

---

**STATE INITIATIVES AND LOW EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTHS IN KUMBO SUB  
DIVISION, NORTH WEST REGION, CAMEROON**

**Kome Blaise Tardzenyuy \***

Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology, University of Dschang, Cameroon. Email:

**komeblais@yahoo.com**

**Dr. Moye Eric Kongnso**

Department of Geography, University of Dschang, Cameroon

**Prof. Jean Emiet Nodem**

Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology, University of Dschang, Cameroon.

**ABSTRACT**

Youth empowerment programs are a cornerstone to unemployment reduction in developing countries. However, these programs are poorly oriented and executed. Using programs in the Ministry of youth affairs, this study aims at examining the logics that explains the non-adhesion of beneficiaries to such programs in Kumbo Sub Division. The guiding premise is that, the non-adherence of youths' beneficiaries to activities offered by state programs is accounted for by unadapt management strategies in the execution of such initiatives. Using the theory of social constructivism and a qualitative research approach, we conducted semi-guided interviews with 65 youths involved in programs such as PAJER-U, PIFMAS and NCSAPD as well with 19 youths who never had the opportunity to belong to such programs. Interviews were equally conducted with administrative officials in charge of implementing these policies. Field observations and visits to project sites were carried out. Results highlights the fact that the poor unadapt management strategies in the execution of programs results to inadequacy between activities offered by the programs and real needs and backgrounds of beneficiaries. Thus, funds offered by programs are often diverted or used for other aims. Non-selected youths, pointed out that modes of selection and funding are based on social affinities. Administrative officials admitted that there is too much centralization of decision making and sociopolitical influence. Given that more than 60% of the youths end up using project funds for other purposes, we believe that a more decentralized and a bottom-up approach in program management can reverse the situation and encourage youth adhesion

**Key Words:** Youths empowerment, Beneficiaries, State initiatives, Non-adhesion.

**INTRODUCTION**

The study of public policy has three main objects which are based on their origin, functioning system and the effects on the target (Muller, 1990). Public policies or governmental action programs in a particular sector (Meny Y., Thoenig J, 1989) have effects on the population. In developing countries with a high rate of youth's unemployment, many policies and programs have been initiated but however, their level of implication remains problematic.

The Cameroon government had developed interest in the area of youth employment and empowerment since the 1950s. The population is growing rapidly with a greater proportion (more than 50%) being the youths. The demographic challenges have recently led to government engagements via some Ministerial Departments and Institutions to tackle unemployment. (FNE, 2005). However, about 17% of the active population is still touched by unemployment (INS, 2005, IMF, 2006). Many efforts to combat unemployment in Cameroon suffer from challenges as training offered to these youths is not adapted with the present context of professional training (Remon F. et al., 2006, Mambou P., 2006,). However, the problems of these efforts are not only linked to training but equally to the will of state agents in implementing them as well as administrative strategies adopted. The world bank (2009) tell us of a need for a national youth policy, an integrated strategy for job creation but it does not suffice. Villegas J. (2016) suggests that since youth empowerment entails the social development of a state, programs and projects should be elaborated for them.

The government through the Ministry of Youth Affairs put in place some initiatives to handle unemployment and the youths of Kumbo have benefited from such programs. They are implemented by de-concentrated services of this ministry. These initiatives include the Program for the Empowerment of Youth through fabrication of sports material known in its French acronym as PIFMAS. This program was initiated and put in place in 2008 to encourage youths get involve in income generating activities through fabrication of sport material like nets, balls, shoes and many others. Another program destined for Cameroonian youths was the Support Program for Rural and Urban Youths known in its French acronym as PAJER-U initiated since 2011. It has as global objective the reduction of unemployment via the funding of activities in domains like agriculture, livestock, small and medium size enterprises and information and communication technologies. The last state program destined for youths in Kumbo is the

National Civic Service Agency for Participation in Development (NCSAPD) initiated in 2012 to promote the engagement of youths in agriculture and livestock rearing. Youths are selected, offered technical, civic training and then given some funds to start their own micro projects.

However, many youths have not identified themselves with such programs due to diverse problems. Roudet B, (1996) and IMF, (2006) opined that the disengagement of youths from such programs and other public initiatives is linked to crises of institutions. This aspect of institutional crisis is effectively crucial in the understanding of empowerment programs in Cameroon and the world at large. This depicts a loss of confidence in institutions which, however can be tackled through inter- generational dialogues (Becquet V. and Linare C., 2005). Laflamme C, (1984), suggests a sociological approach to tackle employment and empowerment ills. The development of youth programs is seen as a catalyst to enhance social development and this should be given keen attention in public policies.

A perusal of the youth empowerment programs in Kumbo shows that it doesn't suffice to put in place programs but rather demands for an effective implementation and follow-up strategies so as to permit such initiatives attain their laid down objectives. This study will bridge the gap by identifying reactions of beneficiaries of programs as well as execution strategies. The scientific challenge so far is the fact that these programs have registered very little studies in Cameroon and Kumbo in particular. Yet, these state initiatives have known devastating difficulties. One of

the most glaring problem or difficulty is the fact that beneficiaries though trained in specific sectors decide to use funds for other activities. Consequently, they do not adhere to activities proposed by the policies. This situation pushed us to investigate the logics that account for the non-adhesion of youths'beneficiaries to activities concerned in such state initiatives destined for them and look at the policy outlook for such programs in Kumbo.

**1.STUDY AREA**

This work is carried out in Kumbo Sub Division in Bui Division. It is the second-largest municipality in the North West Region of Cameroon after Bamenda. It lies about 2000 m above the sea level and is situated approximately 110 km away from Bamenda (the regional capital of the North West region). Kumbo lies on the Bamenda highlands ring road. The Population of Kumbo counts over 127,538 inhabitants, with a female dominance of about 53% over 47% men, spreading over 43 villages (Kumbo Council, 2019). Kumbo shares its boundaries with Nkum to the North, Mbvem to the East and to the South by Jakiri, then to the West by Oku-Noni (Figure 1). It is a mountainous town with 03distinctive hilly settlements, Tobin, Mbveh, and Squares. The economic activities include farming with products like beans, potatoes, maize, cocoyam, raring of animals like goats, cows, pigs and fowls. The area is predominantly rural with over 60 percent of youthful population.

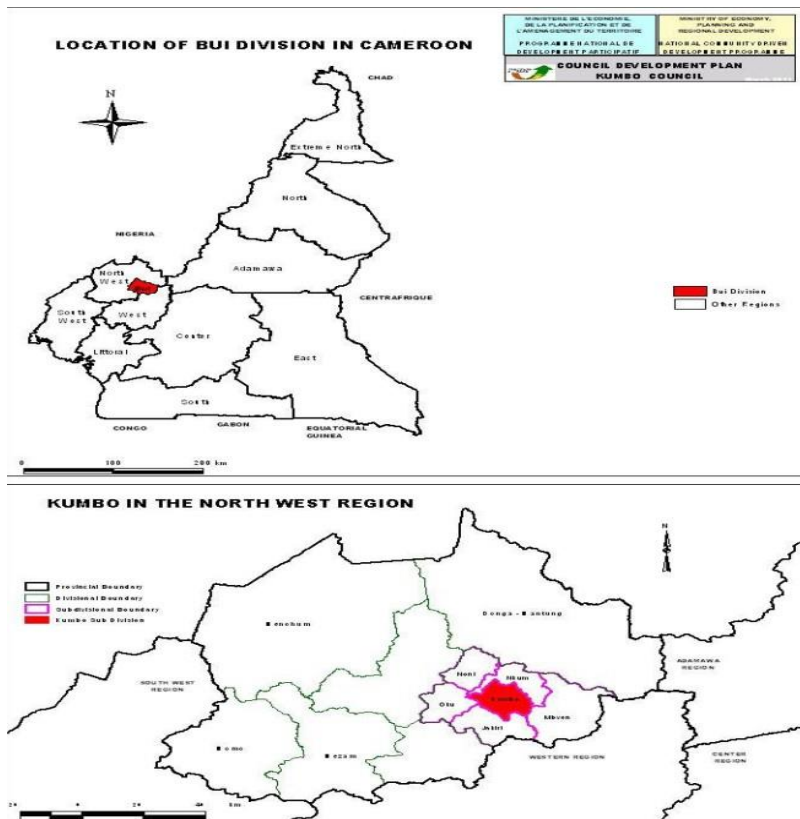


Figure 1. The Location of Kumbo

Source: Kumbo Council Development Plan,(2011)

2.TOOLS AND METHODS

This study adopted mainly the qualitative research approach. Data was collected through interviews and field observations. The study population includes youths who benefited from State programs and government authorities involve in the implementation of the programs. Guided interviews were conducted with 65 youths who benefited from state initiatives and 19 youths who applied and were not selected. By program, we conducted interviews with 50 youths beneficiaries from the National Civic Agency program (NCSAPD), 12 youths beneficiaries from the Rural and Urban Youths Support Program (PAJER-U), and 03 youths beneficiaries from program for the manufacture of sporting materials (PIFMAS). These beneficiaries are those that fall between the period of 2008 and 2014. The 19 non-selected youths were 6, 9,and 4 from each program respectively. We also carried out interviews with officials in charge of implementing these programs. Archives from the project offices were consulted and field visits carried out to some project sites. Data collected was then organized, transcribed and interpreted essentially on content analyses.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The State of Youth empowerment programs in Kumbo

Three main programs have been identified. The selection of these programs took into consideration the level of youth participation and the fact that they are piloted by the Ministry Youths Affairs. Beginning with NSCAPD program, it was initiated in 2012 and 20 youths were selected, trained and given financial grants to start up a project in either agriculture or livestock farming. However, field surveys revealed that just only 10% of the beneficiaries started with the activities for which they were funded. The other 90% diverted funding for other ventures. Even of the 10% who started, about half later abandoned and today, there is only one beneficiary who continued with the same activity. This one person who is still keeps livestock explained that he had been in the activity before the arrival of the project. This shows aspect of passion and commitment which other beneficiaries lacked. Furthermore, in 2013, 20 youths still benefited but none of the beneficiaries started with the activity for which they were trained and funded. And finally, in 2014 session, some beneficiaries did not even complete their training (Table 1)

**Table 1: Activity state of NSCAPD beneficiaries**

Year	Total N° of beneficiaries	Beneficiaries who started original activities	Beneficiaries who later abandoned	Beneficiaries who directly diverted funds	Beneficiaries presently into original activities
2012	20	10%	5%	90%	5%

2013	20	00	00	20	00
2014	20	00	00	20	00
Total	60	10%	5%	90%	5%

Source: Field work, (2017)

Table 1 depicts that from 2012 to 2014, 60 youths have benefited from the NSCAPD program and 90% diverted funds into different activities.

Another program under study is PAJER-U program that recruited 16 youths in 2011. Out of this number, we noticed that 25% of beneficiaries started with the activities for which they were funded and 12,5% later abandoned. Today, only 12,5% are into the activity for which they were trained. In the year 2012, only 01 youth benefited and still diverted funds. Again, in the year 2013, 01 person benefited and did not even start something. Finally, in 2014, 01 still benefited and is presently doing the activity for which she was funded (Table 2).

**Table 2: Activity state of PAJER-U beneficiaries.**

Year	Total N° of beneficiaries	Beneficiaries who started original activities	Beneficiaries who later abandoned	Beneficiaries who directly diverted funds	Beneficiaries presently into original activities
2011	16	25%	12,5%	75%	12,5%
2012	01	100%	100%	00	00
2013	01	00	00	100%	00
2014	01	100%	00	00	100%
Total	19	31,6%	15,8%	68,4%	15,8%

Source: Field work, (2017)

Table 2 shows that from the period of implementation in 2011 to 2014, only 19 youths benefited from the PAJER-U program. Out of this number, 68,4% of beneficiaries diverted funds and only 15,8% are still actively involve in the activities. It is noticed that the number of beneficiaries dropped from 16 in 2011 to 1 in 2014. This drop is attributed to limited funds. The beneficiaries who are still in the program are involved in poultry farming and market gardening. It should be noted these activities have been the livelihood sources of most people in this area, hence, the program helped enhanced what they were already doing. Finally, the same scenario has been

noticed with PIFMAS program that lasted just for a year. It is a socio economic empowerment project of youths through the creation of micro enterprises in the fabrication of sportive material. The beneficiaries were a group of 6 members with a joint workshop. After obtaining training, 50% left due to delays in the arrival of funds. Among the 50% benefited from the funding, they all abandoned with time and got into other activities.

The analysis paints a global picture of the diversion of funds into other non-intended uses or projects by the beneficiaries. Some beneficiaries used the funds on non-profit making ventures while others used the funds on other profit generating activities. For instance, one of beneficiary from PIFMAS bought a commercial moto-cycle while another who benefited from NCSAPD used the funds as a capital for fuel business. These ones may have used the funds for profitable ventures but they do not tie with project objectives. This is the main reason why some beneficiaries have not been able to reimburse the loans they obtained from the projects. In 2014, the Regional Coordination office of PAJER-U revealed that out of the 51,5millions FCFA granted to youths in Bui as loans, only 7,6millions FCFA have been reimbursed. This has negatively affected the project and led to a reduction in the number of beneficiaries over the years. As such, it is imperative to look at the logics behind such behavior from the beneficiaries.

#### Understanding the logics in the behavior of beneficiaries

The logics that permit to understand and explain the behavior of project beneficiaries in Kumbo are diverse. These logics lies in communication and information systems adopted in these programs, sociopolitical influence from elites, distribution of funds, beneficiaries motivations as well as backgrounds or profiles of youth beneficiaries.

The level of motivations of youth involve the projects determine their degree of engagement. Field surveys show that many youths in Kumbo went into projects without prior motivation. For example, about 65% of beneficiaries of NCSAPD brought out the issue of being convinced to register into programs that had no link with their vision, simply because had the previledge to be selected . In the same light, only 15% talked of the wish of wanting to continue in the activity for which they were already carrying out. This justifies the importance of history in individual development (Berger P. et Luckmann T., 1996). Also, 20% of them brought out the search for livelihood without having known the activities that were to be proposed to them as their motive. This situation is probably the reason why many youths diverted funds into other ventures. This lack of motivation equally stem from the fact that potential beneficiaries don't take part in elaborating the program. The programs are conceived at central administrative units without taking into consideration the real needs of the youths. This is contrary to Bruno Jarry declaration in Becquet and Linare who reminds us that true public policy in favor of the youths is supposed to be done with the youths. (Becquet V et Linare C., 2005)

In the same line, Crozier (1994, p. 38) outlined that in an organization, and at all levels, all initiatives or actions elaborated through frank negotiations, conscious and rational participation are more efficient than rational directives coming from above or from top. It is in this same line of reasoning that John Clayton Thomas (1995) undermines the benefits of public participation in the efficiency of an organization and especially on engagement of citizens. He posit that

Participation enhances the adhesion of the public or the citizens to decisions, conditions prior to their putting in place.

As to what concern communication and information systems, it was highlighted by official respondents or local project coordinators that some youths get informed on these programs before they themselves either from relatives, politicians, or official of the programs at central administrative levels. In Kumbo, the few determined youths especially in rural areas have limited access to information and must programs are designed for them. As such, those who finally benefit are not the real targets and this leads to high rates of diversion of funds. As pointed out by Crozier (1994) information is power and those who have the information have the chances of benefiting more than their counterpart. Marquie Gerard in Becquet V. and linare C. (2005) evoked an important aspect in understanding the non-adhesion of youths to projects and programs in their favor. They said, to understand the absence of youths engagement is to grasp their difficulties to acquire information. Not only information per say but on the appropriation of this information by these youths who gives it a sense and finality.

This situation equally emerges from administrative agents that political elites based in the capital city of Yaoundé also influence the selection of youths to be sponsored or funded They also influence on information which makes it in such a way that beneficiaries are not transferred to their appropriate activities for which they have passion, obliging the latter to register just to obtain funds. After funds are successfully obtained, they construct another world with the funds, the world which they consider best (social constructivism).

The distribution of funds is another logic that can permit to understand the non-adhesion of youths to activities for which they have been trained especially the NCSAPD, PIFMAS and PAJER-U programs in Kumbo sub division. The local official and field administrators acknowledged that administrative bottlenecks slow down processes of financial transaction. Funds do not only arrive late but are equally reduced in the course of stratification of functions. Youths who opted for agriculture admitted that before funds arrived, appropriate periods for their farming activities were already over. Thus, causing them to divert funds for other issues. It is also the case with PIFMAS in Kumbo where by after training, 50% of beneficiaries abandoned due to delays in funding. This depicts the degree of impatience in youths who are eager to active life. This corroborates with the views of Michel Crozier (1994, pp 38). In his critical analyzes of a bureaucratic administrative system, which is what is observed with these programs, he affirms that “stratification has made it in such a way that the passage from one category to another is difficult and communication between categories are bad.... ». Couple with this is the lack of follow up. Results from interviews indicate that financial and transport means are not there on time to permit local coordinators to go to the field and effectively carry out follow up activities. The wide gap between project executors and beneficiaries pave the way for divert of funds and non-adhesion to activities.

The profiles of beneficiaries equally exhibit a strong relationship with the level of adhesion. They have varied profiles ranging from trained teachers, university students, business operators, those trained in other professional domains and agriculturalist. Most of them took funds and got married, built houses, settled family debts, health care, paid fees and carried out commercial activities. The engagement into such activities is greatly linked to the social world

which they find themselves. These different profiles present different perceptions of the programs. For youths who immediately diverted funds for other aims, they registered just for formalities. Thus the mentality of wanting to eat what belongs to the state prevailed. For those who started before abandoning, the funds were less to finance the activities for which they opted, and non-appropriate arrivals of funds. Non selected youths presented disinterest and loss of trust for state institutions.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study focuses on the non-adhesion of beneficiaries to some projects in the youth sector (NCSAPD, PIFMAS, and PAJER-U programs). The main objective of the study was to examine the possible logics that explains the non-adhesion of youths and eventual low empowerment of beneficiaries in the activities offered by such initiatives. Results revealed that more than 65% of beneficiaries diverted project funds while about 50% of those who started the projects finally abandoned them. Social constructivism guided us to understand the stand of most beneficiaries and capture the logics of the behaviors. The logics that permits to understand and explain these lies in communication and information systems adopted in these programs, sociopolitical influence, distribution of funds, beneficiaries motivations, backgrounds or profiles of youth beneficiaries and follow-up. The analysis of these logics brought out inadequacies that favor the non-adhesion of beneficiaries to funded projects. This situation is a cause for concern. Hence, the effective implementation of youth projects should take into account their motivation and profiles and equally, project initiators should adopt a bottom-top approach. This ensure sustainability, yield the desired project objectives and empower the youths.

## REFERENCES

- BECQUET V. et LINARE C., (2005): Quand les jeunes s'engagent: Expérimentations et constructions identitaires. L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.
- CLAYTON J. T., (1990): Public involvement in public management: public Administration.
- CROZIER M., (1994): La société bloquée, Paris, édition du seuil
- FNE, (2005) : Stratégie et mesures d'appui du FNE en faveur des jeunes, yaounde
- GOVAN, B., (2004): "Issues in snowball sampling: The lawyer, the model and ethics. Qualitative Research. SAGE Publications, Inc. pp. 816–817
- INS, (2005): Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel au Cameroun, Yaoundé.
- LAFLAMME C., (1984) Une contribution a un cadre théorique sur l'insertion professionnelle des Jeunes vol 10, Montréal



---

MAMBOU P. F., (2006): Stratégies d'insertion professionnelle des jeunes: le cas de la ville de Yaoundé, thesis, ISSEA, Yaoundé

MENY Y., THOENIG J.C. (1989), « Politiques Publiques », Paris, PUF, 391 p.

Muller P., (1990), QUE SAIS-JE? Les politiques publiques, premier editions. Presses universitaire de France, Paris. 127 pp

REMON F, et alt., (2006) : L'emploi et la formation au Cameroun. Edition proximité, Yaoundé.

ROUDET B., (1996) : Des jeunes et des Associations, Paris, Harmattan.

TREPOS J.Y., (2000) : L'analyse des trajectoire : Ressources qualitatives et quantitatives. Harmattan, University de Mezt pp 12.

VILLEGAS J., (2016) : insertion sociale et professionnelle des jeunes en Afrique Subsaharienne, Agence Française de Développement, paris.

World Bank, (2009): Document on Africa development indicators, 2008/09. Youth and employment in Africa: the potential, the problem, Washington DC.

ZIMMERMANN M. A., (2000): Empowerment theory psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. Handbook of community psychology. PP43-64, New York, Kluwer Academic/plenum publisher.