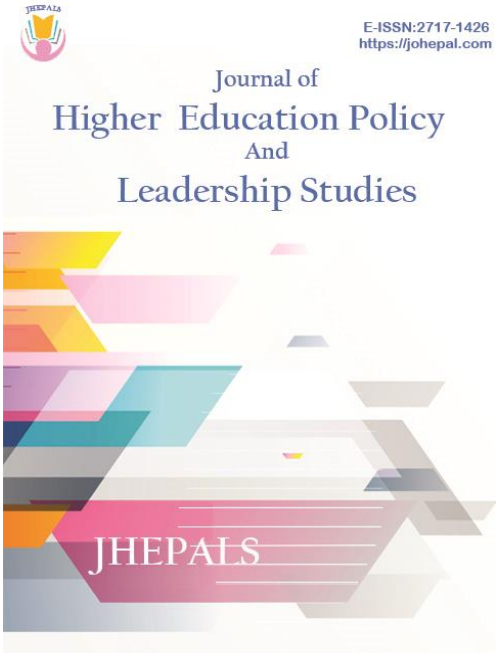
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Planning Coherence Rationales: The Case of the Cameroonian Higher Education Programmes Development



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Abstract

This study discusses programmes planning at the level of the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon. It aims at showing the coherence it implies in a context of mismatch between policies and facts. After having shown that coherence follows a rationale, theories used in the field of planning were explained: rationalist theory, incremental theory, contingency theory, ex-post rationalist theory, sensemaking-sensegiving theory, resource dependence theory and discursive theory. Based on this theoretical framework, seven coherence rationales have been highlighted: rationalist coherence, incremental coherence, contingent coherence, post-rationalist coherence, sense coherence, resource dependence coherence, and discursive coherence. Relying on practice-based theorizing methodology, this study used documents as data. The analysis reveals the dominance of the rationalist coherence rationale. This result expresses organization rigidity, which does not allow sufficient interaction with its environment.

Keywords: Planning; Coherence Rationale; Higher Education; Programmes Development; Cameroon

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Introduction

Across education and training systems around the world, Higher Education is an important key issue. In a context driven by both society and the knowledge economies, the phenomenon of Higher Education systems competition with universities ranking (Hazelkorn, 2013) gave rise to the search of capital accumulation (publications) and symbolic power (rankings) (Münch, 2014). The reliance of Higher Education on capital makes it have the most significant levels of education in the increase of economic growth (Fonkeng & Ntembe, 2009; Kafimbou et al., 2011). Courses provided and knowledge derived turn Higher Education as a critical factor for the productive system. However, reaching such a level requires good governance because quality depends. Governance implies planning. The latter refers to objectives setting and the strategies used to achieve them. In the field of Higher Education, planning is a technique and a tool through which managers develop plan to enable success (Gordon et Fischer, 2016), especially in the context of academic competition. Then, planning appears as a mean for Higher Education systems to position themselves locally, nationally and internationally. Nonetheless, for quality purposes, planning practice is called to take coherence into account (Fullan & Quinn, 2018). Essential concept in the modern administration of educational systems, coherence is seen as connection and synchronization among the elements of an organization. Given the complexity of Higher Education systems, it appears as a means whereby managers coordinate activities in order to prevent any potential contradiction. The scientific literature points out the lack of studies of this issue in the field of Higher Education planning, while it is essential in understanding quality of educational systems pilotage (De Ketele & Gerard, 2007).

In the context of its planning, the Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education has, since 2014, designed a policy based on four programmes: the first one concerns technology, the second is related to professionalization, the third is research and innovation, and the last is departmental governance and institutional support. The major component of the Higher Education plan for these programmes are that they are expected to contribute to its two main economy objectives: growth and employment. In this direction, Higher Education has a major role to play in achieving these goals. However, its system presents a set of deficiencies which undermine the quality of this management. Those flaws are related to four main points: training management, entrepreneurship, research and ICT.

Concerning the first point, state universities generally have two types of schools. On one hand, we have traditional schools (Faculties), and on the other hand, we have training schools (colleges, advanced schools). The first type of which there are 33, representing 41.77% while the second type have 46 or 58%. According to the Ministry of Higher Education, training offered in traditional schools are fewer (41.77%) than those offered in training schools (58.23%) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2017, 2018). But, the number of students from traditional schools are greater than those from training schools. However, growth and employment, so important to the Cameroonian economy planning requires more people to be trained in technological and professional domains than in traditional fields (Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du territoire, 2010).

The second aspect under training management relies on students' supervision. Its role in students training makes it a fundamental aspect to be taken into consideration in Higher

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Education planning. Teachers are one of the major resources in students follow-up and training. While it is possible to note progress on the increase of teaching human resources, students supervision ratio remains problematic because in some public universities, some teachers sometimes have more than 100 students to supervise (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). Moreover, the mapping of the Cameroonian public Higher Education training shows the dominance of academic degrees over professional ones. Even in the fields of science and technology there are 91 academic bachelors against 33 professional ones; 141 research masters against 64 professional ones (Direction des accréditations universitaires et de la qualité, 2020).

Relative to the second point, it is universally accepted that entrepreneurship plays a central role in societal development. The proof is that developed countries are societies in which the largest companies in the world flourish. As entrepreneurship development results from the education system in general and that of Higher Education in particular (Janssen, 2016), that fact is neither an accident nor a coincidence. Related to Cameroonian context, entrepreneurship development at the level of Higher Education has resulted in a policy of professionalization and on projects such as the Support Programme for the Employability of Young Graduates of Higher Education for business creation. These policies reflect a particular scheme to promote employment (Abdourhaman, 2018), but also and especially self-employment. Despite these intentions, Cameroonian economy is characterized by a weak entrepreneurial spirit (Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle, 2016).

Regarding the third point, research is one of the traditional missions of Higher Education, particularly the university system. It is defined by the Higher Education orientation law which states the exploitation of research results. However, while it is true that some Cameroonian universities have a positive participation in economic growth, it remains that others continue to have growth contribution lower than 1, as shown in the table below (Table 1):

Table 1.
State Universities' Contribution to Growth

Universities	Years			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
University of Bamenda	•	0,32%	0,03%	3,03%
University of Buea	-2,67%	0,81%	-1,13 %	- 0,08%
University of Douala	0,08%	0,85%	3,08%	- 0,75%
University of Dschang	-1,84%	0,01%	0,42%	0,90%
University of Maroua	-0,16%	1,26%	-0,77%	1,74%
University of Ngaoundere	-0,30%	0,53%	0,42%	1,14%
University of Yaounde I	-0,95	2,94	-0,88	2,23
University of Yaounde II	-0,50	1,58	-0,74	4,77

Source : Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

This table shows that despite the efforts made by the government, university research remains weak in terms of impact. For the fourth point, Cameroon's Higher Education has not escaped the Information and Communication Technologies tendency. In this wake, the State, through the Ministry of Higher Education, has set up the «e-national higher education network». This project, which is part of the digital governance, aims at building the Third

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Generation University in Cameroon. Only, there is a lack of real digital libraries in Cameroonian universities, and the rate of high-speed Internet use is around 4% (Ministère des Postes et Télécommunications, 2016). This necessarily impacts e-leaning implementation, given the amount of bandwidth it requires.

This context disproves the coherence assumption which states that elements of a system should not have any mismatch. Therefore, based on these observations, the issue at stake is: which coherence underpins a planning having a mismatch between its policy and facts?

Defining Coherence

Coherence is a complex concept due to its transdisciplinarity. Used in disciplines such as communication, linguistics, translation, strategy, management control, psychology, economics and even in education, it becomes difficult to easily interpret or evaluate it. Nevertheless, we can refer to some researchers to have its different meanings. Thus, in the field of communication, coherence can be understood as the relationship between what a speech says and an organization practices (Pech-Varguez, 2003). When placed within an education management framework, coherence is presented as the conformity level that exists between means and intentions (De Ketele & Gerard, 2007). As part of project management, it is seen as a method embedded in developing and implementing a strategy (Travaillé & Dupuy, 2014). In terms of school governance, Fullan and Quinn (2018) presents it, among other things, as the consistency among an organization's mission, policies and practices. However, coherence is not a condition but a constant pursuit. As such, it is linked to quality (De Ketele & Gérard, 2007). In this perspective, coherence implies the roll out of mechanisms (Baille, 2016). It is about coordination, control, cohesion and cooperation. These mechanisms are both technical (coordination and control) and social (cohesion and cooperation) means. They explain the organizations actions in coherence quest.

In summary, all these meanings share the view that coherence is concerned when elements of a system are free of contradictions. But in this study, coherence is defined as a method through which an organization establishes uniformity between its means and its objectives.

Brief Overview of Planning Theories

Planning is a domain crossed by several theories. Based on the concept of strategy and Kamuzinzi et al., (2009a, b) researches, seven planning theories have been identified: that is the rationalist theory, the incremental theory, the contingent theory, the post-rationalist theory, the sense making-sense giving theory, the resource dependence and discursive theories.

Rationalist Theory

Also known as linear model (Chaffee, 1985), rational model (Peters & Waterman, 1982), synoptic model (Fredrickson, 1984) or planning model (Mintzberg, 1994), the rationalist theory is one of the most widely used theoretical models in planning. Recognized as the classic approach in this area, it postulates that planning consists of defining a logical and continuous process to enable organizations to achieve its objectives (Ansoff, 1968).

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Coherence Rationales: Cameroonian HE

According to this approach, activities are carried out into steps, in terms of mission setting, general policy formulation, and resource allocation (Faludi, 1978; Robbins et al., 2014). It also uses a technical approach (Sandercok, 1998). The rationalist theory presupposes information gathering. This implies optimal choices by the actors due to a preliminary diagnosis and the evaluation of each option. It is therefore based on formalization, complete information and strategic control (Mbengue & Ouakouak, 2012). Focusing on problem solving, it aims at preparing actions to be carried out in the future (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009 a, b). However, this theoretical approach has been widely criticized for its rigidity. It is on the basis of this limit that incremental theory will be built.

Incremental Approach

Incrementalism criticizes the rationalist universalism arguing that the environment in which planning takes place is more complex than the idea put forward by the rationalist approach. This theory starts from the assumption that individuals are unable to have a perfect mastery of their environment in terms of information. Their faculty doesn't allow it. Thus, instead of talking about perfect rationality, this approach talks of bounded rationality due to ambiguous and complex environment (Simon, 1955). It is therefore difficult to carry out planning action according to a standardized methodology, because of information density and the plurality of interpretations they can generate. In planning practice, incrementalism rejects the idea of organizing activities into stages due to environmental fluctuations. The latter is marked by instability, openness, complexity, chaos, disorder, blur, creativity, contradiction, paradox, ambiguity (Donnadieu & Karsky, 2002). Therefore, it becomes difficult to make perfect forecasts. Given these pitfalls, organizations can only proceed through iterations. From this perspective, incremental theory argues that planning consists of small "path-making" adjustments, taking into account actions vagaries (Lindblom, 1959; Quinn, 1982; Atkinson, 2011). Its aim is to adjust actions vagaries (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a, b). It highlights the adaptive aspect of decision making based on the actions hazards. Contingency theory will extend this idea by integrating organizational configurations.

Contingency Theory

Contingency and incrementalism share the same philosophical background: human cognitive ability is limited. Therefore, he is unable to make perfect forecasts. Similarly, it rejects the "one best way" principles of classical management. However, incrementalism focuses on the amount of information to be processed while contingency emphasizes on complexity, uncertainty and risks generated by the environment. In contrast to rationalism which advocates systematic application of organizational principles, contingency assumes the reliance of planning on a set of parameters (contingency factors). In this perspective, to plan means adapt the organization to the environmental contingencies (Donaldson, 2015). Adaptation is essential because organizational environment can have low, temperate or high uncertainty (Mintzberg, 1982, 1990; Mintzberg & Waters, 1990). There is a type of planning and therefore a particular organizational structure (Mintzberg, 1982, 1990; Mintzberg & Waters, 1990), based on the uncertainty faced by the managers. For performance purposes, it must be fit between organizational structure and its environment. Thus, the goal pursued by contingency theory is adaptation to the environmental variables (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a,

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b). However, planning is not only practical but also symbolic. It is this aspect that will be exploited by the ex-post rationalist theory.

The Ex-Post Rationalist Theory

Also known as the theory of irrational organization, this theory arose from the issue of choice precedence on action. Most of the authors who are part of this theory argue that, in terms of planning, action can be taken without formulating beforehand actions that we decide to take. It means actions can exist without prior decisions (Brunsson, 1985). Then, decision-making process functions as a legitimizing argument of a previously made choice (Brunsson, 1985). The facts presented are highlighted not to evaluate them and choose the best but, to justify choices of one or a set of decisions taken previously. In addition, ex-post rationalist theory argues that planning steps taken by a previous position of a problem are less frequent than those where the problem is raised retrospectively, since there are situations requiring responses not anticipated by the organization. This results in an unplanned decision due to environment unpredictability (Brunsson, 1985). Thus, the decision formalization comes after. Therefore, this approach functions as actions ex-post rationalization (Starbuck, 1983; Starbuck, 1985). The theory goal is to legitimize a choice retrospectively (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a, b). Nevertheless, the latter shows that the symbolic dimension of planning goes beyond legitimacy quest to integrate actors' representations.

Sensemaking-Sensegiving Theory

This theory postulates that planning is a representation that allows decision-makers to make one's way to an uncharted territory (Weick, 1995). Variety that an organization implies in terms of actors, culture and sensitivities can mean lack of cohesion and then severely taint the organization and plunge it into chaos. In this context, planning consists, in constructing a set of representations allowing world interpretation. These actions serve to influence the present and the future (Weick, 1995). Decisions made within organization are not primarily about explaining or describing what needs to be done. They are representations that change and allow actors to give meaning (create order) in the mayhem surrounding their actions (Laroche, 1995). The decision-making process related to planning is then an artifact used by decision-makers according to the necessary juncture. What they call "decisions" are organized items used to legitimize previous actions, to act on the present or forecast the future (Laroche, 1995). The aim conveyed by this theory in a planning context is the sharing of meaning generation (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a, b). These previous theories were criticized because of their intra-organizational perspective. Most organizations cooperate with others and it is the purpose of the resource dependence theory.

The Resource Dependence Theory

This has become one of the dominant theoretical frameworks in the explanation of why organizations engage in resources acquisition. Resource dependence theory argues that organizations depends on the external environment (more specifically on resource-holding organizations). This exposes the needy organization to external control of its activities (Pfeffer, & Salancik, 2003). The interdependence between the needy organization and its environment is not established in terms of uncertainty but in terms of "external resources acquisition and use". Organizations are not autonomous but rather constrained by a

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network of dependencies with other organizations (Hillman et al., 2009). In practice, planning means seeking to cooperate with organizations for resource acquisition. This is all about negotiating the support of resource-holding organizations either through the supplying organization control (compliance) or through a reduction strategy of its power over them (avoidance) (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). The aim of such a planning is to mobilize external resources from other organizations (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a, b). However, the discursive theory will show that cooperation is not only related to organizations but to individuals also.

The Communicative Theory

Developed in a context where different frames about the rules of the game generate a variety of interpretations, this theory relies in reducing ambiguity in the context of strategic planning (Sotarauta, 1998). In a dialogical interaction approach, it brings together resources from two or more stakeholders in order to solve a set of problems that cannot be solved individually. It also implies power sharing and collective responsibility for actions related to management as well as results. Communicative planning theory is a collaborative approach to planning since it involves actors participation in actions execution as well as common understanding and shared meaning generation (Hytönen, 2016). Organizations that follow this theory strive to create a common sense within addressees with conflicting interests and different understandings. The objective is to achieve a minimum consensus. The inherent aim of communicative theory is the search for consensus among actors with conflicting interests (Kamuzinzi et al., 2009a, b).

From Coherence and Planning to Planning Coherence Rationales

Examining the aforementioned theoretical approaches from coherence definition developed, we observe that each theory carries an aim. To achieve this, each theory implies a particular strategy. It means actors use specific means to achieve the organization's objectives. These are processes in the rationalist theory, context in the incremental theory, contingencies factors (constraints) in the contingent theory, internal legitimacy in the ex-post rationalist theory, meaning in the sense making-sense giving, external legitimacy in the resource dependence theory, consensus in the discursive theory. In fact, these elements show coherence human aspect, which takes shape in activities. On this basis, there is no coherence *perse*, but coherence constructions. That is why we rather talk about "coherence rationale". Combining coherence definitions and the theories, seven coherence rationales have been developed: rationalist coherence rationale, incremental coherence rationale, contingent coherence rationale, ex-post rationalist coherence rationale, sense coherence rationale, resource dependence coherence rationale and communicative coherence rationale.

Coherence has a rationalistic rationale when the process allows the organization to achieve its objectives. It has an incremental rationale when the context allows it. The rationale is contingent when the contingencies of the environment allow it. When objectives achievement are driven by internal legitimacy, coherence has an ex-post rationalist rationale. We talk about sense coherence rationale when objectives achievement is carried by meaning search. Coherence has a resource dependence rationale when seeking external

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legitimacy is the strategy used to achieve the organization's objectives. When it aims at creating consensus for goals achievement, we are then in a communicative coherence rationale. If we refer to the outset observation which shows contradictions in the planning system, we observe that all the coherence rationales do not provide a sturdy explanation. With regard to their formulation, all are potential explanations because a mismatch between their respective strategies and their aims can give rise to gaps or mismatch in practice. This means different coherence rationales can coexist in a same planning action. In such a situation, it is necessary to construct an analytical framework from which it would become possible to highlight the structure of each coherence rationale.

Theorizing on Planning Coherence Rationales

Analytical Framework

In order to highlight the coherence rationale underpinned by the planning of the Cameroonian Higher Education programmes development, it is necessary to define the prevalence conditions of each one. Based on Marchesnay (2004), Kamuzinzi et al., (2009a, b), Baillé (2016) and (Dewulf & Biesbroek (2018) researches, five variables were identified from which this problem could be solved. It is goal, resource, environment, change, and mechanism. The "goal" variable indicates the direction of the organization's actions. The "resource" variable indicates the different elements on which the organization relies to act. The variable related to "environment" describes the situation in which the organization operates. Talk about "change" explains the shifts desired by the organization. The "mechanism" variable allows to describe, in a concrete way, the modes of action used by the actors of the organization.

Propositions on Planning Coherence Rationales

From the variables presented above, the following general proposition emerges: the dominant coherence rationale is determined by the intended goal (1), the resource used (2), the type of environment (3), the desired change (4) and the mechanism used (5). In the case of the planning of the Cameroonian Higher Education programmes development, it means we talk about rationalist coherence rationale when the goal is to develop a plan. In this case, activities are then used as a resource, the environment is characterized by complete information, the desired change concerns the modification the work organization and supervision constitutes the main mechanism.

We talk about incremental coherence rationale when the goal is to make adjustments. From this perspective, context is used as resource. The environment is characterized by incomplete information. The desired change is to modify the plan items and revision is the mechanism. There is contingency coherence rationale when the aim is to make adjustments to environmental changes. Following this coherence rationale, constraints are the resource used. The environment is characterized by a large amount of information. The desired change is to modify the organization's internal design. Restructuring is the mechanism used. Coherence has an ex-post rationalist coherence rationale when it aims at presenting ideas or arguments. In such a case, activities are the resources used. The environment is marked by misunderstandings or resistances. The desired change is to modify actors' perception. The mechanism used here is argumentation or justification. Sense making-sense giving

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coherence rationale is concerned when the goal is to order representations. In this case, resources are actors' opinions and actions. The environment is marked by dispersal. The desired change is to modify the actors' representations. Reconstructing is the mechanism used. Coherence has a resource dependence rationale when the goal is to acquire resources from external organizations. In this perspective, norms are the resources used. Pressure or dependency toward the providing organization is the environmental characteristic. The change sought is to modify the power of the resource-holding organization. Negotiation is the main mechanism. Coherence has a discursive rationale if it aims at seeking ground among actors. Norms are the resources used. The environment is characterized by controversial or conflictual objectives. The desired change is to modify actors' subjectiveness The main mechanism used is conciliation. These propositions are summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2.
Operationalization of the Planning Coherence Rationales

Predominant Coherence Rationale	Variables and Its Modalities				
	Objective	Resources	Environment	Change	Mechanism
Rationalist coherence rationale	Develop a plan	Activities	Complete information	Work organization	Supervision
Incremental coherence rationale	Make adjustments	Context	Incomplete information	Modify the workplan items	Revision
Contingency coherence rationale	Make adjustments	Constraints	Large amount of information	Modify the internal design of the organization	Restructuring
Ex-post rationalist coherence rationale	Present argument	Activities	Misunderstandings	Modify the perception of actions	Justification
Sensemaking-sensegiving coherence rationale	Order representations	Opinions and actions	Mayhem/dispersal	Modify the organization condition	Reconstructing
Resource dependance coherence rationale	Acquire resources	Conventions	Pressure/dependence	Modify the power of external organizations	Negotiation
Communicative coherence rationale	Find a common ground	Values, ideologies	Controversial or conflictual objectives	Modify actors' subjectivities	Conciliation

These propositions show that the prevailing coherence rationale is not determined by one item but by the overall configuration. It is not because the goal is related to plan development that one will conclude that it is a rationalist coherence rationale. Based on these propositions, the objective of this study is to highlight the coherence rationale carried by the planning of the Cameroonian Higher Education programmes.

Methodology

Epistemology and Sample

Cameroonian Ministry of Higher Education is the study site and the programme development is the case study. They have been chosen because the Cameroonian ministry of Higher Education and its programmes have not yet been studied, and the programmes

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are part of the Cameroon's new public management. In view of this study objective, a qualitative methodology was chosen, with interpretative epistemology. Since this study is part of the "practice based theorizing", which is action-based, the process approach was used as an investigative technique in order to have an experience-based analysis (Chia, 1995; Chia & King, 1998; Hussenot, 2016). From this perspective, the case study was chosen with a view to carrying out an in-depth analysis. The sample was built around the events related to the programmes' activities. Based on the fact that it began in 2014 and ended in 2020, and that this study began at the end of those activities, documents were used as a data collection technique.

Data Collection

To obtain documents on events related to the programmes development, two methodological approaches were used. The episodes approach of Hendry & Seidl (2003) and meetings approach of Jarzabkowsky (2005), Jarzabkowsky & Seidl (2008). They first allowed us to delimit each event in terms of time and objective while the second oriented us to the type of documents to ask (minutes). In practice, we went to the Ministry with our research permit to gain access to documents recounting the activities related to the programmes from 2015 to 2019. We met one of the managers in charge of those programmes who provided us with seven minutes.

Data Analysis

Configuration analysis was used to analyze the documents. It consisted of searching for clues corroborating the structure of each coherence rationale. The data was analyzed in two steps. In the first step, each minute was transformed in an episode and each sequence was broken down into sequences in order to facilitate the analysis. This allowed us to have the following seven episodes with sequences per episode (Table 3).

Table 3.
List of the Episodes

Episode and date	Purpose	Number of sequences
Episode 1: (February 2015)	Development of programmes project documents	3
Episode 2: (May2015)	Project documents drafting	4
Episode 3: (May2016)	Medium-Term Spending Framework development and Programmes updating	5
Episode 4: (November 2016)	Programmes project documents completion	3
Episode 5: (November2018)	Management charter completion	2
Episode 6: (February2019)	Project documents updating and completion	2
Episode 7: (March 2019)	Medium-Term Programmes and Spending Framework updating	6

The second consisted of an identification of the different variables in each episode. Each episode was analyzed in a table and through its different sequences. Each sequence was analyzed in a five-row column representing the variables of the analytical framework. Based on the clues identified in the minutes, it was indicated in each column the most representative modality of each variable. Later, we did an upright counting of the different

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modalities to define the predominant coherence rationale in each sequence. Then, we did a horizontal counting of the coherence rationales of each sequence and the most dominant was the one appearing with the most occurrence. Concerning the data interpretation, it has been done through the search for contradicting elements in the structure of each coherence rationale. Those having a consistent structure were not taken into account because of their inability in helping us to understand the mismatch observed. However, when in an episode the coherence rationales gave us parity results (as it appears in the seventh episode), the dominant coherence rationale was determined from the most prevalent "goal" variable.

Results

The results show the predominance of two coherence rationales. Out of the seven highlighted episodes, the rationalist coherence rationale is evident in five (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) and two (6th and 7th) falls under the incremental coherence rationale.

Episodes with the Rationalist Coherence Rationale

The first episode took place from 23 to 27 February 2015. In light with the incomplete achievement of the first meeting which was to develop the four programmes, the meeting chairman stressed, mentioning in the meeting agenda, the importance of completing the project documents. In this respect, he emphasized on the logframe completion and the providing of project documents. For that task, he also convened a core team. This shows that the goal of the meeting chairman is the plan development and he aimed at changing the work organization. The evocation of the previous meeting and the fixture agenda shows the use of context as resource and it reflects, at the same time, the use of a working method as mechanism. That evocation also expresses the holding of the meeting in an environment with incomplete information. Two experts followed the chairman's intervention. They stressed projects development methodology. The first presented the steps structuring the designing of a project and its components, while the second focused on what "project logic" is. As a resource, these actors explained the different phases of project development. They discussed the theoretical and methodological aspects which were put into practice in the workshop. During the workshop which was the last sequence of this episode, participants exchanged on the documents from which they were expected to work on. Based on this work method and the information provided by the documents, the purpose of the participants was to create order in this stage of programmes development, using the context as resource. However, the intriguing fact is that it took place with incomplete information because Cameroon's education development plan was missing.

The second episode took place from 03 to 09 May 2015. During this episode, the presiding officer insisted, once again, on writing the project documents. Yet to be completed, he instructed more clearness in the work, revising what had already been done until then, and expressed the wish to have a draft of the project documents. The presiding officer's goal is therefore to develop a plan. This goal is based on a context underpinned by inconsistencies and incompleted project documents. That is why the meeting chairman suggested the modification of the plan items, taking into account the observed deficiencies. Right after, the rapporteur restored the previous meeting work (February 2015) by insisting on its main points. After that reminder, the expert intervention followed. He mentioned the

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17 points which structure a project document. Only, he will condense those points into 14 (project title, context, objective, population or beneficiary, expected results, project components, implementation strategy, start-up strategic choices, program structure, program management, management, the planning and programming items, the cost table and the risk analysis) in which the cost table and the risk analysis were not provided. This work method demonstrates the expert involvement in the plan development, using activities as resource. Since the projects issue was new to most of those actors, such a seminar-workshop was essential. This is why the expert's intervention was in line with the change of the work organization. This episode ended with the workshop in which the participants worked to give substance to the 14 points defined by the expert.

The third episode has been held from 10 to 16 May 2016. The Ministry of Higher Education had just concluded a financial agreement with the International Monetary Fund. It was in this context that the presiding officer instructed planners to update the programmes but, above all, to provide mature projects in order to obtain most funding. This shows that despite the dependency, the presiding officer's goal remains the plan development. After this intervention, several experts followed one another. The first expert discussed the programmes' updating process. Using a working method, he outlined the main steps, focusing on the PPBS chain (planning, programming, budgeting and monitoring/evaluation) and the objectives and indicators formulation. This intervention is in line with the urgent need for permanent updating of the programmes. Alongside of those elements, the expert will also focus on the quality requirements of the formulated objectives and selected indicators. This shows the change desired by the expert relies on the work organization. The second expert presented the prerequisites and steps for the medium-term expenditure framework development process. Being in an environment in which planners do not have a perfect mastery of that issue, such a training became necessary. By this work method, the modification in the way of working is the desired change. The third expert's intervention focused on the projects maturation, explaining the implications of budgeting an immature project. His goal was to facilitate programmes development for the planners. As in the previous interventions, this one provided more information to planners and allows, in terms of change, to modify the work organization. This episode ends with the workshop. During this sequence, planners misunderstood the difference between an outcome indicator and an impact indicator. Despite this, they stayed focused on completing the plan development by setting those indicators. They also carried out adjustments on each program by revising perspectives, strategies and actions.

During the fourth episode, which took place from November 22 to 23 2016, the programmes, once again, were still incomplete. This still requires the session chairman to emphasize on the plan development, by instructing the production of the programmes project documents. His goal is then to develop a plan. Noticing the persistent inconsistencies in what had already been done by planners up to that point, particularly on the research and innovation programmes, he recommended taking into account the Cameroon's national development plan, in order to produce a quality plan. In this sense, the working methodology proposed by this intervention aims at changing the work organization. The expert intervened to review the activities carried out so far in the context of the programmes development. Through this revision mechanism, it sought to contextualize the programmes through adjustments. Following, the head of the research and innovation programme took

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the floor. He worked to complete the development of his programme by making a diagnosis on its issues. His diagnosis showed the research low impact on growth and he then presented the possible causes of such a situation. Its purpose is then to develop the plan, as instructed by the presiding officer. Through this activity, this actor situated the context of the Cameroonian university research and provided, at the same time, new information on its environment. This activity was carried out according to a specific framework (expositions-exchanges). This shows the use of a working method. Moreover, his speech was marked by misunderstandings from the other participants about the programme strategy and a lack of information on university outputs.

In the fifth episode, held from November 12 to 14, 2018, we note that the management charter whose development has been underway since 2014, has not yet been completed. To this end, three experts intervened simultaneously. After the brief welcome of the meeting chairman, they presented the objectives and inputs relating to the management charter, with a view to finalize the plan development. They used the various chapters of the charter as a resource and it was from this working method that they completed it. Since this tool standardizes the programmes management, the change desired by those experts is in line with the modification of work organization. The experts' intervention was followed by the workshop. This latter took place around the different points of the charter. They were seven, one group per point or chapter. It was a matter for each group to provide additional information on each point, following the guidelines given by the experts. The objective was to complete the charter, so the aim of the participants was to finalize the plan development. This activity was carried out in the form of exchanges and debates. On the basis of this working method, each group submitted, at the end, a copy of the results of their exchanges. Each group work was subsequently compiled into a draft. However, the environment reveals troubles during the workshop, as many were facing such an exercise for the first time. As a result, they did not know, most of the time, what to fill on the charter or how to do it.

Episodes with Incremental Coherence Rationale

In addition to the rationalist coherence rationale, it also emerges that the development of Cameroon's Higher Education programmes are also underpinned by incremental coherence rationale. It is mostly evident, in the 6th and 7th episode. Episode 6 has been held on February 21, 2019. Following the meeting purpose, it focused on updating and completing the programmes. This means that until then, the programmes were still uncompleted. Also, contrary to the previous meetings, this one has a particular format. It did not involve the presiding officer speech as usual. It begins with the rapporteur's intervention who recounts the work of the previous meeting. He recalled its resolutions which recommended, for the on-going one, the rewriting of the programmes related to professionalization and research. According to the rapporteur, the matter was to revise the context, adjust it to the Cameroonian society real life, match the contents with the programmes titles and, lastly, introduce new economic data. Considering the persistence of those inconsistencies, the rapporteur aims at making adjustments. The desired change is therefore the modification of the plan items, in particular the two programmes mentioned above. Soon after this sequence, the expert intervention followed. In line with the rapporteur speech, his intervention focused on a set of amendments to be made. These included reviewing the

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context, taking into account the national development plan and integrating Cameroon's major challenges. On the basis of those elements, the aim of his intervention is also to make adjustments. Considering the recommendations made by the rapporteur at the beginning of the meeting, the experts have worked in order to modify the plan items using revision as mechanism.

The seventh episode is also marked by incremental coherence rationale. Held from March 26 to 29, 2019, this meeting took place approximately one month after the previous one. Contrary to the other meetings, this one is singular in terms of actors. In fact, the report recounting it shows the attendance of more actors than usual. These include programmes managers, representatives of various organizations (State universities, GIZ, the sectors of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Higher Education). This episode began with the speech of the presiding officer. Based on the fact that Cameroon had just concluded a financial agreement with the International Monetary Fund and that the new national development plan is underway, the session chair stressed the need to select projects eligible for funding and update the programmes. The purpose of his speech was to make adjustments in order to acquire external resources. Moreover, his reference to the projects rationalization and to programmes and medium-term expenditure framework updating shows the presiding officer willingness to revise the programmes, by modifying its items. The second sequence of this episode is marked by an expert presentation on the updating programmes approach. That expert described the process for developing the medium-term spending framework in terms of objectives, components, indicators and activities. His purpose was to assist the planners in the plan development. His intervention was also based on the context as a resource because it was part of the debate on the budget debate imposed by the Central Africa sub-region. Via this evocation, the modification of the plan items is the change expected by planners.

The third sequence involved a second expert who set out activities streamlining. Coming from the Ministry of Finance, this expert highlighted the basic elements which characterized it. To this end, he mentioned activities identification, their contents and their mapping. Like the previous expert, that intervention is an aid in developing the plan. That presentation was based on a set of observations: the weak link between sectoral strategies and activities; the lack of relevance and objectivity in the programs performance assessment, the poor activities identification process (which were sometimes excessive), and a poor resource allocation. From this context, the expert mentioned misunderstandings about the issue of rationalization by planners because of its novelty. So, we are in an ambiguous environment. Having made that observation, the expert wished to modify the plan items by prescribing a work method to carry out the streamlining activities. The fourth sequence was characterized by the intervention of another expert. Coming from the Ministry in charge of Economy, Planning and Regional Development, his presentation made an implementation evaluation of the 2018 budget in Cameroonian public administrations.

This sequence was proposed with a view to identify challenges and how to address them for the current fiscal year (2019). To this end, he proposed an evaluation approach specific to this new management tool, which shows that we are dealing with an environment characterized by information mastery. That expert presentation was therefore based on activities such as diagnosis and evaluation in order to teach them how to design a plan. Since this intervention contributes to planning quality improvement, the change desired by the

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expert is in line with the modification of the plan items. This sequence ended with workshops. Unlike previous meetings, all the programmes were on the agenda. All of those programmes have been improved, particularly on their overall objectives. This shows that planners' goal was to make changes through programmes review. Through this mechanism, the planners worked to modify the plan items by reducing the number of actions per programme and by reformulating the overall objectives. These actions come from the meeting context, whose purpose is to update the programmes. That means the programmes' information was imperfect, hence their revision was advised.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study is to find out which coherence rationale underpins a planning marked by a mismatch between policy and practice. The results of this study shows the dominance the rationalist coherence rationale, followed by the incremental coherence one. What is the meaning those coherence rationales?

Rationalist Coherence Rationale

The fact that plan development is the prevailing goal means planners' behaviour is essentially focused on achieving the established objectives, the actions taken to achieve them, evaluating limits and influences that affect the choices. It shows planners' choices about the programs are oriented towards the realization of the plan, as recommended by the hierarchy. In this sense, it is part of the ideas developed by Ansoff (1968) Peters and Waterman (1982), Fredrickson (1984), Chaffee (1985) Mintzberg (1994). According to these scholars, organization strategy starts with a general policy stated by the top management and implemented by the middle management. The planners were also trying to execute the hierarchy orientations based on information.

Evolving under instrumental rationality, they strive to seek a congruent relationship between means and ends. However, this approach reflects the quest for rationalist coherence rationale since actors want to make anticipations about the future. The results of this study show that planners have been working to complete the programmes drafting project documents, using a set of data to develop them, while ensuring the accordance between the content and the defined objectives. This approach is in line with Mbengue and Ouakouak's (2012) conceptualization, for which rationalist planning consists in formalization, completeness and strategic control.

Moreover, during the activities of the five episodes in which the rationalist coherence rationale is predominant, there are divisions (introductory word of the chairman of the meeting, restitution of the previous work, intervention of the experts, work in workshop or drafting, finalization, updating), but also a systematic use of experts. The first reflects the procedural rationality of Faludi (1978) because planners work in well-defined phases. The second highlights the idea of comprehensive rationality (Sandercok, 1998), which states that planning is a technical activity based on expertise and competence.

However, what is intriguing in the structure of this coherence rationale is the complex and ambiguous environment in which planners act. Despite this, planners' goal remains the plan development. This situation shows, once again, formal planning limits. The Cameroon's Higher Education programmes development comes to be mechanic. Such an approach

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strictly restricts actors in objectives, procedures and dates (Robbins et al., 2014). The latter are defined without taking into account the hypothesis of environmental changes. The orientation, as defined by the hierarchy, is a system in which all planners are obliged to comply formally. However, such an approach is unique to bureaucracies, which most often have organizational structures unfavorable to interaction with its environment.

Therefore, the starting vision will be reduced to a planned routine. In the programmes development, this routine can be seen through the activities variations which are mostly about either project documents designing, their completion and or their updating. Thus, it leaves very little room for manoeuvre in actors' intuition and creative expression. As a result, actors are engaged in activities and projects that do not always suit them or that they do not know nor understand. This explains why, at times, planners have worked to create order due to misunderstandings. As Peter and Watermann (1982) showed, organization success is linked to their ability to engage and even inspire workers. Clearly, this type of planning is opposed to his approach to capacity strengthening where creativity and intuition are the most expressive items. When possibilities are given to workers to make their own choices, they are likely to be more interested in what is entrusted to them. As can be seen, activities related to the development of the Cameroonian Higher Education programmes were carried out according to a hierarchical mechanism in which everything done came exclusively from the top.

Incremental Coherence Rationale

The updating work carried out by the planners during the sixth and the seventh episode unveils problems they faced concerning information processing. The fact they were particularly focused on «reviewing», «reforming» and «introducing» new items in what had already been done is a proof. This shows that when planners were deciding, they had only a part of information about the programmes. The environment instability and the amount of information to be processed did not allow them because of their limited ability (Simon, 2004). That is why the planners have been working on revising the programme items by introducing new infomations. During those episodes, experts' interventions as well as the previous work reports insisted on the modifications to be made, in the eyes of the persistent inconsistencies reported during the second episode. Not being able to foresee everything, those actors faced uncertainty. Through this approach, they made gradual adjustments (Atkinson, 2011) to refine the plan (programmes). Those disruptions, which are hampered by uncertainty, heaviness and cost (in terms of time and money), hindered perfect forecasts. As a result, planners were forced to focus on programmes (re)writing issues. They focused on providing answers to these "surprises" with "small curative steps". Given the time and information constraints they faced, it was difficult to examine the options. That is why, in their meetings, they focused on alternative solutions, by changing for example the programmes context, objectives, strategies and even some programmes' managers.

Nevertheless, what is surprising in this coherence structure is the fact that planners had plan development as goal in a complex environment. This situation testifies, once again, planner's inability to have a complete control on their environment. As the specific planning is the one taking place here, it is inadequate to complex environment. As results, the plan produced is inconsistent, incomplete and even partial. This leads to constant revision and adjustments. This incompatibility between intentions (the goal) and one of the means (the

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environment), proves, once again the little interaction between Cameroon's Higher Education planning system and its environment.

The results of this study highlight the rigidity of Cameron's Higher Education Planning system due to his bureaucratic structure. It has also shown the "constructive" dimension of coherence in planning through an analysis framework, and stating that coherence is shaped by actors' intentions and their environment. With the concept of "rationale", we have a theoretical tool to grasp coherence construction in a formal management system. As prospects, we can examine planners' role in this type of management system or, evaluate, at the micro level, programmes benefits within universities, using the varieties of academic capitalism approach (VoAC).

Limitations

The methodology used in this study has three main limitations. Firstly, it was almost impossible to collect data on-site as required by the processual approach since the programs development were going to their end when initiating this study. So, documents appeared as the only alternative. Secondly, it is always recommended to combine documents analysis with another data collection technique in order to diversify data sources. In this case, it was very difficult to follow that orientation due to key actor's accessibility. Finally, this study did not go through all the required documents owing to information restriction and archiving issues. As a result, the analysis has been carried out based on the documents made available to us.

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