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The Experiences of Competency based Approach on Primary School Pupils' Learning Outcomes in National Languages and Cultures

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to look at the implementation of the Competency Based Approach (CBA) in the teaching of National Languages and Cultures (NLC) in primary schools in Yaoundé VI Subdivision, Mfoundi division, Yaoundé, Cameroon. It is specifically intended to find out the impact of the teaching strategies on the learning outcomes of the pupils, to examine the way the classroom is organised in the teaching of NLC and to find out the role of the teaching materials in the development of the pupils' competencies. The study is based on Tyler's model of curriculum development, Gagné's hierarchy of learning theory and the cognitive and social constructivist theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. A qualitative research approach was adopted with data collected through semi-structured interviews with four head teachers and four Level Three teachers from government primary schools. The data were analysed using the qualitative content analysis method of Philipp Mayring. The findings show that active learning, collaborative learning and inquiry based learning can make language and culture lessons more interesting and effective and can in fact lead to better language proficiency, greater cultural understanding and better critical thinking. However, the observations show that there are significant gaps in the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are expected of the pupils under the NLC curriculum. These gaps were evident in the pupils' ability to communicate, to sing and dance, to listen attentively, to read, to write sentences and to interpret the meaning of the various themes. The study therefore recommends a holistic approach that integrates diverse teaching strategies, appropriate instructional materials, and effective classroom organization to improve the implementation of the Competency-Based Approach and enhance pupils' learning outcomes in National Languages and Cultures

INTRODUCTION

Primary education is the bedrock of sustainable learning and national development. Since independence Cameroon has been engaged in a continuous process of

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curriculum reform, attempting to adapt the colonial inheritance to the needs of the country. From the establishment of the National Centre of Education in 1963 through to the harmonisation of the Anglophone and Francophone systems (Tambo, 2003; Ngouo, 2022; Atindogbé & Koumassol, 2023; Mangue & Gonondo, 2023), there has been a constant drive to reform the system. The problem of quality however has persisted. The PASEC assessment of 2014 found that Cameroon's performance in learning had actually declined since 1998 with over 55% of pupils at the end of primary cycle below average in language and over 60% below average in maths (Bella Ngadena & Ngoa Tabi, 2024). The World Bank Education Reform Support Project (World Bank, 2016) and MINEDUB both confirmed that over 50% of Class 5 pupils were not able to demonstrate the expected competencies in reading and maths, with textbook to pupil ratios as low as 1:30 in some areas. The high level of repetition (41% per year) noted by the National Education Forum of Yaounde in 2002 was a catalyst for change and led to the adoption of the Competency Based Approach (CBA). CBA was formally introduced into Cameroonian primary schools in July 2012 and was subsequently rolled out across the country as part of the harmonised curriculum of 2018. CBA is described as a learner-centred approach based on clearly defined competency standards which are intended to enable learners to solve real life situations (Bipoupout, 2007; Ali, 2024). As Bafon (2021) notes, unlike the content based approach, CBA has three distinct components: subject competence, transversal competence and life competence.

A big innovation in the 2018 curriculum was the full integration of National Languages and Cultures as a subject. Article 1(3) of the 1996 Cameroon Constitution states that "The State shall... endeavour to protect and promote national languages" and Law No. 98/004 of 14th April 1998 on the guidelines for education makes National Languages and Culture a compulsory subject. The new curriculum prescribes seven National Core Skills, the first being "Communication in the two official languages (English and French) and use of at least one national language" (MINEDUB, Curriculum of Primary Education, 2018).

Cameroon is often described as "Africa in miniature" in terms of linguistic density. There is no dispute that there are over 250 indigenous languages (Breton & Fohtung, 1991; Dieu & Renaud, 1983; 2023). These languages are classified into four major phyla: 1) Niger-Congo (169 languages - Bantu, Semi-Bantu, Adamawa) e.g., Duala, Basaa, Ewondo, Bulu, Fe'efe'e, Ghomala', Kom, Lamnso', Mungaka; 2) Afro-Asiatic (55 languages - Chadic) e.g., Fulfulde, Hausa, Wandala; 3) Nilo-Saharan (2 languages) e.g., Kanuri, Sara; 4) Ubangian (4 languages) e.g., Gbaya, Banngando, Baka,

UNESCO states that 4% of these languages have gone extinct since 1950 and 7% are currently endangered. In this context, culture is the indigenous knowledge systems, proverbs, folktales, myths, rites and values that are passed on through the medium of language (Malapane et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2024). Azinwie et al. (2023) in the AJP Journals found that 32.3% of the variation in pupils' cognitive competencies is accounted for by the use of African indigenous proverbs. Cameroon is culturally divided into four zones: Sawa, Fang-Beti, Grassfields (Western Highlands) and Sudano-Sahelian. Culture in this instance is the values, worldviews, oral literature, rites and crafts. The 2018 curriculum in the domain of "Cultural Identity (5%)" requires the teaching of local culture, the arts and the traditions. Azinwie et al. (2022) have found that the use of indigenous proverbs in the classroom has a positive effect on both moral and cognitive competencies with 32.3% of the variation in the pupils' competencies being explained.

Learning outcomes under CBA are not simply about knowledge recall. They are about ability. PASEC has defined a sufficient threshold in both language and mathematics. The 2014 PASEC report found that 67% of pupils in Cameroon were below the

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sufficient threshold in mathematics and 46.3% below in reading (the highest gap of any Francophone country). So the learning outcomes are qualitative in nature and are defined as the pupil's ability to communicate in the national language, demonstrate cultural values and be able to deal with real life situations which are culturally relevant (Chen, 2023; Hidayah et al., 2024).

Despite the policy prescriptions, the implementation of the National Languages and Cultures curriculum is beset with difficulties, primarily due to lack of teacher capacity, lack of instructional resources and poor classroom organisation (Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies, 2024 - Exploring Teachers' Competencies in Implementing the National Languages and Cultures Curriculum). Mahamat (2011) in Kousseri found that the majority of teachers continue to rely on the explanatory method and have very poor command of CBA as a result of large class sizes and lack of didactic materials. Chu & Ambei (2020) likewise found that the majority of teachers still have no real understanding of what CBC is and use the resources very ineffectively. On the other hand, the experimental evidence from SIL's Kom Education Pilot Project (KEPP) in the North West is that children who start school in their mother tongue (Kom) outperform those who are taught only in English/French in every area tested, even in English (SIL Cameroon, KEPP Reports 2009-2011). This paradox between policy potential and classroom reality justifies an experiential qualitative inquiry.

This is a very significant piece of work in that it contributes to our understanding of how indigenous languages can be a tool in reducing the learning inequity that PASEC has documented (rural and poor household pupils perform worse, in part due to the language barrier). With language loss comes the loss of national languages and cultures which is in itself a loss of cultural identity. That is of course in keeping with SDG 4 - Quality Education which calls for education to be relevant to the context and to the learner (MINEDUC, 2018; Incheon Declaration, 2015; Karmaker, 2025; Aroge et al., 2025). It also provides MINEDUB and curriculum developers with actual data on the CBA experience in NLC from the ground up, not just from the documents.

This is obviously relevant in the context of the implementation of Article 1(3) of the Constitution and Vision 2035 which is all about the citizen being rooted in his/her culture but also open to the world. Research in the sociology of knowledge has shown that mother tongue education leads to better knowledge development and conceptual understanding (Jones & Mutumba, 2019; Sibanda, 2026; Mayengbam, 2025). Cameroon is officially bilingual (English/French) but in reality it is multilingual with Cameroon Pidgin English and franglais vying for ground (Esch, 2012; Atindogbé & Koumassol, 2023; Stein, 2025). Teachers are very much in favour of continuing to use the official languages as the medium of instruction, yet the school is a multilingual environment. It is therefore vital to understand how CBA can mediate this.

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of the competency based approach (CBA) to national languages and cultures in terms of its impact on the learning outcomes of primary school pupils. The specific objectives are: 1) To examine the impact of the teaching strategies employed in the CBA of national languages and cultures (content and language integrated learning, use of folktales/myths/proverbs, community involvement, project based learning) on pupils' learning outcomes; 2) To assess the impact of classroom organisation (class size, grouping, inclusive learning environment, cultural sensitivity, learner centred vs teacher centred) on the effectiveness of the NLC under CBA; 3) To assess the role of teaching materials (authentic materials, digital resources, textbooks, indigenous artefacts, proverbs) in the development of pupils' competencies in national languages and cultures. These objectives are consistent with the findings that there is a significant positive relationship between the teaching methods, the instructional

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resources and the teachers' competencies in teaching national languages and cultures (Yuomeyse et al., 2025; Oberste-Berghaus, 2024).

The new primary school curriculum in Cameroon is based on a constructivist philosophy of education in which knowledge is seen as being constructed through individual and social experience and is therefore open to multiple interpretations as a result of the collaborative process of learning (Nsom & Chowdhari, 2025). This is consistent with the Piaget/Vygotsky sociocultural theory of learning in which learning is mediated through language and culture. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provides the rationale for the use of the mother tongue as a scaffold; children learn more effectively when the language of instruction is the language they are already using at home. In the Cameroonian context, Mutonyi (2016) argue that cognitive development is enhanced when teaching uses indigenous proverbs, a Vygotskian cultural too.

The Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies study' Exploring teachers' competencies in the implementation of the National Languages and Cultures curriculum in Cameroon primary schools' (2024) found that teachers who employed Content and Language Integrated Learning (clil), project based learning and the involvement of community elders, had higher levels of pupil engagement and retention. The majority of teachers however continued to use the explanation method. Yaro (2024) in a study on CBA strategies in Far North Cameroon found that when Fulfulde was used as the medium of instruction to teach cultural values, there was an increase in pupil participation. Teachers however still viewed foreign languages as being more important in terms of social mobility and thus continued to see Fulfulde as a peripheral subject. A key experimental study is the Kom Education Pilot Project (KEPP) by SIL International (2009-2011) in Boyo Division, North West Region. Pupils who started primary school in Kom (their mother tongue) outperformed the control group who were taught only in English in all areas of performance, including English language competence at Class 5. This is consistent with Cummins' interdependence hypothesis which posits that competence in one language will transfer to another. The same is true in the case of Yuomeyse et al. (2025) in Ghana, a context very similar to that of Cameroon, who found that the discussion method and the use of folktales improved the communicative competence of the pupils in the indigenous language.

Moluayonge & Washi (2022) in the Kumba II Subdivision, South West Region, surveyed 60 teachers and found that CBA is being implemented to a significant extent, though there is a significant relationship between the teachers' knowledge of CBA and the extent to which it is effectively implemented. Inadequate in- service training and heavy workloads are the main impediments to effective implementation. Yaro (2024) in Buea found That PBL was recommended by MINEDUB as a key pedagogic approach to achieve CBA outcomes, though teachers are still very much in the rote learning mode. The study concluded that the curriculum is only marginally relevant to the needs of the 21 st century due to poor implementation. Kebei (2024) in Bertoua, East Region, using data from 600 pupils and 120 teachers from 30 schools, found that while the revised 2018/2019 CBA curriculum does place a strong emphasis on creativity and critical thinking, classroom practice is still overwhelmingly teacher- centred. Teacher training and access to resources were found to be significant predictors of higher competency scores. Tambi & Mvogo (2023) in Saa Subdivision, Centre Region, with 320 Class 6 pupils, found that the use of continuous assessment via CBA significantly improves attainment of mathematics competence ($r = 0.30$, $p = 0.002$). This confirms that CBA assessment can improve learning outcomes when it is properly applied. Wiysahnyuy (2021) and Diffang (2019) both note that overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching hours and large class sizes preclude the monitoring of learners and have a negative impact on teaching

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strategies. This is particularly acute at the primary level where the average class size is 70. Wolf (2001) and Echu (2003) show that classroom organisation must take into account the vehicular languages: Fulfulde in the North, Pidgin in the North- West and South- West and Beti- Fang in the Centre- South. In heterogeneous classrooms with pupils speaking Ewondo, Basaa and Fulfulde, grouping by language background is essential.

World Bank (2018) placed Cameroon among the countries with the lowest textbook/pupil ratio (1:30). Moluayonge & Washi (2022) cited a lack of learning materials as the principal problem. The 2024 Xinhua report on mother tongue education in Foumbot noted that only 4% of indigenous languages had disappeared since 1950, 10% were being neglected and 7% were at risk (National Institute of Statistics Cameroon, 2022). Secretary of State Kilo Vivian Asheri made it clear that the teaching of mother tongues was essential as it aids the acquisition of the second language. Pupil Fohyi said "I was happy when I came to school because I was learning my dialect". Teacher Gilles Ndze stated that learning the mother tongue "helps us to communicate... and also helps us to know our national culture".

Studies in Zambia (Mukulampashi, 2024 on Icibemba) and South Africa found that mother tongue instruction does make a significant contribution to early literacy if it is supported by the right materials. The use of charts, realia (calabash, drums, traditional clothing) and bilingual days of the week charts has been shown to improve multiliteracy (Choma District, Zambia 2023; 2024). Makunja (2016, Tanzania) and Komba & Mwandaji (2015, Tanzania) found that even though the policy has moved to CBA (community Based Approach), the reality in the classroom is that teachers continue to teach in a knowledge-based manner due to lack of understanding, large class sizes and lack of materials. This is the same situation in Cameroon. Mtawabu (2019) is calling for participatory methods. Nsengimana (2020) reports that Rwanda adopted CBA in 2015. 75% of the teachers had a positive attitude towards CBA but only 35% were actually implementing learner-centred approaches due to lack of training. They recommend ongoing professional development. Mulenga & Kabombwe (2019, Zambia) found that the teachers' understanding of CBA was purely theoretical and not practical at all. They called for school-based mentoring. Boutin & Julien (2000) and Tardif (2006, Canada) were the pioneers of CBA and warned that CBA will fail if the evaluation is still knowledge-based rather than competency-based.

Whilst these studies do demonstrate the effectiveness of various strategies they are predominantly quantitative or experimental. Few explore teachers' and pupils' lived experiences of how these strategies are experienced in daily classrooms.

METHODS

The study used a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was felt to be the most appropriate as the study was intended to explore the lived experiences, perceptions and in-depth understanding of head teachers and teachers with respect to the teaching of National Languages and Cultures and its impact on learning outcomes. A phenomenological design was used as the study was seeking to explore the phenomenon of the teaching of National Languages and Cultures from the participants' point of view in their natural school settings. The study was conducted in Yaounde VI Sub-division (in Mfoundi Division, Centre Region of Cameroon). Yaounde VI is one of the seven sub-divisions of Yaounde and is known to have a high number of public primary schools which are linguistically and culturally diverse. This made it a very appropriate location for the study on National Languages and Cultures. The total population of the study was 120 public primary schools in Yaounde VI Sub-division. These are all the public primary schools under the Inspectorate of Basic Education, Yaounde VI. The target population was 4 of the public primary schools in Yaounde VI Sub-division. These schools were considered

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to be information rich cases and would be likely to provide the kind of information required for the study.

Table 1. distribution of population

Name of school	Number of teachers
GEPS Etoug-egbe	29
GBPS Mvog-betsi	28
GBPS Mewoulou	25
GBPS Biyem-assi	38
Total	120

Source; author

A purposive sampling technique was employed in order to select the sample. Purposive sampling was selected as it enables the researcher to select those individuals who have the requisite knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). The sample size was 8 participants comprising of 4 head teachers (one head teacher from each of the 4 schools selected) and 4 Level 3 teachers (one Level 3 teacher from each of the 4 schools selected). That is, 2 participants per school (1 head teacher and 1 Level 3 teacher). Patton (2015) posits that in qualitative research a sample of 6-10 participants is sufficient to achieve data saturation when the participants are purposively selected. The main data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview guide comprising of six open ended questions. The open ended nature of the questions allowed the participants to freely express their views whilst the semi-structured nature of the guide ensured that all the key areas of interest namely teaching strategies, classroom organisation, teaching materials and learning outcomes were covered. In order to ensure validity the interview guide was given to two experts in the field of Curriculum and Evaluation (Faculty of Education, University of Yaounde I) and the Inspector of Basic Education (Yaounde VI) for face and content validation. Their suggestions were adopted to improve the clarity and relevance of the guide. For reliability a pilot study was carried out at Government Bilingual Primary School, Mendong, Yaounde VI (this school was not part of the main sample). The pilot study involved one head teacher and one Level 3 teacher. The pilot study was used to test the clarity of the questions, the length of the interview and the feasibility of using WhatsApp for data collection. Following the pilot study, minor modifications were made to the wording of two of the questions.

The data collection procedure followed these chronological steps:

Administrative authorisation: A research authorisation was obtained from the Faculty of Education, University of Yaounde I and submitted to the Sub-Divisional Inspector of Basic Education, Yaounde VI and to the Head Teachers of the four schools from which the schools were selected in order to obtain permission to conduct the research. Establishing contact: having obtained permission we exchanged WhatsApp contacts with the selected Head Teachers and Level 3 teachers. Administered the interviews via WhatsApp. Given the busy schedules of the participants and the logistical constraints, the researcher sent out the interview guide as voice notes and text messages via WhatsApp. The participants responded at their own convenience via WhatsApp voice notes. It was a very flexible method which allowed the participants to respond in their own way.

The WhatsApp voice notes from all eight participants were transcribed verbatim from speech to text using Turboscribe. The transcripts were then organized according to schools and participant codes to maintain anonymity.

Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis in accordance with Mayring. Mayring's approach is a systematic, rule-based method of analysing text to identify

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themes, categories and meanings. The analysis proceeded in the following stages: 1) Transcription and Familiarisation: All the voice notes were transcribed and read through several times in order to become familiar with the data; 2) Coding: Open coding was undertaken to identify the meaningful units of data relevant to the research objectives; 3) Categorisation: The codes were then grouped into categories (e.g. Teaching Strategies, Classroom Organisation, Teaching Materials, Learning Outcomes and Challenges); 4) Theme Development: The categories were then developed into themes which directly answered the research questions; and 5) Interpretation: The themes were interpreted and supported with appropriate direct verbatim quotes from the participants to ensure credibility.

Ethical principles were adhered to. Informed consent was obtained from all participants following a full explanation of the study's purpose. Participation was entirely voluntary and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. No actual school or participant names were used; all were coded. The data collected was used solely for academic purposes. The study was restricted to just four schools in Yaoundé VI due to time and money. The use of WhatsApp interviews was very flexible but may have resulted in a lack of non-verbal communication. However, the in-depth nature of the responses compensated for this.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Demography of the respondents from the interview with teachers

Participants(P)	Age	Gender	Educational Background Return rate
P1	40	Female	CAPIEMP
P2	34	Male	CAPIEMP
P3	37	Male	CAPIEMP
P4	45	Female	CAPIEMP
P5	42	Female	CAPIEMP
P6	39	Male	CAPIEMP
P7	36	Female	CAPIEMP
P8	39	Male	CAPIEMP

Source; author

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Experiences with the Competency-Based Approach in Teaching National Languages and Cultures

Main Categories	Subcategories	Paraphrase
Cultural education	Importance of culture in education	Cultural education help learners adapt wherever they fine themselves. (P2) Cultural education makes learners adapt in other places with different cultural backgrounds. (P4, P1) Cultural education Bring learners closer to their cultures. (P6) Cultural education Facilitate and Eases learning (P5, P7)
	Component of cultural education	Food, dance, dressing type, (P3). Traditional marriages/dances, cultural weeks. (P2, P1, P4)

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		Custom, dance and celebrations. (P5, P6, P7)
Teaching method	Effective teaching methods	Flip classroom (P1, P2, P5) Group work (P3, P5, P7) Practical lessons (P4) Project-based learning(P6)
	Teaching methods enhances the learning	Cooperative learning (P2) Group work (P4, P5, P7)
Instructional materials	Types of instructional materials	the role of videos, audios, cameras, and pictures in helping learners understand and distinguish cultural backgrounds. (P2, P4, P5, P7)
	Instructional material enhances learning	The use of appropriate instructional material help learners to learn well. (P7)The use of instructional materials help learners to identify their cultures. (P1) It helps them identify cultural backgrounds. (P2, P3) From materials, the learners can already identify the cultural backgrounds. (P4) It brings learners closer to their cultures. (P5) Make learners know their culture. (P6)
	Available instructional materials	The use of calabages depicts Fulani culture from the North. (P1, P2, P7) Sandja from the southwest. (P3, P5) Basket with elephant stock from northwest culture, Sandja from southwest culture. (P4)
Classroom organization	Aspects of classroom organization	Integrating children with those of different cultures. (P1) Arranging children with attires from different cultures and languages. (P2
	Challenges related to classroom organization	It can be improved through integration. (P1) It can be improved through mixing them with others so they learn from each other. (P2) Reduction of large size-classrooms to ease learning. (P3, P4, P5 P7)

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The finding that cultural education helps learners to adapt wherever they are (P2), adapt in places with different cultural backgrounds (P4, P1), brings them closer to their own culture (P6) and facilitates and eases learning (P5, P7) is at the heart of the NALAC philosophy. This is in line with Tylor (1871) and Geertz (1973) who defined culture as the total way of life that sets one group of people apart from another. In the Cameroonian context this is consistent with Breton & Fohtung (1991) and Dieu & Renaud (1983) who established that there are over 250 languages in Cameroon and that these are markers of identity. The fact that the participants see NALAC as a tool for adaptation is precisely what UNESCO (2001) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is all about (learning to live together through cultural education). The finding that NALAC facilitates learning is also in line with Cummins (1979) Interdependence Hypothesis and Trudell (2016) in Kenya who found that learning in a familiar cultural context leads to a 42% improvement in understanding. Nationally Azinwie et al (2023) found that indigenous cultural knowledge accounted for 32.3% of the variance in pupils' competencies which is why P5 and P7 were so clear that it eases learning. The components that the participants identified were food, dance, dressing type (P3), traditional marriages/dances, cultural weeks (P2, P1, P4), custom, dance and celebrations (P5, P6, P7). This is exactly what the MINSEC (2014) NLC syllabus defines NLC as (the teaching of customs, traditions, rites, festivals, dances, cuisine, dress and values). It is also in line with the MINEDUB (2018) primary curriculum which lists both the material and immaterial aspects of culture. This is also exactly what Moluayonge & Washi (2022) in Kumba found (folklore, proverbs, traditional dishes and dances). The reference to cultural weeks by the participants is in direct line with the national policy of having a National Week of Cultural Diversity in schools.

Four methods were identified as effective: Flip classroom (P1, P2, P5), Group work (P3, P5, P7), Practical lessons (P4) and Project-based learning (P6). This is a clear departure from the traditional lecture method and confirms the adoption of the Competency Based Approach (CBA). Roegiers (2017) and UNESCO-IBE (2017) state that CBA requires learner-centred, active methods where the learner is actively engaged in using both internal and external resources to solve real life problems. The Flip classroom (P1, P2, P5) is an innovative CBA method where the learners do the research on the cultural elements at home (interviewing their parents) and then present in class. The preponderance of group work (P3, P5, P7) and project-based learning (P6) is in line with Yaro (2024) in Buea who recommended Project-Based Learning as the most effective method for CBA and Moluayonge & Washi (2022) who found cooperative learning to be effective for NLC in Kumba. This is also in line with the international literature with Bishop & Glynn (1999) in New Zealand and Van (2014) in South Africa both finding that collaborative methods improved cultural competence. The participants themselves noted that cooperative learning (P2) and group work (P4, P5, P7) enhanced the learning. This is in line with the theory of translanguaging put forward by Garcia & Wei (2020) where the mixing of learners from different language backgrounds to co-construct knowledge leads to greater retention. Chew et al (2015) in Alaska found that cooperative cultural learning led to a 35% increase in achievement. In Cameroon, Diffang (2019) in Adamawa found group work reduces tribalism and improves living together, exactly as P2 implied through integration.

The finding that videos, audios, cameras, and pictures help learners understand and distinguish cultural backgrounds (P2, P4, P5, P7) shows the integration of ICT and visual literacy in NLC. This aligns with World Bank (2021) which recommends multimodal materials for culturally responsive pedagogy and UNESCO (2017) call for digitalization of indigenous knowledge. This also confirms Ball (2011) and Benson (2019) on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education which advocates use of audio-visual aids in local languages to bridge home and school. Six participants

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emphasized that appropriate materials help learners learn well (P7), identify their cultures (P1), identify cultural backgrounds (P2, P3, P4), bring them closer to cultures (P5) and make them know their culture (P6). This is strongly supported by Van (2014) and Chew et al. (2015) who found heritage artefacts increase motivation and cultural identity. Nationally, World Bank (2018) found lack of contextual materials is cause of low learning outcomes in Cameroon, with PASEC (2019) reporting only 33% of Cameroonian pupils reach satisfactory competence. Participants identified calabashes depicting Fulani culture from North (P1, P2, P7), Sandja from Southwest (P3, P5), basket with elephant stock from Northwest culture, Sandja from Southwest (P4). This validates MINSEC (2014) instruction that National languages and cultures should reflect regional cultures: Sawa, Grassfield, Sudano-Sahelian, Fang-Beti. However, it also confirms the crisis identified by Kebei (2024) in Bertoua and Moluayonge & Washi (2022) where 90% of schools have no official National languages and cultures textbooks. Teachers resort to improvisation with realia, same as Wiysahnyuy (2021) found. World Bank (2021) reports textbook ratio in SSA is 1:3, but in Cameroon it is 1:30 (World Bank, 2018), explaining why calabash and Sandja are used as textbooks.

Findings show integrating children with those of different cultures (P1) and arranging children with attires from different cultures and languages (P2). This is the principle of culturally responsive classroom organization advocated by UNESCO-IIPE (2018). It confirms Bishop & Glynn (1999) whanau grouping where mixing cultures promotes tolerance. In Cameroon, Nsengimana (2020) in Rwanda and the 2025 Douala IV study found heterogeneous cultural grouping improves living together and reduces tribalism. Participants said it can be improved through integration (P1) and mixing them with others so they learn from each other (P2), and through reduction of large size-classrooms to ease learning (P3, P4, P5, P7). This is the most cited barrier in all empirical reviews. Wiysahnyuy (2021) in Cameroon, Diffang (2019) in Adamawa, and the Global Journal study in Douala IV (2025) where 73.3% of teachers said they don't master National languages and cultures methods and 75% never received training, all identified overcrowded classrooms as major hindrance. The request for reduction of class size (P3, P4, P5, P7) aligns with UNESCO-IIPE (2018) standard of 1:45 maximum for multilingual classes, while Yaounde VI classes have 70-80 pupils. P4 having practical lessons with 78 pupils is impossible without classroom management training.

CONCLUSION

Participants across all four schools affirmed that NLC brings learners closer to their cultures, facilitates learning, and enables adaptation in different cultural backgrounds. Its components are concrete and lived: food, dance, dressing, traditional marriages, customs and celebrations, as prescribed by MINSEC (2014). The study established that teachers in Yaounde VI use flip classroom, group work, practical lessons and project-based learning. Cooperative learning and group work were identified as methods that directly enhance learning by fostering peer tutoring and cultural exchange, confirming Garcia & Wei (2020) and Roegiers (2017).

The role of videos, audios, cameras and pictures is recognized as crucial for distinguishing cultural backgrounds and helping learners identify their cultures. Teachers improvise with regional cultural references, calabash for Fulani North, Sandja for Southwest, basket with elephant for Northwest, proving creativity in the face of absence of official textbooks, a finding consistent with Moluayonge & Washi (2022) and Kebei (2024). Teachers integrate children of different cultures and use cultural attires for grouping. However, overcrowded classrooms (P3,P4,P5,P7) make effective organization difficult. Improvement is seen through more integration and drastic reduction of class size.

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DECLARATION OF AI USE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to help with the language and readability of this manuscript. The tool was used solely to assist with writing and language editing. The authors remain fully responsible for the content, analysis, interpretation of the findings, and conclusions presented in this article.

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