The Cameroonian Universities in the Era of Knowledge-Based Society: from the Paradoxes of Governance to the Challenges of Implementing a Cognitive Pedagogy

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Abstract: The university was created in Yaounde, the political capital city of Cameroon, in 1961, after the independence. For the young Federal State it therefore became necessarily urgent to put in place a training institution that would cover the needs in local senior staffs, after the departure of French and English colonial administrators. It was also to endow the young nation with an instrument of quality training that would boost local economic and social development. At its opening, the university had 213 students (Sup Infos, 2011, pp. 10-11) who were systematically absorbed by the labor market; it will accommodate 37,215 students in 1992, on the same campus. But with the economic crises, it witnessed a severe employment crisis. Due to the implementation of structural adjustment programs driven by the Bretton Woods institutions, the economic crisis was coupled with a political crisis: the Ngoa-Ekelle campus where the University of Yaounde was found rapidly became a vast experimental field of socio-political demands for an integral multiparty system, a general amnesty and liberal democracy in Cameroon. Faced with these crises, the State could not remain indifferent. Thus, a "university reform" will be launched in January 1993 by presidential decree (Ministry of Higher Education, 1993, p. 9).

Keywords: Cameroon; higher education; social development

1. Introduction

For some years now, despite this reform, the university system in Cameroon keeps facing several challenges (see Zeleza and Olukoshi, 2004): the challenge of competitiveness in the production and dissemination of knowledge (none of the newly created universities features among the top best universities in Africa and in the world), the challenge of employability (training and employment mismatch) and the challenge of cognitive pedagogy[2] (emphasis on the number of credits earned by the students and not on their skills).

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[2] In August 1992 actually took place in Yaounde, Cameroon, the Congress of the International Association of University Pedagogy where it was clearly stated that "the vast majority of students do not know how to work". This is a denunciation of what causes the downgrading of graduates and their mismatch in the job market, especially their difficulty to capture a rational knowledge, to know how to express their ideas in coherent language. This shows that professionalization on which we lay so much emphasis today cannot be the elixir.

If Law No. 005 of 16 April 2001 on the orientation of the Higher Education and the entry into force as from 2007 of the BMP system (Bachelor-Master/Doctorate) helped meet the first two challenges, it seems much less able to incorporate the cognitive pedagogy requirement that must nevertheless come into play in the knowledge-based society in which we live. This reform of 1993 was code-named "NUG: New University Governance" (Messina, 2010).

Is the neglect of the educational dimension of the strategy not likely to jeopardize the willingness of the Cameroon government and its leaders to lead the country towards a knowledge-based society, a society par excellence of great intellects? By focusing the operationalization of the strategy on "governance" are we not running the risk of producing at the end of the academic training, postmodern subjects, pure consumers (Affa'a, Des Lierres, 2002, Atangana, 1996, Mandla Makhanya, 2010 & Mamdani, 2007), incapable of flexibility and openness in their workplace (Raoult, 2002)? How can we understand that while the industrialized and the "emerging" countries focus on cognitive development, through a flowering of methods for "learning to learn", "learning to think" (Costa, 2001; Jean-Montclerc, 1991; Machado, 1980 & Mondoué, 2010), in Africa, and specifically in our universities, the echo of such a movement is not perceptible? In other words, can African countries afford to turn their backs on something that will allow their entry into modernity with insurance while proclaiming they crave for modernity?

This article will uncover the secrets workings of such a paradox through a decryption of unspoken rules that govern the concept of "governance". This thorough work of archaeology done, we will highlight the correlation between cognitive development, cognitive pedagogy and knowledge-based society. It will therefore be time for us to identify the stakes in an implementation of cognitive pedagogy for the future of the university system in Cameroon.

2. Governance or Manufacturing of Postmodern Subject

The "New University Governance" includes in 06 major areas: 1 / academic governance, which involves strict respect of schedules provided for instances; 2 / managerial governance, which has to do with the strict implementation of government measures, 3 / the financial governance, which aims to apply a transparent management of public funds made available to universities, 4 / social governance, based on strengthening the social dialogue and assistance to the entire university community, 5 / digital governance which should contribute to the widespread use of ICT and the promotion of e-learning, 6 / infrastructural governance, whose ambition is to endow academic institutions with quality infrastructure and in sufficient quantity (Sup Infos, 2011, p. 157).

However, a very interesting paper, Nkolo Foe (in Cahiers de UCAC, 2008) found the fertile ground on which the concept of "governance" germinated and blossomed:

A specter is haunting the Third world: governance. Historically, this concept is a legacy of the medieval French (then English) where it refers to state craft. Pointing to ethics and cosmopolitanism, it was recycled by the World Bank so as to ideologically structure international relations. [...]

Introduced in Africa just of recent, governance as "administrative technology" actually comes to top the institutional and political structure of SAPs in terms of governability and normativity. Attacking the welfare State from a moral perspective, it has inspired in Africanism a whole anthropology of homo manducans, of belly politics and criminal State [Bayart]. In a bit to exorcize their repeated failures, WB and IMF (finally) acknowledge the limits of economism.

Thus, governance is the new mask of the neoliberal ideology that promotes international financial institutions, whose undisclosed ambition goal is to dismantle the sovereign powers that had been the foundation of the welfare state: education, health, safety. The incantatory and apparently moralizing speech: transparency, freedom, equal rights, promotion of the civil society. One therefore understands the cautionary note of Reich in *The Global Economy:* "governance opens a new era, that of musical comedy, of soft; confrontations are dealt with in a prankster's manner" (2002, p. 47).

Governance imposes, as one may notice, the code of silence or compromise. It is structured and revitalized with ease in a bourgeoise society where the proletariat agrees to cooperate, according to the well-established principle of self-interest. Nkolofoé (Id.) also adds the following:

Viewed from the globalization perspective and as an ideological artifice, governance masks the refusal of extension of the civil society and class compromise to the rest of the world. Avatar of cosmopolitanism, it is an ethical instrument to complete the universalization of the market form.

Thus comes the true face of governance, particularly the opening of markets to allow circulation of goods, making sure that all the goods will be consumed without restraint; atomizing the social fabric to avoid any business coalition around a liberating or negating project of the neoliberal system; lubricating trade under the guise of universalism. It is clearly talking about modernity while remaining antimodern, to be honest, postmodern. Postmodernism is synonymous with governance.

According to Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida in fact, postmodernism is not exceeded modernity within modernity: it is a beyond modernity, a new paradigm, a

"radical" deconstruction of metanarratives and transcendental signifiers of the aufklärung. Besides, here is what Lyotard explicitly says:

The word "postmodern" refers to the state of the culture after the changes that affected the rules of the game in science, literature and arts from the late nineteenth century onwards. […]

In extremely simplified terms, "postmodern" stands for incredulity towards metanarratives. This is probably an effect of scientific progress, but that progress in turn presupposes it. The obsolescence of the metanarrative legitimation device particularly corresponds to the metaphysical philosophy crisis and that of the university institution which depended on it. The narrative function is loses its functions, the great hero, the great perils, the great voyages, and the great goal. :

The university system is therefore called upon to operate its transformation so as to serve the merchandising world instead of moulding a rational citizen, able to build large projects instead of locking itself in a relativism that challenges its fundamental essence, the one that led to her creation in the 13th century: produce and disseminate universal knowledge, ensure technological development and contribute to the development of the society, build up virtuous citizens. It is in this sense that Jacques Fame Ndongo (Sup Infos, 2011, 7), the Cameroon Minister of Higher Education, asked the university community to mobilize itself for the achievement of a great utopia, the construction of a new civilization:

Valorous and deserving members of the university community, lets us not imitate our Carthaginian brother Hannibal who did not benefit from his victory and preferred to sink in the pleasure of Capua. Let us follow the example of the greatest General of the Humanity, Julius Caesar. After having won the Vercingetorix of obscurantism, nihilism and self-centeredness, let's say "aleajactaest", lets us have the audacity to cross the Rubicon et to take over Rome. The Rome of inventiveness. The Rome of innovation. The Rome of fundamental and applied research. We will therefore become, for the happiness of the future generations, not futile consumers of imported and outdated knowledge, but creators of civilizations and makers of History.

Innovation, creativity, production of knowledge and techniques are so many infrastructures, technosuperstructures and superstructures from which we can identify a knowledge-based society.

3. Cognitive Development, Knowledge-Based Society and Cognitive Pedagogy

By "cognitive development" we mean the dynamic process by which the individual develops the methods and content of the human mind through interactions that are social patterns, with the physical and material environment, with the social environment. To these two environments, it is worth adding the systems of symbols created by society, such as language, writing and digital systems, which appear throughout history and vary from one society to another. Cognition therefore involves two main components: 1 /the knowledge process; 2/the products of this process.

From the beginning, research on cognition consisted in measuring human intelligence to set standards of tests intended for successive age groups. Psychologists like Binet and Simon (1970) had developed intelligence tests in order to distinguish individuals in relation to the whole. Everything was done as if the subject's reactions were almost predetermined, so much so that it was impossible to act on its intelligence to raise its level. Piaget's genetic epistemology will cast doubt on this research, denouncing their partial and biased character. It will show that human intelligence develops following stages which correspond to the evolution of the body (psycho-motor development of the child). However, Piaget did not imagine that the ability to construct hypothetical and deductive reasoning corresponding to the stage of formal operations or the mastery of basic logical and mathematical notions is not obvious; in short it is neither natural nor spontaneous. Hence the assumption of educability or facilitation cognitive development (Jean-Montclerc, 1991).

Changes in employment, particularly with the automation and computerization of work within companies (Ela, 2008 & Messina 2010), the discovery of intellectual impairments or deficiencies in certain individuals or groups of individuals and the need to apply a remedial treatment; the advent of cognitive science through which we can now equate the human brain to a deductive machine whose components or neurons embody logical principles (Neumann, 1996, Varela 1988 & Mbuyi Mizeka, 2001), and finally the increased demand for education coupled with the need for the education system to provide appropriate responses to a rapidly and constantly changing world (Affa'a & Des Lierres, 2002; Noumba, 2009) pushed researchers to develop tools and methods likely to stimulate cognition mechanisms. These include, among others, the "Entraînement mental" of Joffre Dumazedier, the "Ateliers de Raisonnement Logique" of Pierre Higele, "Méthode des cubes " of Peter Mialet, the "Programme d'Enrichissement Instrumental " of Feuerstein in Israel, projects like "Apprendre à penser " and "Intelligence" in Venezuela, the "Cort Thinking Program" in the UK and the USA where "Strategic Reasoning", "Impact", "Odyssey", etc., programs are experimented. (Costa, 2001) The purpose

of this multitude of experimented programs or programs under experimentation is clearly established:

Helping students become effective thinkers is increasingly recognized as a primary goal of education. Rapid expansion of knowledge points to the importance of curriculums that empower students to locate and process knowledge rather than simply memorize facts. (Costa, 1985)

The requirement to adapt to a new society which is opening up thus rests on the ability to reason of learners in particular and citizens in general. The knowledge-based society is a society that rests on the "economics of invention", in which the individual at the risk of disappearing or falling into anachronism, must move from a culture of concrete object that can be manipulated to a culture where manipulations are done on a keyboard controlling a machine (Giry, 1994).

And yet, curiously, this course of thought and these experiences in cognitive development that we have just mentioned are still transparent or neglected in Africa in favor of a recycling of "governance". As lectures, we are compelled to seek practical solutions to the problem of promotion of scientific rationality in our societies. To do this, we must first exorcise in us the idea that scientific rationality is inherent in Western culture (Malanda Dem, 1977; Tempels, 1961), that the Negro-African culture is fundamentally magico-religious and ancestralist (Kabou 1991; Etounga Manguelle, 1990), that Africa is the experimental field of knowledge and practices coming from elsewhere, thus merely "sleeping on the mat of others" (Ki-Zerbo).

4. Conclusion

It is clear that globalization, to which no country can escape, is the result of the application of scientific knowledge. For our countries whose ambition is to enter modernity, the mastery of science through extensive programs to stimulate the intelligence is imperative. The power of a country will no longer be proportional to the number of its colonies, neither to the wealth of its subsoil nor to its defense forces (Toffler, 1993). The economic, social, cultural and political power will now be determined by the ability to control and disseminate, in record time, information or knowledge produced. Toffler also argues that the age of bourgeois of capitalism and the proletariat of Karl Marx is foreclosed: we are in the era of cognitariat (class of those who know and especially eagerly broadcast through the channels of the information and communication technology, what they know).

Can we afford, in these conditions, to turn our backs to the *"Intelligence Revolution"*, on the basis of which a cognitive education is built, while our marginalization is now paroxysmal?

For almost twenty years now, I contribute to the establishment of a unique experience of teaching by logical reasoning (courses, seminars, workshops) in a primary and a secondary school in Yaoundé and in the Philosophy Department of the Higher Teachers' Training College. This is a logic program developed by Professor Etienne-Bebbé-Njoh (1976, 2004), mathematician and philosopher, who has rubbed shoulders with most of the theoreticians of intelligence development methods. Fun exercises on the logical square, basic logic operations and formal syllogisms help stimulate the intellectual capacities of learners. National days of cognitive education with intelligence show are in preparation, with a view to popularize this new method, to generate a critical mass on the issue. This extension / ownership will be beneficial for our university and for the emergence of a "quality education", so dear to UNESCO (see Aronowitz, 2002).

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