

YOUTHS MOTIVATION IN POLICIES AND REPERCUSSIONS ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN KUMBO SUB DIVISION, CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

Youth policies are a crucial tool for youth empowerment and development in most developing countries. However, the motivation of youths to get engaged into policies or programs should be in adequation with objectives of such policies for this to be achieved. Using selected government youth programs, this study aims at identifying motivation factors of youth engagement into programs and their effect on youth empowerment in Kumbo Sub Division. The main hypothesis, is that the low empowerment of youths' beneficiaries in activities offered by state programs is accounted for by disequilibrium between youth motivation and objectives of such policies. Using snowball sampling technic, theory of social constructivism, associated with critical youth empowerment theory 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 staff who animate the execution of these policies as well as field observations and visits to project sites. Results highlights the fact that the poor outcome of youth policies is linked to unbalance between motivation factors, and objectives assigned to such policies. Non-selected youths, expressed interest but lack of social capital. Administrative officials admitted that there is self-interest among stakeholders involved. As a result of all these, a consideration of youths aspiration and motivation as well as a bottom-up approach in youth policy designs and execution can help achieve policy youth empowerment.

Key Words: Motivation, Youths empowerment, Beneficiaries, Youth policies.

INTRODUCTION

The study of public policy has gain grounds since the 1990s notably with scholars such as Meny Y., Thoenig J, Muller P and many others who proposed study and analytical frameworks to this domain of study. However most of these early writers discussed in a general manner on public policy without precision on sectors or domains of public policies.

Most governments across the globe are promoting youth entrepreneurship programs in an attempt to create income generating activities but this has recorded very little success (OECD Development Centre, 2018). In developing countries like Cameroon, especially with high rate of youth's unemployment and associated repercussions, many youths projects and programs have been elaborated and put in place but has not permitted states to effectively handle youth related hitches. (Kome T. et alt, 2019). The reasons that account for this are numerous especially those

linked to actors like psychological or cognitive factors (motivation). It should be recalled here that what is considered as youth varies in context and space. This pushed Bourdieu (1984) to affirm that youthfulness is just a word.

The Cameroon government has initiated policies to handle youth unemployment addressed to nationwide youths among which are the youths of Kumbo. They are implemented at local levels by de-concentrated services of ministries concerned. Many ministerial departments intervene in the youth sector like Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, Ministry of Youth Affairs as well as Small and Medium Size Enterprise Ministry in Cameroon. Making a sample of 03 projects of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, we worked on these in Kumbo. These program includes Program for the Empowerment of Youth through fabrication of sports material known in its French acronym as PIFMAS. Initiated in 2008, it was aimed at attracting youths in fabrication of sport material like nets, balls, shoes and many others income generating activities. The Support Program for Rural and Urban Youths known in its French acronym as PAJER-U is another national initiative initiated in 2011 that the youths of Kumbo benefited from. It recruits, train and fund activities in the domains of agriculture, livestock, small and medium size enterprises as well as information and communication technologies. The last governmental policy addressed to the 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. In this program, youths are selected, offered technical, civic training and then given some funds to start up individual micro projects.

However, field observations brings out that the empowerment of youths beneficiaries from the above initiatives have stood low. The logics that account for these are of many different sources as Kome T et al (2019) showed. However, detail account of each of the logics remain hanging. Many researchers have showed possible reasons for disengagement of youths from public space and initiative that explains their low empowerment. Roudet B, (1996) posit that the disengagement of youths from public initiatives policies is linked to institutional crises. Douglas

M. (1986) tell us that the understanding of public policies is to be taken from institutional culture. However, issues linked to motivation of different actors involved should be questioned especially the target population. It is for this reason that Nickki D. and Larson R. (2011) posit that for youths to benefit from developmental opportunities provided via programs, they need to not only attend but become psychologically engaged and motivated in the activities of such programs. The gain of youths from youth programs need to be felt not only at individual levels but also in communities where they find themselves (Louise B. Jennings et al, 2006). The question of how youth become motivated is crucial to understand youth empowerment programs. Motivation as a determinant of the success of youth programs is greatly linked to youth aspiration. Youths are only motivated on issues that suit their aspiration.

A perusal of the youth empowerment programs in Kumbo shows that it doesn't suffice to put in place programs but rather take into account motivation of actors involved and laid down objectives of the policies. This present paper will bridge the gap by identifying motivational factors of beneficiaries and their link to objectives assigned to youth programs. It should be noted here that these programs have registered very little studies in Cameroon and Kumbo in

particular despite their unbalance outcomes. Among the problems registered in these programs is low empowerment rate. This situation pushed us to investigate the motivation of actors. Kome T. et al (2019) focused on administrative strategies to understand the empowerment of beneficiaries of these policies. This study centers on motivation of youth beneficiaries as an element to understand empowerment of beneficiaries from these policies.

STUDY AREA

This work is carried out in Kumbo Sub Division which is the headquarters of Bui Division all of them found in the North West Region of Cameroon. Kumbo is the second largest town in this region 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). It is occupied by an ethnic group called Nso with few immigrants mostly from Nigeria and other parts of the country. The Population of Kumbo counts over 127,538 inhabitants, with a female dominance of about 53% over 47% men (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 03 distinctive hilly settlements, Tobin, Mbveh, and Squares. The main economic activities practiced here is agriculture with the cultivation of main farm products such as beans, potatoes, maize, cocoyam, raring of animals like goats, cows, pigs and fowls. The area is predominantly rural with more than 50% of youthful population.

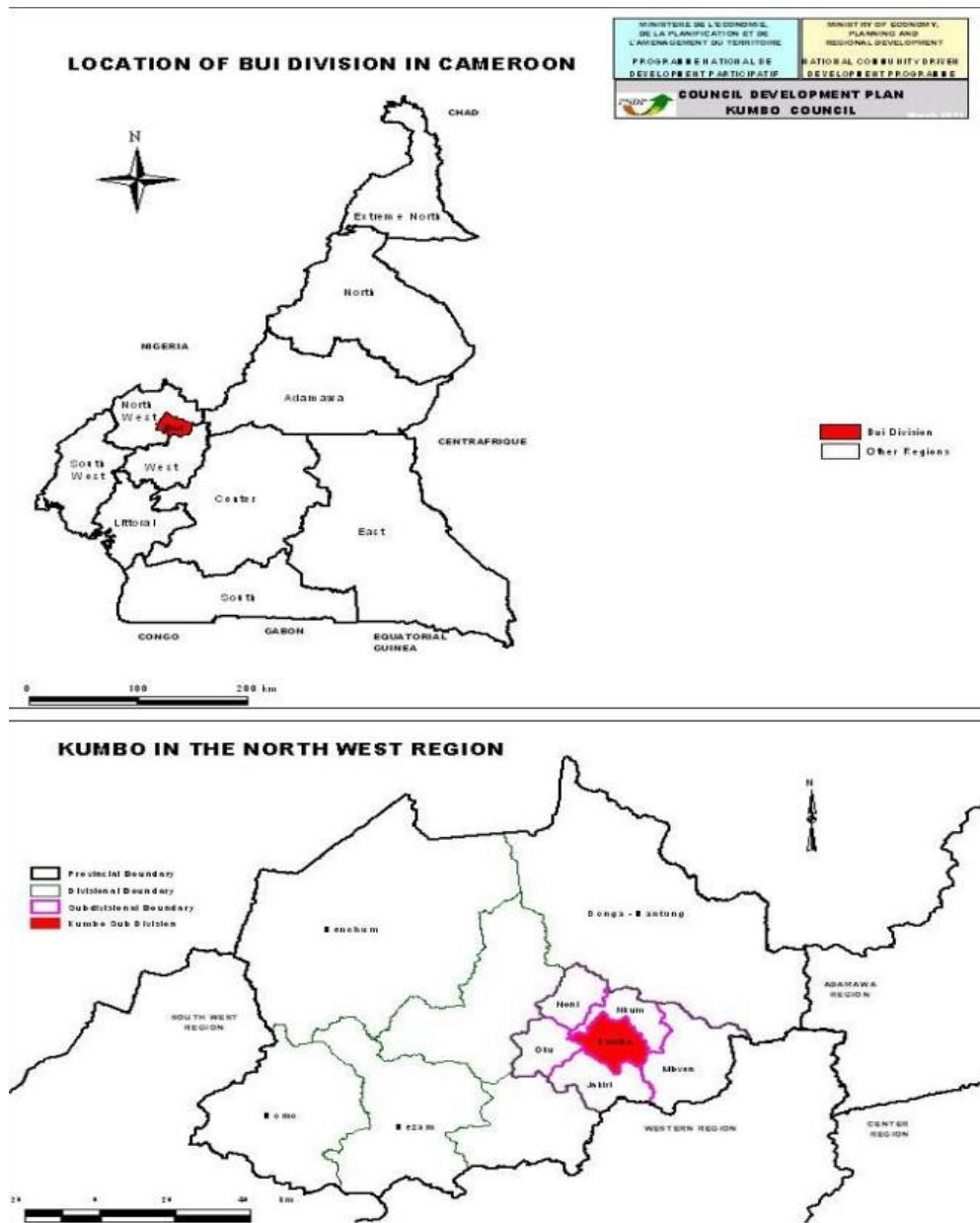


Figure 1. The Location of Kumbo

Source: Kumbo Council Development Plan,(2011)

TOOLS AND METHODS

This study is essentially qualitative and thus uses qualitative methods. The data used to explain this study are of primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews to youth beneficiaries, non beneficiaries and local animators charge with implementing youth policies. we also carried out direct observation of projects sites and

youth activities. Secondary data was collected from existing documents such as general as well as specialized books, articles, policy and working papers and electronic website linked to the study theme. A snowball sampling technic was used

Guided interviews were conducted with about 60 youths who benefited from state initiatives and about 19 youths who applied and were not selected. By program, we conducted interviews with more than 45 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. Archives from the project offices including administrative reports were consulted. Data collected was then organized, transcribed and interpreted essentially on content analyses. Interpretation of the results was done referring to theories and scientific concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

General Empowerment situation of youth beneficiaries of policies in Kumbo

Empowerment is a multi-level construct. It is a social action processes, and an outcomes both at individual and collective levels. Generally, empowerment signifies when individuals, families, organizations, as well as communities gain holistic control and mastery, within their immediate communities or environment (Zimmerman, 2000). According to critical youth empowerment theory by Louise B. Jennings et al (2006), who proposed an understanding and evaluation frameworks of empowerment, six dimensions should be considered namely a welcoming and safe environment; meaningful participation and engagement, close gap in power between youth and adults, engagement in interpersonal and political progress; participation in sociopolitical processes to impact change and finally individual- and community level holistic empowerment. Basing on this understanding, we can determine the empowerment levels of beneficiaries of programs in Kumbo.

Three main programs were identified. These programs were considered for the study because of the level of youth beneficiaries participation and empowerment. The programs identified had in common the circumstances of emergence, duration of existence and under the tutelage of the same ministerial department, that is the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

To begin with the NSCAPD program, field sources revealed that between the year 2012 and 2014, about 60 youths benefited from the program. They were recruited, trained and offered funds to engage in income generating activities. However, according to field sources, more than 60% of those who completed training and received funding have not been empowered by the activities for which they were trained as they used the funds for other aims. Today, just 5% of beneficiaries are empowered by the program activities (livestock).

The second program identified by the study is PAJER-U program. Between the year 2011 and 2014, a total of 19 youths were recruited, trained and offered financial support. Field sources

revealed that about 80% of beneficiaries have not been empowered as a result of abandon of the programs by beneficiaries and just an insignificant percentage of 15 are successfully engaged and empowered by the program activities. The 15% empowered are into poultry farming and market gardening. The same scenario is being observed with PIFMAS program. The program registered one group of 06 youths. Today, the impact of this program is totally absent as no beneficiary is exercising the activity for which they were funded. It should be recalled here that youths are effectively empowered when they engage in actions or activities that create change in organizational, institutional, and community levels. These youths after abandon express dismay and disinterest for activities offered by these programs. Many logics has explained this situation (Kome T et al, 2019). However, each and every logics should be developed in details. The examination of what motivates youths as one of the most crucial logics to engage into such policies becomes imperative.

Youths motivation and perceptions in policies in Kumbo

Motivations levels of youth involve in projects is one of the logics that determine their degree of engagement (Kome T et al, 2019). As well, the engagement level of youths in policies determine their empowerment. Many diverse motivations and perceptions were raised during field data collection. However, there are predominance of some motivation factors such as social affinities (affiliation), financial motivations, activity history linked to self-confident and personal connection to program activity.

Beginning with social affinities or affiliation, beneficiaries revealed that they were firstly informed by their closed ones involved in this program at central administration levels. They brought out that they were convinced by these close ones to go in for these programs who are either their relatives, political elites, or friends who are at the same time officials in charge of the programs at central administration or close to officials involved.

During an interview with one of the NCSAPD program beneficiary, he declared as follows: “my uncle called me to go and register. I did not want it but he told me that even if I don’t like the activities of the program, I should put my name because at the end, money will be shared. I then went ahead and registered my name. i was not even interested with their training...”. (interview carried out on the 13 of June 2017 with Eric Chia). This beneficiary simply wanted to exploit the “opportunity” offered him by the uncle. Registration motives of this beneficiary is contrary to objectives attributed to the initiatives.

Another beneficiary of this same program revealed he was informed by a municipal councilor. This same idea figured in expressions of so many other beneficiaries of other programs contacted. . They thus constructed the knowledge of becoming interested to register for this programs via interaction with their close ones (social construction). In fact, it is the social context in which they find themselves that explain their actions. This action though in favor of the individual is detrimental to the program.

The delegate who is one of the local animators of these programs declared that: “at times, we are being informed by these youths of the launching of the programs. At times, they come here

wanting to register when we don't yet have any official document. Because they have been informed by our hierarchy who are love ones to these youths". (interview carried out on the 12 of June 2017 with Nduh Eseh). These portrays the effects of centralization of decision making in public policy designing and formulation This said, we can conclude on this note that those who

benefit do so thanks first to the fact that they have information from their close ones and second because these close ones convinced them to register.

For the non-selected youths or non-beneficiaries, they expressed diverse feelings and perceptions. They acknowledged the fact that being close to program officials can facilitate being selected in these programs. This is what came out from the words of one of the non-beneficiary of PAJER- program who said: "masa, we know all those games that they play. I personally believe that for you to be selected, you should be a child of a "big man" or have "connaissance. I really loved that program but had nobody to follow my documents, I had nobody behind me, my family has no body..." (interview carried out on the 14 of June with Boris Kemkia). Those who have relations or social capital to retake the words of Bourdieu linked to the programs have high chances of being selected more than their counterparts.

Another declaration made by a non-beneficiary of the NCSAPD reads as follows: "my brother, it is not easy in this country, if you don't have influential person behind you, you cannot be chosen as a beneficiary; even to get information on the program was not easy for me; I only got it from a friend whose sister called from Yaoundé...." (interview carried out on the 14 of June 2017 with Mainimo Christain). In Kumbo, information related to social capital or affinities is a problem especially for youths in rural areas. As such, those who register for programs are not the real targets and this leads to low empowerment rate of these beneficiaries. Crozier (1994) has made an important contribution in the understanding of the role of information in the society. He stated that information is power and thus those who have the information have the chances of benefiting more than their counterpart. The latter are not only having the information on time but they are equally being convinced to get engaged for motives contrary to those laid down by the programs.

From the motivations raised, we understand that information and selection are not based on universal characteristics but rather on social affinities that acts as engagement engine of beneficiaries. This is a critic addressed to a bureaucratic organization by Yves-Frederic Lilian, (2001). Those who convince youths to register do not also care of the impacts of their action. Yves-Frederic Lilian, in 2001 posit that in a bureaucratic system of administration, actions and activities of those involved are not justified. He points out that they are based on subjective individual interest.

The second motive advanced by more that 40% of beneficiaries was financial. Though not interested on activities offered by the programs, they wanted to register just to get funds for issues their consider primordial. A beneficiary of the NCSAPD program affirmed that: "I did not even know what I was going in for, I only discover it when we started our training. Bit as

I was told money will be offered at the end, I persevered till the end to get that money. The money I got provided me with capital for my petrol business today” (interview carried out on the 13 of June 2017 with Seka Abdoulahi). This beneficiary is today carrying out business in the domain of petrol. His aspiration did not match with that laid down by the program

Still on the NSCAPD program, a beneficiaries declared that “that their nonsense be first please na who. Who tell them say I want do agriculture or say I want do poultry. I be just put my name na for get the money masa.....”. (interview carried out on the 13 of June 2017 with Ntutin Protus). This depicts disequilibrium between the objective presented by the beneficiary and the goal set by the program. This financial motivation factor featured in the sayings of many beneficiaries. This reminds us of the famous game theory that stipulate that the actors involved in a game only try to maximize profit to their own self and thus where each of them tries to grasp the benefit he considers best. (Geçkil, I., et al 2010),

The third youth motivation factor for youth programs in Kumbo is activity history linked to personal connection to program activity. Views expressed by beneficiaries during interview, on thier actions were linked to the pass. A beneficiary of PAJER-U declared that: “so they expect me to forget what I was already doing to do agriculture. I was cooking my food and selling at the Tobin round about and it was feeding my and the family. Then they come and take a woman like me with a large family to go and waste my time saying they want to train me to do agriculture.....” (interview realized on the 14 of June 2017 Ethel Dzemo). This is not far from the case of one of the beneficiary who was a graduate from teachers training college and was waiting for integration. She made us understand the money she took help her to rather compile her integration into public service documents. This was her primordial push factor into the program. Beneficiaries become players concerned with what they consider beneficial to them with reference to their pass experience. Though the “game” played by about 60% of actors involved was contrary to program activities, about 5% of “beneficiaries players” revealed some interest in program activities

Activity history of few beneficiaries rather stimulated their engagement into activities offered by the programs. This is the case of a beneficiary of the NCSAPD actively involved in poultry framing up till date. During an interview with him, he declared that: “is just by coincidence because I really love doing a part time activity like this one. So when I got of the programs, I did not hesitate to go in.....”. (interview carried out on the 15 of June with Linyuy Muhamadou Moye). History play an important part in shaping the lives of human beings. This is one of the principle of social constructivism theory that stipulate that the development of human beings today has a great link to their pass. Th youths in Kumbo has demonstrated significantly that motivation of their actions ties to their pass experience. This has greatly impacted their life. The situation of youths beneficiaries has proven their absence during conception of the projects. Becquet V et De Linare C. (2005) posit that a local youth policy that is supported by reception, information, participation and orientation is essential and can become support points to youths’ engagement.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study focuses on motivations and empowerment of beneficiaries of some projects in the youth sector (NCSAPD, PIFMAS, and PAJER-U programs). The main objective of the study is to identify motivation factors of youth engagement into programs and their effect on youth empowerment in Kumbo Sub Division. Results reveals that more than 60 % of youth who get engaged in programs do so for reason not linked to programs objectives thereby engendering poor outcomes of such youth policies such as divert of funds and abandon of project activities. This adversely affect their empowerment. Social constructivism theory associated with critical youth empowerment theory guided us to identify and understand the actions of most actors and grasp the empowerment of beneficiaries. The analysis of these motivation factors brought out disequilibrium between individual interest, aspirations and objectives assigned to such policies. This situation is a cause for concern. Hence, the effective implementation of youth projects and policies should privileged participative approach in the various levels, aspirations of the target and should adopt a bottom-top approach. This ensure holistic and sustainable empowerment of youths, attend desired policy objectives and objectives at global scale.

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