integrated into existing cognitive structures through assimilation or lead to the creation of new structures through accommodation (Piaget, 1972). This continuous process of organization and reorganization enables learners to construct meaning.

Constructivism further holds that cognition serves to organize experience rather than to represent an objective reality. Knowledge is viewed as viable rather than absolutely valid, shaped by interpretation and personal experience (von Glasersfeld, 1995). Meaning-making is therefore subjective and context-dependent. Learning is enhanced when it is socially situated and embedded in meaningful contexts. Language plays a crucial role in this process, as thinking is often mediated through communication. Through language, learners organize ideas, articulate understanding, and extend knowledge beyond prior experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Finally, motivation is a key component of learning. The fundamental motivation for learning lies in the learner's innate desire to make sense of the world and their experiences (Bruner, 1996).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Evaluation

Evaluation is a central concept in educational research and programme assessment. According to Earnia (2016), evaluation is a systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data related to teaching and learning in order to make informed decisions that enhance learners' achievement and improve the effectiveness of educational programmes. More recent scholars describe evaluation as the comparison between intended objectives and actual outcomes, focusing on what was achieved, how it was achieved, and the extent to which programme goals were met (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017; OECD, 2020). Evaluation may be conducted at different stages of a programme and is generally classified into two main types: formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation occurs during the implementation of a programme and is aimed at monitoring progress, identifying challenges, and making timely improvements to enhance learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2018). It supports continuous improvement by providing feedback to learners, teachers, and programme implementers. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, is conducted at the end of a programme to determine its overall effectiveness, merit, or

efficiency (Scriven, 2019). In educational systems, summative evaluation is commonly used for certification, grading, and decision-making regarding learners' academic achievement. In Cameroon, summative evaluation is reflected in official examinations such as the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), the General Certificate of Education (GCE), and the *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle* (CAP).

In this study, the evaluation focuses on assessing the effectiveness of the Special Bilingual Education Programme in achieving its stated goals and intended outcomes. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether learners graduating from the programme attain functional bilingualism and are able to integrate successfully into the labour market or pursue further education. The overarching objective of the Special Bilingual Education Programme is to ensure that all enrolled learners become bilingual, regardless of their region of origin. Cameroon operates a dual educational system comprising two English-speaking regions and eight French-speaking regions. By analysing learners' performance in official examinations, it becomes possible to assess achievements across the two sub-systems of education and to identify areas requiring adjustment, innovation, or policy reform. Such evaluation provides evidence-based insights that can guide decision-making and improve the quality and relevance of bilingual education in Cameroon.

Formative evaluation is integral with learning, while summative evaluation may determine rather than reflect the nature and methods of the curriculum. Formative evaluation gives the teacher and the learner feedback about how learning objectives are attained. Tchombe (2019) encourages formative evaluation since we need to know and recognize that learners have individual differences. She adds that the focus of assessment is on recall of course content, which helps in understanding individual learning problems. Evaluation stresses the learning process, how concepts and skills are learnt and information retrieved, rather than on the acquisition of factual knowledge. Tchombe (2019:238) holds that evaluation allows for comparison based on standards. She identifies three types of comparisons: Norm-referenced assessment, self-referenced assessment, and criterion-referenced assessment.

Norm-referenced assessment concerns the performance of pupils in the same class and year, which may be compared. Further comparison can be based on norms of performance for a specific age group. Self-referenced assessment permits the comparison of pupils' previous standard of performance. Report cards exemplify this model. Criterion-referenced assessment involves comparisons in this model between pupils' performance and set criteria for the achievement of learning objectives. Evaluation leads to certification, classification, and comparison with other pupils.

Evaluation can also serve the function of: increasing pupils' motivation; predicting individual pupils' potential; diagnosing learning and diagnosing teaching.

### Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation seeks to determine the extent to which the broad objectives of a programme have been achieved. According to Tchombe (2019, p. 240), summative evaluation focuses on the purposes, progress, and outcomes of the teaching-learning process. It is essentially judgmental in nature and often carries a certain degree of threat, as learners may have little familiarity with the evaluator, and failure can have far-reaching consequences for them. Compared to formative evaluation, summative evaluation is generally more objective and outcome-oriented. Tchombe (2019) further identifies several assumptions that underlie summative evaluation, namely that:

- The programme's objectives are achievable;
- The teaching-learning process has been conducted efficiently.
- Teacher-learner-material interactions have been conducive to learning;
- Teaching techniques, learning materials, and audio-visual aids are adequate and appropriately utilized; and
- There is uniformity in classroom conditions for all learners.

Contemporary evaluation scholars support this perspective, emphasizing that summative evaluation is primarily concerned with accountability, decision-making, and the demonstration of results to stakeholders (Scriven, 2018; Rossi, Lipsey, & Henry, 2019; OECD, 2020).

### Types of Evaluation Based on Timing

Unlike monitoring, which is continuous, evaluation is conducted periodically at specific stages of a project or programme. The main distinguishing characteristic of evaluation is therefore its timing and purpose at different phases of implementation. Based on the period in which it is conducted, five major types of evaluation can be identified: formative evaluation, mid-term evaluation, summative evaluation, ex-post evaluation, and meta-evaluation (Patton, 2015; OECD, 2020).

#### 1. Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation, sometimes referred to as a baseline study, is carried out before the actual implementation of a project or programme. Its primary purpose is to assess the existing situation within the target population in order to inform project design and focus. Formative evaluation serves as the foundation upon which subsequent evaluations are built, as it establishes benchmarks for comparison. Moreover, the tools and methodologies used during formative evaluation are often retained and applied during later stages such as mid-term and summative evaluations (Rossi et al., 2019; Patton, 2015).

#### 2. Mid-Term Evaluation

Mid-term evaluation, also known as a mid-term review, is conducted halfway through project implementation. Its main objective is to assess progress toward the set goals and objectives and to inform management decisions regarding adjustments in implementation strategies. Mid-term evaluations enhance organizational learning and confidence in project strategies; however, when performance indicators suggest limited progress, they serve as a basis for corrective action. For long-term projects, periodic evaluations may be conducted prior to the formal mid-term review, depending on available resources and managerial commitment (OECD, 2020).

#### 3. Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation, also referred to as end-term or project completion evaluation, is conducted at the conclusion of a project. It focuses on assessing outputs and immediate outcomes by comparing end-line results with baseline data. This type of evaluation informs stakeholders about the overall success of the project and contributes to documenting lessons learned and best practices. Summative evaluations are often conducted by the project team, although external involvement may be included to enhance objectivity (Scriven, 2018; Rossi et al., 2019).

#### 4. Ex-Post Evaluation

Ex-post evaluation, also known as post-implementation evaluation, is frequently confused with summative evaluation; however, the two are distinct. While both occur after project completion, ex-post evaluation is conducted after a longer time interval and focuses primarily on long-term impacts and sustainability. It is usually carried out by external evaluators to ensure independence and objectivity. Ex-post evaluation is often the final evaluation associated with a project and provides deeper insight into its enduring effects (OECD, 2020).

#### 5. Meta-Evaluation

Meta-evaluation refers to the systematic evaluation of evaluations. It draws upon multiple evaluation studies conducted either within the same organization or by different institutions on similar initiatives. The purpose of meta-evaluation is to assess the quality, credibility, and consistency of evaluation findings and to establish confidence in evaluation conclusions. According to Scriven (2018), meta-evaluation plays a critical role in strengthening evaluation practice and promoting evidence-based decision-making.

### Bilingualism and Bilingual Education

Bilingualism refers to the ability of an individual to understand and use two languages with varying degrees of proficiency (Grosjean, 2010). The term originates from the Latin words *bi*, meaning "two," and *lingua*, meaning "tongue" or "language." A *mother tongue* (or first language) is the language acquired naturally from early childhood within the family and community environment.

Multilingualism, by contrast, refers to the ability to use more than two languages and is increasingly common in many societies worldwide (UNESCO, 2023).

Contrary to earlier misconceptions, bilingualism is now recognized as a global norm rather than an exception. Research indicates that a substantial proportion of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual, particularly in Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe (García & Wei, 2014). Young people are especially likely to be bilingual due to increased mobility, migration, and educational policies promoting second-language acquisition (OECD, 2021).

### **Bilingual Education**

Bilingual education involves the use of two languages as media of instruction for teaching academic content. Typically, instruction is delivered in both the learner's first language and a second or official language, with the proportion of each language varying according to the educational model adopted (Cummins, 2017). Unlike foreign-language instruction, bilingual education integrates language learning with content learning and forms part of the formal school curriculum (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Educators widely regard bilingual education as a pathway to functional bilingualism and biliteracy, enabling learners to develop cognitive, linguistic, and academic competence in both languages. According to Cummins (2017), strong literacy skills in the first language support the acquisition of additional languages and enhance overall academic achievement.

### **Cognitive and Educational Benefits of Bilingualism**

A growing body of research demonstrates that bilingualism offers significant cognitive advantages. Bilingual individuals tend to show enhanced executive functioning, including improved attention control, problem-solving skills, multitasking ability, and cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2018). These benefits are particularly evident in children exposed to bilingual learning environments during early childhood. Studies have shown that bilingual learners often outperform monolingual peers in tasks requiring selective attention and mental flexibility (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). The ability to switch between languages trains the brain to manage competing information, which supports more efficient learning processes.

### **Social, Emotional, and Cultural Benefits**

Bilingualism also supports social and emotional development. By enabling communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries, bilingualism fosters social inclusion, intercultural understanding, and stronger community ties (UNESCO, 2023). Bilingual children are better equipped to maintain connections with their family heritage while engaging meaningfully with the broader society (García & Wei, 2014). The United States Department of Education (2020) emphasizes that bilingual education strengthens

learners' identity development and promotes positive self-esteem by valuing linguistic and cultural diversity. Bilingual learners often develop stronger communication skills and greater empathy, which support relationship-building within schools and communities.

### **Long-Term and Economic Benefits**

In an increasingly globalized economy, bilingualism is a valuable asset. Proficiency in more than one language enhances employability, access to international labor markets, and professional mobility (OECD, 2021). Bilingual and biliterate adults have broader career opportunities in fields such as education, diplomacy, tourism, journalism, translation, and international business. Beyond economic outcomes, bilingualism has been linked to long-term health benefits. Research suggests that bilingualism may delay the onset of age-related cognitive decline, including Alzheimer's disease and dementia, by several years (Bialystok, 2018). This cognitive reserve is attributed to lifelong engagement in complex language management tasks.

### **Early Childhood and Lifelong Learning**

Research consistently shows that children benefit most when bilingual exposure begins in early childhood. Early bilingual education enhances learning potential, supports academic success, and facilitates the acquisition of additional languages later in life (Cummins, 2017). Although adults can also benefit from learning a second language, the cognitive and linguistic advantages are strongest among early bilinguals. Bilingualism and bilingual education contribute significantly to cognitive development, academic achievement, social integration, and lifelong success. As societies become increasingly multilingual, promoting bilingual education is both an educational necessity and a strategic investment in human capital development.

### **Curriculum Evaluation**

Curriculum evaluation fundamentally involves the systematic provision of information to support decision-making at various stages of curriculum development. It encompasses the selection of criteria, the collection and analysis of data, and the use of information to judge the value and effectiveness of an educational programme and its procedures (Posavac & Carey, 2021). Evaluation is a broad and comprehensive concept that goes beyond standardized tests to include all methods of determining educational outcomes and the quality of curricular components (Floyd & St John, 2020). Importantly, curriculum evaluation is an integral part of the curriculum development process, not a "tail-end process" that occurs only after implementation. Rather, evaluation is continuous and iterative: planning is informed by evaluation findings, and evaluation, in turn, is guided by planning objectives (Tyler, 2013; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2021). Although closely related to planning, evaluation maintains its distinct identity and purpose within the cycle of curriculum improvement.

The significance of curriculum evaluation lies in its ability to determine the value and appropriateness of the curriculum itself. Key questions include whether the curriculum is suitable for the specific group of learners with whom it is used; whether the instructional methods selected are the most effective in light of the desired objectives; whether the content and subject matter represent the best possible selections; and whether recommended instructional materials are the most appropriate and effective for achieving the intended educational outcomes (Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead, 2020).

### **Bilingualism in the World (State of Affairs): Bilingual Education and Immersion in Canada**

Bilingual education in Canada has a long history, with French immersion programmes being among the most studied models worldwide. Originally developed in several provinces, early French immersion programmes were implemented in boards such as Ottawa, Toronto, and Charlottetown, while partial immersion variants were introduced later in regions like Elgin County and Peel County (Dicks & Genesee, 2017). In these immersion formats, instruction in French varied from half-day to full-day schedules, with French serving as the medium of instruction for most subjects, including language arts (Dicks & Genesee, 2017). At programme entry, many students were unilingual English speakers, and participation was optional, primarily serving the English-speaking majority population (Dicks & Genesee, 2017). A key principle across these programmes was that immersion students studied the same academic content as their peers in regular English-medium programmes (Dicks & Genesee, 2017).

The Canadian immersion model has been the focus of ongoing scholarly inquiry, including examinations of linguistic outcomes and multilingual identity formation among participants (Roy, 2020). Critics and advocates alike note that immersion can foster bilingual proficiency without compromising core academic content, although access and equity remain areas of discussion (Roy, 2020).

In the United States, many bilingual education programmes targeting students whose home language is not English gradually increase English instruction over time. These are often termed “transitional bilingual education” programmes, as they transition learners from their minority home language to English, the dominant language of instruction, commerce, and daily life (Krashen, 2025). Such transitional models contrast with Canada’s immersion approach by prioritizing eventual English dominance rather than balanced bilingual proficiency.

Bilingual and immersion education is not limited to North America. For example, European bilingual programmes such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Spain and other countries integrate subject matter with a second language to enhance both language competence and content understanding (Pérez Cañado, 2024).

CLIL illustrates the diversity of bilingual education approaches globally and highlights how bilingual pedagogy continues to evolve beyond traditional two-language immersion models (Pérez Cañado, 2024).

### **English and French**

A widely implemented form of bilingual education in Canada is the French immersion programme, designed primarily for the English-speaking majority to gain access to French, one of Canada’s official languages (Tremblay & Gardner, 2021). In French immersion programmes, at least half of classroom instruction occurs in the second language (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2020). Research on French immersion has typically compared the academic progress of learners enrolled in immersion with that of their peers in regular English programmes. Such research is grounded in the philosophy that immersion students should receive an education equivalent to that of students in the English programme, differing only in the language of instruction (Baker, 2022).

Regarding French immersion in Ontario, the specific programme examined involved a focus on classroom processes that is, the actual instructional practices used. Immersion education operates on the principle that students receive the same curriculum as in regular English classrooms, but the medium of instruction and language of interaction is French (Swain & Lapkin, 2021). The pedagogical technique employed was the language experience approach. In this study, experimental designs were used to introduce reading in English in Grade 2 via the language experience (analytical) approach, while the comparison method used in the control classes was the phonics (synthetic) approach. Both groups began reading in French during Grade 1, the second language.

The comparative study aimed to evaluate the relative effectiveness of these approaches because educators perceived that the phonics approach to English reading might be confusing students who were still mastering French phonics in Grade 2 (Cummings & Davies, 2020). Phonics instruction involves teaching learners to read by identifying individual sounds rather than whole words. Data collected at the end of Grade 3 indicated that English reading comprehension scores and linguistic analysis outcomes were significantly higher for the language experience group compared to the phonics group (Lambert, 2023).

An analytical approach to reading instruction is equally valid for teaching reading in French. In this approach, learners’ oral language production forms the basis for instruction, using familiar utterances to support reading development. Subsequent instruction introduces global sentence recognition and comprehension of meaning (Clark & Medina, 2022).

In educational evaluation, comparing one group of learners with another is common; however, selecting an appropriate comparison group remains

contentious. A key challenge in testing students is determining which learners to include. Typically, a control group is selected that is similar in all respects to immersion students except that they are enrolled in the regular English programme (Smith & Lo, 2021). Yet, immersion learners may differ systematically for example, they may be more extroverted, verbal, or better able to cope with academic demands.

Control variables such as socioeconomic status (SES) and intelligence quotient (IQ) significantly influence academic achievement and must be accounted for (Hart & Risley, 2021). When evaluating relative performance, researchers must ask: How do students in the experimental programme perform compared to peers in standard programmes or other experimental approaches? If the immersion programme enrolls children primarily from working-class families, corresponding comparison groups should also consist of children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, ideally from the same or demographically comparable schools.

Interpretations of bilingual education often conclude that bilingually educated students perform as well as, better than, or worse than they would have in regular English instruction. The use of comparison groups allows researchers to infer relative performance levels between instructional contexts. Standardized assessments aligned with curriculum goals, such as the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) or the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), are commonly used to measure English language competencies (vocabulary, reading, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization) (Brown & Park, 2022). A central question remains: How do immersion learners perform relative to how they would have fared outside the immersion programme?

In the Cameroon context, Echu (2019) argues that official bilingualism (English and French) results from a shared political will between anglophone and francophone communities to use both languages within the same political entity. Official bilingualism in Cameroon is thus seen as a unifying and integrative political strategy. In contrast, Canada's bilingual policy emerged from prolonged linguistic conflict, particularly Quebec nationalism, leading to the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–1967). The Commission's recommendations informed the Official Languages Act of 1969, which institutionalized English and French as equal official languages in federal institutions (Hornberger, 2020).

Whereas bilingualism in Cameroon was instituted by authorities to achieve reunification, in Canada it followed sustained advocacy by the francophone minority. Demographically, Cameroon's population comprises approximately 20% English-speaking and 80% French-speaking individuals, while in Canada, francophones constitute about 25% and anglophones 75% of the population (Echu, 2019;

Statistics Canada, 2024). Despite these differences, both countries share complexities associated with maintaining and evaluating bilingual education within multilingual national contexts.

### **The Effect of Socio-Economic Status (SES) on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Learners**

SES is a multidimensional construct that blends economic and sociological measures of an individual's work experience and social standing relative to others, typically based on income, education, and occupational status (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2022). To investigate family SES, researchers commonly examine household income, parental education, and occupation, as well as personal attributes when assessing an individual's SES (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Generally, SES is categorized into three levels: high, middle, and low to classify individuals or families based on these variables. Parental responsibility in education is crucial, and parental SES can significantly influence a child's academic achievement. The environment in which children are raised affects their attitudes toward learning, motivation, and overall educational outcomes (Sirin, 2005). Rothstein (2012) argues that SES not only affects academic performance but also impacts the ability of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to compete effectively with peers from higher SES backgrounds, even when exposed to similar educational environments.

Education serves as a fundamental tool for individual and societal development. Sabzwari (2004) emphasizes that education broadens perspectives, enhances moral judgment, and enables individuals to utilize their environment optimally for personal and communal advancement. Empirical studies support the positive correlation between SES and academic outcomes. Suleman et al. (2012) found that children from higher SES backgrounds tend to achieve better academic performance than those from lower SES families. Similarly, Saifi (2011) reported that parental education, occupation, and home resources significantly affect learners' academic performance. Eamon (2005) also revealed that students from lower SES families tend to underperform academically due to limited access to educational resources, highlighting a negative correlation between low SES and academic achievement.

A study conducted in the Ganderbal District of Jammu and Kashmir investigated the relationship between SES and the academic performance of secondary school learners across different zones (Rajibir et al., 2013). The study employed a descriptive-analytical design and sampled 120 learners through random sampling. Standardized socio-economic scales and prior academic records were used for data collection. Analyses using mean, standard deviation, mean difference, and t-tests revealed that learners from high SES families performed significantly better than those from low or middle SES families. However, differences between middle and low SES learners were not statistically significant.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study adopts a survey and correlational research design. The design focuses on individuals, groups, institutions, methods, and materials in order to describe, compare, analyze, and interpret phenomena as they occur in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The survey approach is employed to enable the study of a large and statistically significant population, from which substantial quantities of data can be collected and meaningful generalizations made. The survey is descriptive in nature, as it allows data to be collected at a specific point in time and facilitates the systematic description of events or phenomena, as well as the identification of characteristics upon which comparisons can be made (Bryman, 2016). This design enhances objectivity and supports the generalization of findings to the wider population. Descriptive research primarily addresses the “what” aspect of the research objectives by providing an accurate portrayal of existing conditions and relationships among variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

### Study Area

This study was conducted within the scope of secondary education in the Republic of Cameroon. According to recent estimates, the population of Cameroon was approximately 30.64 million inhabitants in 2026, reflecting significant growth from earlier estimates (Worldometer, 2026). The rapid population increase continues to intensify demand for educational services at all levels, particularly in secondary education where the age group of learners is expanding. Cameroon currently has numerous government secondary schools as well as a large number of private and lay-private institutions, which together help to absorb the growing number of pupils transitioning from primary to post-primary levels. These diverse providers have played a role in reducing the educational pressure on public services and expanding access to secondary schooling. The Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, the design and regulation of curricula, and the overall supervision of secondary schools across the country (World Education News & Reviews, 2021). MINESEC’s mandate includes setting educational standards, regulating both public and private secondary institutions, and ensuring that teaching and learning align with national objectives for academic quality and student development.

### Population Samples

Sampling technique refers to the procedure through which a subset of individuals is selected from a population in order to draw conclusions about the whole population (Bryman, 2016). In this study, a simple random sampling technique was adopted to select learners, teachers, and inspectors involved in the implementation of the Special Bilingual Education Programme (SBEP) in secondary schools

in Cameroon. In correlational studies, an important consideration in sample selection is the identification of a population that is meaningful and from which data can be reliably obtained on the variables under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This consideration informed the researcher’s decision to focus on selected public and private secondary schools implementing the SBEP. The total sample size comprised eight hundred (800) learners, in addition to selected parents, teachers (both male and female), and inspectors. A relatively large sample size was chosen because larger samples tend to increase statistical power and enhance the generalizability and reliability of research findings (Taherdoost, 2016).

The sampling technique constituted a structured plan specifying how the sample was drawn from the target population. Specifically, simple random sampling without replacement, a subtype of probability sampling, was used. Sampling without replacement implies that once an element is selected, it is not returned to the sampling pool, thereby ensuring that each participant is selected only once (Bryman, 2016). To operationalize this technique, the names of 102 bilingual secondary schools were written on separate slips of paper and placed in a basket. After thorough shuffling, the researcher personally conducted the draw and randomly selected forty (40) schools. This procedure ensured fairness and equal chances of selection for all schools in the population. Although it would be ideal for research to include the entire population, this was impractical due to the large size of the population. Consequently, sampling was considered appropriate because it is time-efficient, cost-effective, and allows for manageable access to participants while still yielding valid and meaningful results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### Techniques for Data Analysis

Two complementary approaches were employed to ensure robust analysis of the data collected from the field: quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach provided empirical evidence for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses formulated at the earlier stages of the study. This approach involved the computation of frequencies, percentages, and the identification of relationships and differences among variables. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and organize the data, including frequencies and percentages derived from questionnaire items on variables such as age, gender, occupation, language spoken at home, parents’ socio-economic status (SES), parental involvement, and environmental factors influencing academic performance. In addition, inferential statistical techniques were applied to test the hypotheses and draw conclusions from the sample to the wider population. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23, which is widely recognized for its reliability in social science research. The use of a descriptive survey design, combined with inferential statistics, enabled a systematic interpretation of the data and enhanced

the validity of the study's findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Field, 2018; Bryman, 2021).

The data obtained from interviews conducted with teachers and parents of students enrolled in the Special Bilingual Education Programme (SBEP) were transcribed using the interview guide in line with the observation schedules. Participants expressed diverse views and perspectives across the various rubrics of the schedule. Relevant excerpts from the face-to-face interviews, narratives, and field notes were carefully recorded to capture the context and depth of participants' experiences. The findings were systematically analyzed and discussed, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were made. Finally, areas for further research were identified.

### Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$  or  $r_s$ ) is a non-parametric statistical measure used to assess the strength and direction of the association between two variables measured at the ordinal level or when the assumptions of parametric correlation are violated. According to Field (2018), Spearman's correlation is appropriate when data are ranked or when the relationship between variables is monotonic but not necessarily linear. Similarly, Pallant (2020) explains that the coefficient evaluates how well the relationship between two variables can

be described using a monotonic function, making it robust against the influence of outliers.

The Spearman correlation coefficient is obtained by transforming the raw scores into ranks and applying the following formula:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum D^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

- $D$  represents the difference between the ranks of paired observations,
- $n$  denotes the number of paired ranks.

This method was selected in the present study because it minimizes the effect of extreme values, which could otherwise distort the magnitude and interpretation of the relationship between variables (Akoglu, 2018). Consequently, Spearman's correlation is particularly suitable for educational and social science research where ordinal data and non-normal distributions are common.

### Research Question

How effective is the implementation of the SBEP impacting the academic achievement of learners enrolled in this educational programme?

## FINDINGS

### Descriptive Statistics

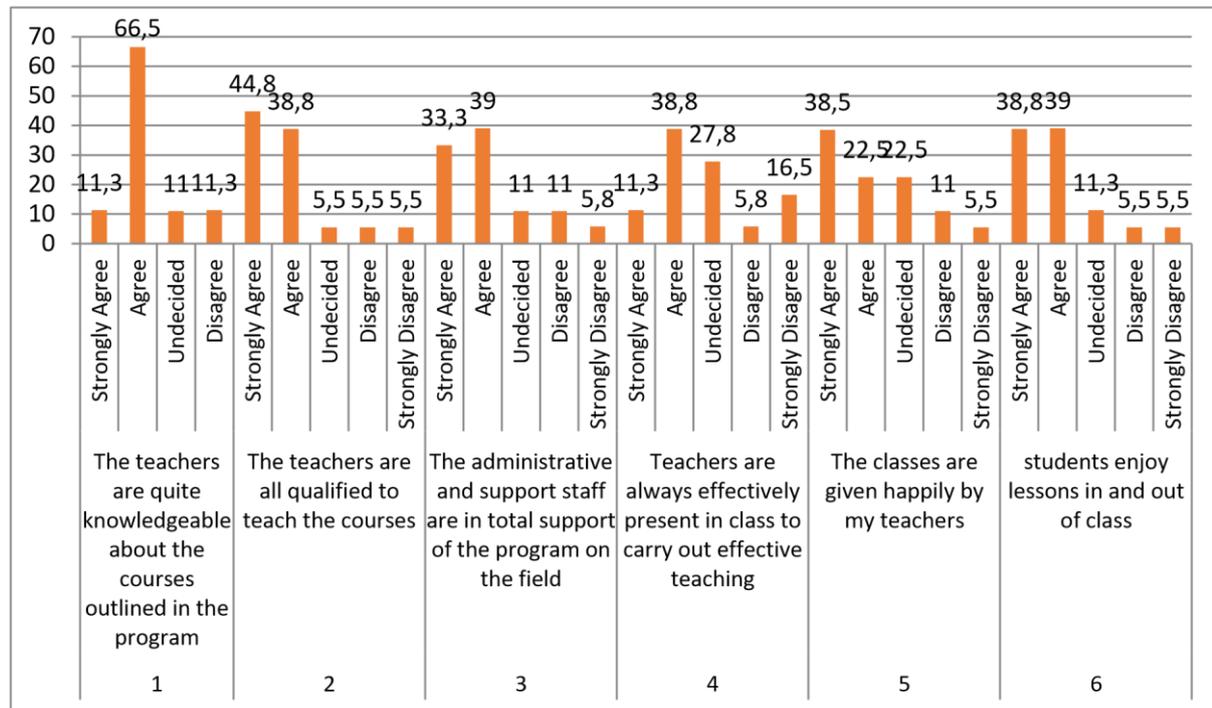
**TABLE 2:** Evaluation Processes.

Sn	Items	Modalities	Frequency	Percentage
1	There are too many assignments involved in the programme.	Strongly Agree	45	11.3
		Agree	156	39.0
		Undecided	89	22.3
		Disagree	110	27.5
2	The many evaluations given in this SBEP are beneficial to learners.	Strongly Agree	134	33.5
		Agree	110	27.5
		Undecided	23	5.8
		Disagree	88	22.0
		Strongly Disagree	45	11.3
3	The intensive English is too difficult to some learners .	Strongly Agree	242	60.5
		Agree	136	34.0
		Undecided	22	5.5
4	The sequential test and evaluations are good for the mastery of programmes domain.	Strongly Agree	112	28.0
		Agree	111	27.8
		Undecided	66	16.5
		Disagree	67	16.8
		Strongly Disagree	44	11.0
5	I prefer home works to class test given by teachers.	Strongly Agree	132	33.0
		Agree	112	28.0
		Undecided	45	11.3
		Disagree	22	5.5
		Strongly Disagree	89	22.3

Source: Field Data, 2026.

The table above presents respondents' views on evaluation processes. For the first item, only 11.3% and 39% of respondents agreed that many assignments are given by teachers in the training programmes; however, the majority of respondents disagreed with this statement. This suggests that learners' performance could be improved if teachers engaged learners in more supplementary exercises. In the second item, 33.5% and 27.5% of respondents agreed that the many assignments given in the SBEP are beneficial to learners. Despite this, 22% and 11.3% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

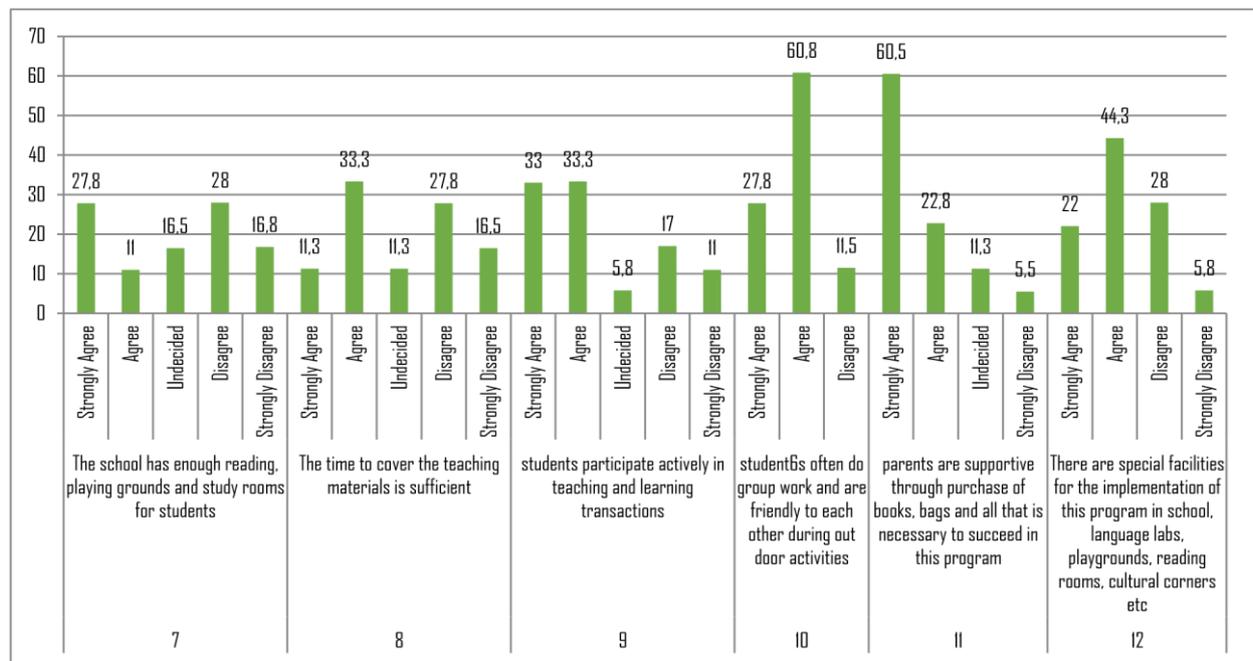
For the third item, most respondents agreed that Intensive English is too difficult for some learners. This may be explained by the predominance of the French language, which is commonly spoken at home, in society, and even within the school environment. In the fourth item, 27% and 28.7% of respondents agreed that sequential tests and evaluations are effective for mastering programme content. Finally, more than 60% of respondents indicated a preference for homework over classroom tests.



**FIGURE 1:** Histogram on programme implementation.  
 Source: Field Data, 2026.

The graph above present respondents' views on the implementation of Special Bilingual Programmes in secondary schools. For the first item, although 11.3% and 66.5% of respondents agreed that teachers are knowledgeable about the courses outlined in the programme, 11.0% and 11.3% disagreed. This suggests that not all teachers are sufficiently conversant with the Special Bilingual Programme in secondary schools. Regarding the second item, the majority of respondents (44.8% and 38.8%) agreed that teachers are academically qualified to teach the courses. However, effective programme implementation goes beyond academic readiness alone. Other complementary factors such as teachers' attitudes towards the subject and learners, psychological dispositions, and social relationships also play a crucial role in teaching effectiveness. For the third item, 33.3% and 39.0% of respondents agreed that administrative and

support staff fully support the programme in practice. This level of institutional support may partly explain why learner performance in the Special Bilingual Programme appears higher than that of learners in regular programmes. In the fourth item, nearly 75% of respondents reported that teachers are consistently present and effective in carrying out teaching activities, while approximately 25% disagreed. Finally, in the fifth and sixth items, the majority of respondents indicated that both teachers and learners actively and enthusiastically participate in the teaching-learning process. Teachers remain the central drivers of the educational production function. Their competence, commitment, and approach to curriculum implementation can either enhance or undermine the effectiveness of the education system, particularly when the quality of curriculum delivery is inadequate.

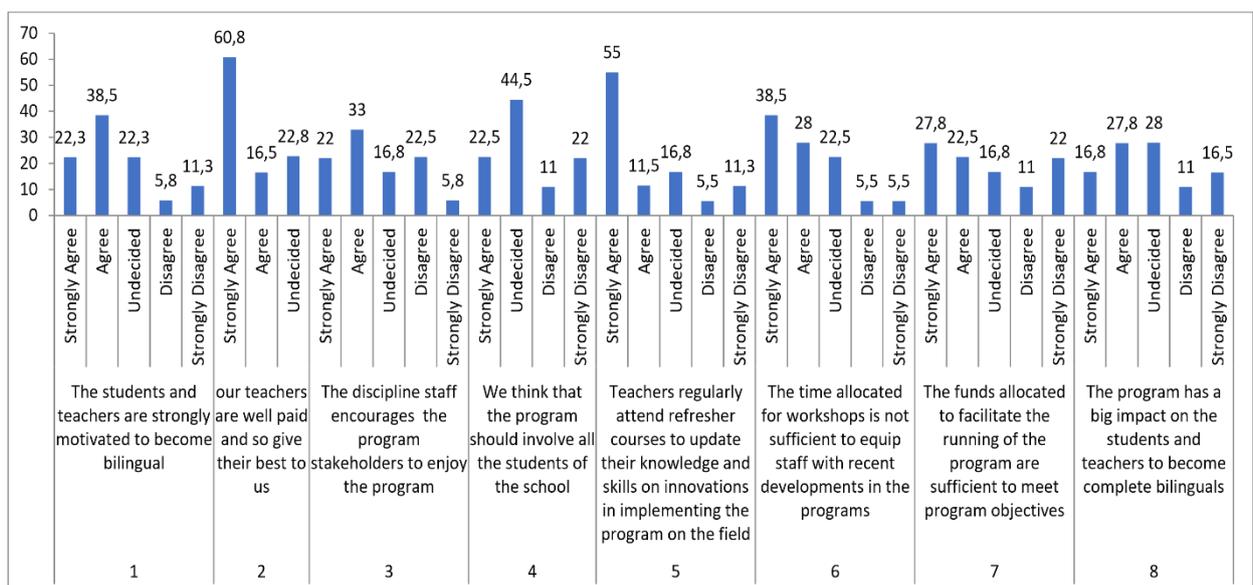


**FIGURE 2:** Histogram on programmes implementation (continues).  
Source: Field Data, 2026.

In the seventh item, 27.8% and 11.0% of respondents agreed that schools have adequate reading facilities and playgrounds, while 16.5% and 28.0% disagreed. This indicates that learners have limited access to school libraries and recreational facilities, which may adversely affect their academic performance. Subsequently, in Item 8, 11.3% and 33.3% of respondents agreed that the time allocated to cover the teaching programme is sufficient, whereas 27.8% and 16.5% disagreed. This suggests that the instructional time available may be inadequate for effective programme coverage.

In Item 9, 33.0% and 33.3% of respondents agreed that learners actively participate in teaching-learning activities, while 17.0% and 18.0% disagreed, indicating moderate learner engagement

in classroom interactions. In Item 10, the majority of respondents agreed that group work is a very effective instructional strategy for enhancing teaching and learning in bilingual programmes at the secondary school level. In Item 11, more than 80% of respondents acknowledged that parents are consistently supportive in providing the necessary learning materials to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process. Parental collaboration in education is crucial for improving academic performance and mitigating negative learner behaviours. Finally, the findings reveal a significant shortage in the availability and utilization of special facilities required for the effective implementation of the programme in schools, including language laboratories, playgrounds, reading rooms, and cultural corners.



**FIGURE 3:** Histogram on Respondents Data Learners and Teachers Motivation.  
Source: Field Data, 2026.

The graph above present respondents' statistics on learner–teacher motivation. For the first item, about 60% of respondents agreed that learners and teachers are strongly motivated to become bilingual, while approximately 17% disagreed with this assertion. Meanwhile, 22.5% of respondents remained neutral. This situation is not entirely favorable for the objectives of the training programmes, as it suggests that further orientation is required to enhance learners' full integration into the programmes. In the second item, more than 70% of respondents indicated that teachers are well paid and, as a result, give their best to promote quality teaching. For the third item, although some learners indicated that they enjoyed the programmes due to teachers' discipline, about 30% of respondents disagreed, suggesting that teachers are not sufficiently disciplined. In the fourth item, 67% of learners agreed that the special bilingual programmes should be integrative for all learners within the secondary school system. In the fifth item,

66.5% of respondents agreed that teachers regularly attend refresher courses to update their knowledge and skills on innovations in programme implementation, while fewer than 20% disagreed. In the sixth item, 38% and 28% of respondents agreed that the time allocated for workshops is insufficient to equip staff with recent developments in the programme. Furthermore, 22.5% and 27.8% of respondents indicated that funds allocated to run the programmes are inadequate and not efficiently utilized to optimize programme objectives. Despite these challenges, 16.8% and 27.8% of respondents agreed that the programme has a significant impact on learners and teachers in becoming fully bilingual. The second part of this chapter presents inferential statistics used to verify the formulated hypotheses. Hypotheses are tentative responses to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Only after empirical verification can they be accepted or rejected based on established statistical rules and procedures.

**TABLE 3:** Correlations Evaluation Processes and Learners\Performances in Bilingual programmes in secondary schools.

			<b>Evaluation Processes</b>	<b>Learners Performances</b>
Spearman's rho	Contents of Curricula	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	.664**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	400	400
	Graduates'dispositions,	Correlation Coefficient	,664	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	400	400

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above presents the correlation between evaluation processes and learners' performance. The correlation coefficient of 0.664 indicates that teaching, instructional methods, and instructional materials collectively influence learners' performance in bilingual programmes by 66.4%.

The two-tailed significance level is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between the quality of teachers and learners' performance in bilingual programmes in secondary schools.

**TABLE 4:** Correlations on Programme Implementation and Learners Performances.

			<b>Programme Implementation</b>	<b>Learners Performances</b>
Spearman's rho	Contents of Curricula	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	.699**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	400	400
	Graduates'dispositions,	Correlation Coefficient	,696**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	400	400

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table above indicates that programme implementation significantly influences learners' performance in bilingual programmes in government secondary schools. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level, indicating statistical significance. The correlation coefficient of 0.696 suggests that programme implementation

accounts for 69.6% of the variation in learners' performance. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that programme implementation has a significant influence on learners' performance in bilingual programmes in government secondary schools.

### Frequency of Monitoring by Inspectors

Teachers reported that they are often inspected by regional inspectors at least once every three months (quarterly). They noted that during seminars or workshops organized by officials from the Ministry of Secondary Education, the time is usually insufficient to address all the pedagogical concerns of participants. During such seminars, new materials are provided, and new teaching techniques and methods are shared with participants. Teachers also observed that the English language textbook used for teaching English is the same for non-bilingual learners *Interactions in English* and therefore does not address any unique aspects of the language requirements in the bilingual programme. For literature in the Special Bilingual Education Programmes, the textbooks used include:

- **Prose:** *Born Before Her Time*
- **Drama:** *Visiting America*
- **Poetry:** *Authentic Poetry Level 2*

It should be noted that some of these textbooks are also used in the Anglophone sub-system of education in Cameroon.

**Interviewer:** Researcher

**Interviewer:** Madam (Teacher of Intensive English to French-speaking learners)

**Researcher:** Did you receive any special training to teach in the programme? If yes, how were you posted to teach in this SBEP programme?

**Teacher:** Thank you for this question. No, I did not receive any special training. While at the ENS (Higher Teachers Training College), we were taught pedagogy in general, without emphasis on a specific programme. I am not bilingual, but I was assigned by the school administration to teach courses in this special bilingual education programme when it was introduced in our school.

**Researcher:** Thank you for your response. Now, do you know and fully understand the objective of the SBEP programme, and is it easy to attain this objective?

**Teacher:** Thank you for this interesting question. I believe the main objective of the SBEP is to train young learners to become proficient bilinguals, allowing them to reap the benefits of bilingualism. However, some of my colleagues feel that only bilingual teachers should have been assigned to teach this programme.

**Researcher:** Are you aware of any government funds available to support the activities of the SBEP in your school, or at the level of the inspectorate or regional delegations responsible for promoting bilingualism?

**Teacher:** Hmm, no, I have no idea about the existence of such funds. However, during the celebrations marking Bilingualism Week, which takes place every first Friday of February, the focal

point responsible for coordinating bilingualism in the school submits a detailed programme of activities to the school principal, along with a proposed budget for the week's activities.

### Transcript Number 2

**Gender:** Female

**Class Taught:** Terminale, Form 4 Bilingual

**Subject:** English Language to French-speaking learners

**Teaching Experience:** 11 years

**Place of Interview:** Science Laboratory, GBHS Emana – Yaoundé (10:00 am – 11:30 am)

**Researcher:** Good morning, Madam. Thank you for accepting to take part in this interview. Your insights will contribute significantly to improving the quality of the SBEP programme in your school. What criteria were used to post you to teach in the SBEP, and are you a bilingual teacher?

**Teacher:** I am an English language teacher, a graduate of the Higher Teachers Training College, Yaoundé, and I was posted to teach English to French-speaking learners at GBHS Emana. No, I am not bilingual. However, we are often trained through workshops, either termly or annually, to handle the difficulties learners face and to meet modern teaching challenges in our area of specialization.

**Researcher:** How do you cope with the difficulties faced by learners from French-speaking backgrounds?

**Teacher:** The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) using real-life situations is very effective. It teaches all four language skills irrespective of the learners' sociological background. The teacher works slowly, gives many examples, and asks many questions so that learners construct their own knowledge. We are instructed not to translate words, but to use real-life examples that help learners understand the concepts.

**Researcher:** Are you aware of any funds allocated for the running of the SBEP in your school? If not, how are activities for National Bilingualism Day conducted?

**Teacher:** No, I am not aware of any dedicated funds. The only funding occurs during the week of activities marking National Bilingualism Day. The school focal point, together with staff, generates a programme of activities, which is submitted to the principal and the PTA for financial and material support. Activities include poetry recitation, traditional dances, modeling by learners, essay writing competitions, oral communication exercises, and distribution of symbolic prizes. Unfortunately, the prizes are not substantial enough to significantly motivate learners.

**Researcher:** Do you master the objective of the SBEP programme? And is it being attained over the years?

**Teacher:** Yes. The programme aims to train young Cameroonian learners to be proficient in both official languages. Admission is selective; learners take a placement test in Form One or “Sixième” class, and only successful candidates follow the programme through to the end, which can last four, five, or seven years. My experience has shown that these learners consistently perform the best in all subjects and achieve the highest results in official examinations.

**Researcher:** Do your colleagues master the contents of the CBA teaching method?

**Teacher:** Personally, I do not have problems with the CBA approach. It helps tailor lessons to learners’ levels and environments. However, many colleagues find it difficult to implement. Some inspectors also do not fully understand it, which makes supervision less effective.

**Researcher:** How often do you assess learners, and which methods do you use?

**Teacher:** We assess learners weekly. Written examinations are administered once per term, meaning three terminal evaluations per year. The CBA and Ministry inspectors require evaluations after every sequence (every six weeks). Learners are also assessed orally on a daily basis, as language proficiency improves with daily practice.

**Researcher:** How often are your classes visited by inspectors, and do you attend seminars or pedagogic workshops?

**Teacher:** Supervision occurs twice a year. Inspectors and regional coordinators organize pedagogic days, usually at a central school like Lycée Général Leclerc, Yaoundé. Unfortunately, one day is too short to address all issues adequately. The frequency depends on teacher and inspector availability.

**Researcher:** Are there specific challenges you face in teaching?

**Teacher:** Yes. The allocated hours for Literature Awareness are insufficient. Teachers handle both English Language and Literature Awareness. English gets four hours, and Literature two hours per week. Classrooms are sometimes unavailable, so lessons are held in staff rooms or science labs.

**Researcher:** What about infrastructure like classrooms, playgrounds, libraries, and language laboratories?

**Teacher:** We have two playgrounds shared among sports teachers. We lack language laboratories for practice in pronunciation and articulation. Better scheduling could prevent conflicts over playground use.

**Researcher:** Any suggestions to improve SBEP in your school?

**Teacher:** Yes:

1. Schools should have language laboratories to improve teacher and learner performance.
2. Teachers need specialized bilingual training. More workshops are necessary to enhance skills.
3. Modern ICT tools (computers, internet-enabled devices) should be provided.
4. Examination questions should better reflect practical skills, especially writing skills for French-speaking learners.
5. Emphasis should be placed on speaking and listening skills, using correct accents.
6. Stakeholders (teachers, parents, school authorities) should follow up on learners’ progress.
7. Science learners lag behind arts learners in completing the programme, especially French-speaking students.
8. Candidate selection should begin earlier, ideally in Class Six, so learners are prepared for the programme’s demands.

**Researcher:** How would you rate SBEP learners in terms of class performance and official examinations?

**Teacher:** They are the best in all subjects. Their high performance is due to the programme content, exercises, bilingual nature of instruction, and close follow-up.

**Researcher:** What career opportunities exist for SBEP graduates?

**Teacher:** Many opportunities. Bilingual learners can pursue careers in embassies, companies, the National Assembly, Senate, Presidency, law, interpretation, translation, advertising, journalism, and more.

**Researcher:** Anything you want to add to enrich the programme?

**Teacher:** Teachers’ working conditions should be improved. Good working conditions allow teachers to perform their duties effectively. Teaching and assessing learners is a professional duty, but they often end up supervising learners who eventually surpass them in status.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

*Evaluation methods* for learners enrolled in the SBEP. The first item addresses the number of assignments given to learners. Only 39% of respondents indicated that many assignments are given by their teachers during the training. A larger proportion of respondents disagreed, suggesting that learners’ performance could improve if they were regularly engaged in more assignments. Frequent practice reinforces mastery of content and skills. Most learners reported that the prescribed textbook for Form One, *Interactions into English*, is relatively difficult.

This may be attributed to the fact that many learners come from French-speaking backgrounds and encounter English only in school. Similarly, some anglophone learners, especially those from English or Pidgin-speaking homes, find French challenging. The language spoken at home significantly influences a learner's proficiency in a second language. More than 60% of learners prefer class tests to homework assignments. Learners also affirmed that sequential evaluations help them remain prepared for programme demands. Daily oral questions allow teachers to gauge whether learners have understood module content.

Various factors influence learners' performance, including the availability of textbooks, the learning environment, peer relationships, school infrastructure, class size, and classroom interactions between learners and teachers. Co-curricular activities, such as sports and physical education, are also valuable. Notably, many Cameroonians, including the internationally recognized boxer Francis Ngannou, have achieved success through sports, demonstrating the importance of determination and discipline. Distance education is gaining prominence in Cameroon, particularly in urban areas, with digitalization becoming a key aspect of the educational system. At secondary and higher education levels, computer-assisted assessments provide accuracy, speed, and efficiency in grading, reducing the need for physical contact while allowing teachers to reach many learners simultaneously.

Language learning in Cameroon is reinforced through practice and engagement. According to Skinner's operant conditioning, learners are motivated by reinforcement and are conditioned to perform desired behaviors. Therefore, learners must be prepared to complete assignments, participate in monthly projects, and engage in all classroom and extracurricular activities. The study also confirms principles from Systems Theory (Bertalanffy), showing that the English- and French-speaking subsystems in Cameroon's educational system are interrelated. Political crises in the Northwest and Southwest regions have impacted the system, causing mass displacement of learners to French-speaking towns such as Bafoussam, Mbouda, Dschang, Douala, Yaoundé, and others. This displacement has led to overcrowded classrooms, shortages of infrastructure, noise, high living costs, and other challenges.

Bilingual learners, who interact with peers, family, and community members in both languages, tend to perform better than monolingual learners. Lev Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes that children benefit from guidance from more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers, parents, or peers. Collaborative learning, where faster learners assist slower learners, is particularly effective in acquiring bilingual skills. Practice, the drill method, and the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) are also suitable techniques for developing bilingualism.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains that learners' interactions with their environment, including family, peers, culture, and society, shape their behavior and performance. The mesosystem the learner's immediate environment comprising family, classmates, teachers, religious institutions, and neighbors plays a critical role in developing language proficiency and overall learning outcomes.

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory is also relevant: SBEP learners who believe in their ability to succeed tend to outperform monolingual peers. Social learning occurs through imitation, modelling, and vicarious experiences. Learners observe teachers, parents, and peers, imitating language, behavior, and social practices. Reinforcement strengthens desirable behaviors, while socially discouraged behaviors are suppressed. Observational learning highlights the reciprocal interaction between cognition and environmental factors. Finally, interactionist and sociocultural theories posit that language develops from social interaction. Learners acquire language out of a desire to communicate with the world around them. While nativist theorists (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Plato, Descartes) argue that language is innate, this study adopts an eclectic perspective: language acquisition depends on both innate capacity and environmental stimulation. An enabling environment is essential for effective bilingual development.

## CONCLUSION

The 1998 Cameroon law laying down the guidelines on education clearly states that bilingualism is an important means through which national cohesion and regional integration can be achieved. This is likely why the state formally incorporated the concepts of official bilingualism and multiculturalism into law in 2019. Education plays a vital role in preparing young citizens who are both open to the world and deeply rooted in their own culture. Skills such as self-confidence, motivation, willingness to try new things, innovative thinking, active listening, collaboration, and problem-solving enable children to thrive in many areas of life, express themselves both inside and outside school, develop new personal interests, and advance in their careers. The social, cultural, political, and academic environments in which learners of bilingual studies grow up help shape them into valuable assets for the nation. Consequently, education has become a key means of achieving national objectives and fostering development by the year 2035. In this context, schools remain the primary agents for promoting bilingualism, and their graduates can more easily integrate into the job market after completing their studies, acquiring the essential skills needed in various professional fields. Every individual or society develops positively or negatively depending on the quality of education received. The challenges facing the country can be addressed through action research conducted by competent professionals produced by the educational system, within a framework of political stability and socio-cultural growth.

The acquisition of bilingual competencies, proficiency, and the ability to switch between official languages enhances the credibility of the Cameroonian educational system and all its stakeholders.

Supervision and monitoring of the educational system by the relevant Ministries through Divisional, Regional, and National Inspectors, as well as inspector-coordinators responsible for promoting bilingualism significantly contribute to harmonizing teaching and learning practices across both private and public sectors. Cameroon stands out in the African continent, particularly in Central Africa, for producing skilled labor across almost all domains, reflecting significant human capital development. The Ministry of Basic Education introduced a new curriculum in 2018, which is currently being implemented in all basic education establishments nationwide. This curriculum emphasizes the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), which teaches through real-life situations. The approach is widely adopted in both private and government schools, and textbooks have been designed to align with the content and recommendations of CBA. In this system, learners are no longer passive participants; teachers are no longer mere dispensers of knowledge but facilitators. Both teachers and learners engage in the exchange of ideas, with learning constructed collaboratively in this dual process.

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