HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAMEROON: THE CONCEPT, PROCESSES AND CREDENTIAL RELEVANCE

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Abstract

This book explores the complex dynamics of higher education governance in Cameroon, a sector crucial for the country's socio-economic development. It highlights the challenges faced by educational institutions, including the quality of teaching, access to resources, and administrative management. The author also analyzes the value of certificates in the Cameroonian labor market. By examining the expectations of employers and the skills of graduates, he highlights a worrying gap between academic training and professional requirements. By proposing innovative solutions to improve governance to strengthen the relevance of diplomas, this book is an essential resource for policymakers, educators, and anyone interested in the future of higher education in Cameroon.

Biography

Asongwe Cyprian Foche, born in January 15, 1976, in Nkwen-Bamenda, in the North-West Region of Cameroon, is a University Lecturer and Education specialist. Holder of a PhD in Educational Planning and Administration, he is currently a Lecturer at the University of Maroua, since 2020. Previously, he worked as a School Guidance Counselor from 2004 to 2016. He has also held various positions, including Chief of Service for Guidance and Counseling at Government Bilingual High School Maroua, from 2009 to 2017, and Regional Pedagogical Inspector for School Life and Guidance, from 2017 to 2020. He was recruited as a permanent lecturer in the Department of Sciences of Education in 2020, and in 2022 he was appointed Director of the Center for Studies and Research in Education at the Higher Teachers' Training College of the University of Maroua. His areas of specialization include Educational Planning and Administration, as well as Governance and Professionalization of Higher Education. He is also the author of several publications on these topics.

Preface

In a global context where higher education has become a fundamental pillar for socio-economic development, Cameroon is at a critical crossroads. The governance of higher education in this country is marked by complex challenges, ranging from institutional management to the alignment between diplomas awarded and the needs of the labor market. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2021, only 30% of graduates find employment in their field of study within two years of graduating. This finding highlights not only a crisis of diploma relevance but also an urgent need to improve the governance mechanisms that govern these institutions.

Historically, the Cameroonian education system has been influenced by various political and economic factors that have shaped its current structure. The World Bank report (2022) indicates that since the educational reforms of the 1990s, the country has experienced a rapid expansion of the number of higher education institutions, from 10 universities in 1990 to over 50 in 2022. However, this expansion has not been accompanied by a proportional improvement in pedagogical and human resources. As a result, the quality of teaching has often been compromised, leading to a devaluation of diplomas in the labor market.

It is imperative to establish a solid regulatory framework that promotes not only transparency but also accountability within institutions. The relevance of diplomas cannot be dissociated from effective and inclusive governance. Key stakeholders such as policymakers, academics, and employers must collaborate to redefine curricula to respond to current market requirements.

A survey conducted by the World Economic Forum (2023) reveals that nearly 70% of Cameroonian employers believe that graduates lack the practical skills necessary to succeed in their positions. This gap highlights the urgency of a systemic reform that integrates more practical learning and professional experience into academic training. This book aims to provide an in-depth and critical analysis of these critical issues while proposing concrete pathways to improve the governance of higher education in Cameroon.

Introduction

Higher education in Cameroon has undergone significant evolution since the country's independence in 1960. At that time, the education system was largely influenced by colonial models, but it has progressively transformed to meet the needs of a changing society. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2021, the number of higher education institutions has increased by 300% since 2000, from 20 to over 80 institutions. This rapid expansion raises crucial questions about the quality of education provided and the relevance of diplomas obtained by students in a constantly evolving labor market.

The governance of higher education in Cameroon is marked by structural challenges that hinder its effectiveness. Research by scholars such as Nguefang (2022) highlights that problems related to administrative management, insufficient funding, and teacher training are widespread. Indeed, a survey conducted by the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) in 2023 reveals that only 45% of graduates find employment in their field of study within two years of graduating. This finding highlights an alarming mismatch between the skills acquired by students and the requirements of the labor market, which directly questions the relevance of the diplomas awarded.

In the face of these challenges, it is imperative to adopt a proactive approach to reforming the higher education system in Cameroon. Experts like Tchouassi (2024) recommend strengthened collaboration between universities and the private sector to ensure that academic programs are aligned with current economic needs. Furthermore, according to a report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2025, investing in research and development could also play a key role in improving educational quality. "The Governance of Higher Education in Cameroon and the Relevance of Diplomas" aims to be a call to rethink not only how we train our students but also how we value their qualifications in a globalized world.

Chapter 1:

Context and Challenges of Higher Education in Cameroon

1.1. Historical Background of Higher Education in Cameroon

1.1.1. Evolution of Higher Education Institutions

The evolution of higher education in Cameroon since its independence in 1960 reflects the broader socio-political changes within the country. The establishment of the Federal University of Yaoundé in 1961 was a pivotal moment, as it laid the groundwork for a structured higher education system aimed at producing skilled professionals to support national development. The Federal University of Yaoundé was created as part of a broader strategy to develop educated elite that could contribute to nation-building. Initially, the university focused on humanities, social sciences, law, and exact sciences. This focus was aligned with the needs of a post-colonial state seeking to establish its identity and governance structures.

At its inception, the university had approximately 2,000 students. This number quickly rose due to increasing demand for higher education as more Cameroonians sought advanced learning opportunities. The growth in enrollment reflected both population increases and a rising awareness of the importance of higher education for personal and national development. Following the establishment of the Federal University of Yaoundé, additional institutions were created throughout Cameroon to cater for diverse educational needs. These included specialized professional schools focusing on engineering, agriculture, health sciences, and technology. The diversification aimed to address specific sectors critical for economic growth.

Over the years, various reforms have been implemented in response to changing educational demands and global trends. These reforms often focused on improving quality assurance mechanisms within universities, enhancing research capabilities, and fostering partnerships with international institutions. As of 2025, Cameroon boasts numerous public and private universities offering a wide range of programs across different fields. The government continues to emphasize higher education as a key driver for economic development while addressing challenges such as access disparities between urban and rural areas. Higher education in Cameroon has evolved significantly since independence through foundational milestones like the establishment of major universities, increased enrollment rates, institutional diversification, policy reforms, and ongoing efforts to enhance educational quality.

The 1990s marked a significant period of transformation for higher education in Cameroon, primarily due to the establishment of several public universities aimed at addressing the increasing demand for higher education and diversifying academic

offerings. This transformation was part of a broader educational reform initiative that sought to improve access to education and enhance the quality of academic programs available to students. In 1993, five new universities were founded: University of Buea, University of Dschang, University of Ngaoundere, University of Douala and University of Yaoundé II.

These institutions were strategically created to cater to various academic disciplines and regional needs, thereby expanding the educational landscape across Cameroon. The University of Buea, for instance, became particularly notable for its focus on social sciences and management programs, which attracted a diverse student body from different parts of the country. By the early 1990s, the total enrollment in higher education institutions across Cameroon had reached approximately 30,000 students. This figure reflects not only the establishment of new universities but also an increasing recognition among Cameroonians regarding the importance of higher education for personal and professional development. The growth in student numbers indicated a rising aspiration among youth for advanced learning opportunities that could lead to better employment prospects and contribute to national development.

The introduction of these universities played a crucial role in enhancing both the quality and accessibility of higher education in Cameroon. With more institutions available, students had greater choices regarding their fields of study and could pursue specialized programs that aligned with their career aspirations. Additionally, this expansion helped alleviate some pressure from existing universities, which were often overcrowded and struggling to accommodate growing student populations. Furthermore, these developments coincided with broader socio-political changes within Cameroon during this period, including calls for democratization and increased public participation in governance. The establishment of new universities was seen as part of a larger effort to promote educational equity and empower citizens through knowledge. The creation of public universities in Cameroon during the 1990s represented a pivotal shift towards improving access to higher education while also diversifying academic offerings tailored to meet national needs.

The last decade has indeed witnessed significant growth in the university sector in Cameroon, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing access to higher education across various regions. This expansion is characterized by both the establishment of new universities and an increase in student enrollment. The creation of new universities is a pivotal aspect of this expansion. Notably, the University of Maroua was established in 2008, followed by the University of Bamenda in 2010. These institutions were part of a broader strategy to decentralize higher education and make it more accessible to students from different geographical areas. The most recent additions include three universities inaugurated in 2022 located in Garoua, Ebolowa, and Bertoua.

This indicates a proactive approach by the Cameroonian government to address regional disparities in educational opportunities.

As per the latest available data, there are over 400,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions across Cameroon. This figure signifies not only a quantitative increase but also reflects a growing interest among the youth for higher education as a means to improve their socio-economic status and contribute positively to national development. Alongside the increase in the number of institutions and student enrollment, there has been a diversification of academic disciplines offered at these universities. This diversification is crucial as it caters for various fields of study that align with both local and global job markets. It allows students to pursue degrees that are relevant to their interests and career aspirations while also addressing the needs of the economy. **T**he expansion of higher education institutions in Cameroon over the past decade demonstrates a concerted effort by the government to enhance educational access and quality across different regions. The establishment of new universities, coupled with an increase in student numbers and diversification of academic programs, illustrates a positive trend towards improving higher education infrastructure and opportunities within the country.

Forces of change in Higher Education
The forces of change in higher education are diverse and significant. Experts believe these forces range from technology and globalization to shifting student and employer expectations. The impact of any one of these drivers is significant and in total is transformative. Experts predict this "perfect storm" (Mayberry, 2011) requires transformation in higher education practices to make a quality post-secondary education affordable, relevant, accessible, and desirable.

> "The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible via the Internet is increasingly challenging us to revisit our roles as educators. Institutions must consider the unique value that each adds to a world in which information is everywhere. In such a world, sense-making and the ability to assess the credibility of information are paramount. Mentoring and preparing students for the world in which they will live and work is again at the forefront. Universities have always been seen as the gold standard for educational credentialing, but emerging certification programs from other sources are eroding the value of that mission daily" (Johnson & Adams in The Horizons Report, 2012, p. 4).

Students and Technology
Changing demographics and shifting expectations for the learning environment require universities to examine teaching and learning practices. Between 2001 and 2011, the student population in State Universities in Cameroon rose from 63,135 in 2001 to 207,887 in 2011, giving a triple rise of 3.3 in 10 years, (MINESUP, 2011). Incoming

freshmen believe use of academic technologies in their courses improves learning but report that upon graduation, the academic technologies they used in their coursework hasn't adequately prepared them for the workplace (Smith & Caruso, 2010).

Employers

New-entrant skills requirements include professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork/collaboration and critical thinking/problem solving. Yet in a recent study, employers reported that graduates of four-year colleges are deficient in these skills. In a recent study, employers reported that graduates of four-year colleges are deficient in these skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

The need for an agile, responsive University

Universities of late are under increasing pressure to render their training to match with the exigencies of the 21st century knowledge based economy. Online courses/programs are growing in number and some universities are making their course content not only available online, but free to everyone. Use of technology to simulate everything from operation of a jet engine to the working of the human heart has allowed students anywhere in the world, to interact with professors and one another both asynchronously and in real-time, rather than requiring physical attendance in a laboratory. Many academic units are restructuring their curriculum with state-of-the-art laboratory systems and software environments and the campus as a whole is a technologically rich atmosphere.

Increased demand for accountability

According to Mayberry (2011) there is increased pressure being applied by the government and accrediting bodies for universities to demonstrate that a college education is a worthy investment. Says Mayberry (2011, p. 6), "The vocabulary of accountability Is changing: we hear less about 'assessment' and 'learning outcomes' and more about 'competencies,' 'return-on-investment,' and 'gainful employment.' This ties with our research theme which deals with university governance policies on the professionalization of higher education in the University of Ngaoundere which sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the professionalization in the teaching/learning process through the acquisition of skills and competences by learners.

Changing student expectations

Student expectations are influenced by technology use and their parents' satisfaction is framed in terms of employability. Given the increased competition in higher education, especially from the for-profit sector, students and their parents also expect competitive pricing. The impact of any one of these drivers is significant and in total is

transformative. Experts predict this "perfect storm" (Mayberry, 2011) requires significant change in higher education practices to make a quality postsecondary education affordable, relevant, accessible, and desirable.

1.1.2. Major Reforms in the Sector

The higher education sector in Cameroon has indeed undergone significant reforms, particularly with the introduction of the BMD (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate) system. This reform was initiated to enhance the quality of higher education and align Cameroonian diplomas with international standards. Below is a detailed examination of these reforms: The BMD system was officially adopted in 2006 and began implementation in the 2007/2008 academic year. This reform aimed to modernize the educational framework by introducing a structured approach to higher education that mirrors systems used in many countries worldwide. The BMD system categorizes higher education into three distinct cycles: Licence (Bachelor's), Master, and Doctorat (Doctorate). This structure not only facilitates better organization within universities but also enhances clarity for students regarding their educational pathways. With the transition to the BMD system, Cameroon replaced its previous diploma structure with three clearly defined cycles of study. Each cycle corresponds to specific academic levels and qualifications:

Bachelor: Typically, a three-year program that provides foundational knowledge and skills.

Master: A two-year program that allows for specialization in a particular field.

Doctorate: The highest level of academic achievement, focusing on research and advanced study.

This restructuring aims to provide students with a more coherent educational journey while ensuring that they acquire relevant competencies at each stage. Another critical aspect of the reforms is the introduction of semesterization, which divides the academic year into two semesters. This change allows for more flexible learning schedules and enables students to complete their studies at an accelerated pace if desired. Additionally, the capitalization of validated teaching credits means that students can accumulate credits throughout their studies, which can be transferred or recognized across different institutions. This credit system is essential for promoting student mobility both within Cameroon and internationally.

The reforms also emphasize enhancing student mobility between countries, particularly within Francophone regions. By creating a credit system that facilitates diploma equivalency, Cameroonian students can pursue further studies abroad or transfer between institutions without losing previously earned credits. This initiative not only

broadens educational opportunities for students but also fosters international collaboration among universities. These reforms represent a significant shift towards improving higher education quality in Cameroon by aligning it with global standards through structured programs, enhanced flexibility in learning, and increased opportunities for student mobility.

The education system in Cameroon has faced significant challenges over the years, particularly in aligning educational outcomes with labor market needs. According to statistics provided by Issa Tchiroma (2021), a staggering 88% of the education system continues to produce skills that are not aligned with the requirements of the job market. This disconnect indicates a systemic issue where educational institutions may not be adequately preparing students for the realities of the job market.

The entrepreneurial landscape in Cameroon reveals further insights into the educational qualifications of business owners. Data from the National Institute of Statistics (2018) shows that 48.4% of entrepreneurs possess only a Certificate of Primary Education, while a mere 8.8% have graduated from higher education institutions. This disparity suggests that many entrepreneurs may rely on informal or non-academic pathways to enter the business world, which could be indicative of both a lack of access to higher education and a potential undervaluation of formal qualifications in certain sectors.

The employment outcomes for young people in Cameroon, particularly those who have attained higher education degrees, are concerning. Issa Tchiroma (2021) notes that 88.6% of young individuals with higher education degrees find themselves engaged in informal employment. This statistic highlights a critical issue: despite having advanced educational qualifications, graduates struggle to secure formal employment opportunities that match their skills and training.

These statistics underscore an urgent need for policy reforms within the Cameroonian education system. The high percentage of graduates entering informal employment suggests that there is a mismatch between what is taught in schools and what employers require. To address this gap, it may be necessary to revise curricula, enhance vocational training programs, and foster partnerships between educational institutions and employers to ensure that graduates possess relevant skills.

The current state of the Cameroonian education system presents significant challenges regarding skill development and employment outcomes for graduates. The high percentage of misalignment between educational offerings and labor market needs calls for immediate attention from policymakers to create an environment where education can effectively contribute to economic growth and individual prosperity.

The major reforms in the higher education sector in Cameroon aim to improve the quality of education and make diplomas more compatible with international standards. However, statistics show that challenges persist, particularly in terms of matching the skills produced with the needs of the labor market. Reforms must therefore be continued and strengthened to meet the needs of the market and improve the employability of graduates.

1.1.3. Role of National and International Actors

Higher education in Cameroon is shaped by a variety of national and international actors, each contributing to the educational landscape through different roles. The complexity of these interactions is evident in the ongoing reforms aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of higher education. Cameroonian Government: The government plays a pivotal role in formulating policies that govern higher education. This includes setting educational standards, funding public universities, and regulating private institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education is particularly influential, overseeing the implementation of educational reforms and ensuring compliance with national educational goals.

Public Universities: These institutions are significant players in the higher education sector, providing a range of academic programs and research opportunities. They are funded primarily by the government but also seek partnerships and cooperation agreements with international organizations for additional resources and expertise.

Private Universities: In recent years, private universities have emerged as important contributors to higher education in Cameroon. They offer alternative pathways for students seeking higher education, often focusing on specialized fields that may not be available in public institutions. Their growth reflects a response to increasing demand for higher education.

Student Organizations: Student bodies play an essential role in advocating for student rights and interests within the higher education system. They engage with both university administrations and government officials to influence policy decisions affecting students' welfare, tuition fees, and academic standards.

International Organizations: Various international bodies such as UNESCO and the World Bank provide support for educational reforms in Cameroon through funding, technical assistance, and policy guidance. Their involvement often aims at enhancing educational quality and expanding access to higher education.

Foreign Universities and Institutions: Collaborations between Cameroonian universities and foreign institutions facilitate knowledge exchange, joint research projects, and capacity building for faculty members. These partnerships can enhance curriculum development and improve teaching methodologies.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs focused on education contribute by implementing programs that address specific challenges within the higher education sector, such as gender disparities or access for marginalized groups. Their initiatives often complement government efforts to reform higher education.

The interplay between these national and international actors creates a dynamic environment for higher education in Cameroon. Ongoing reforms reflect a collective effort to improve educational outcomes while addressing challenges such as funding shortages, quality assurance, and equitable access to learning opportunities.

The government plays a central role in defining educational policies. For example, it has been involved in reforms aimed at adapting the educational system to the requirements of the labor market and improving the quality of education (Fourcade, Paul & Vernières, 1994). Universities themselves are often at the forefront of responding to government expectations while facing challenges such as graduate unemployment and working conditions (Smith, 1997). Student organizations have also played a crucial role as intermediaries between students and university administration. They are often involved in social movements that demand improvements in study and employment conditions for graduates.

International actors primarily include financial institutions such as the World Bank and UNESCO, which strongly influence educational policies through conditional funding and policy recommendations. According to Samoff & Bidemi (2004), these institutions promote systemic reform of African educational systems, including in Cameroon, by emphasizing economic efficiency and the profitability of education. These recommendations are part of a broader context of globalization where the private sector is encouraged to play a more significant role in higher education (Kassimir, Lebeau & Sall, 2003). This has led to a redefinition of the traditional role of education as a public good towards a conception where it is perceived as a private good with market value (Tilak, 2004).

The dynamic between national and international actors in higher education in Cameroon is characterized by a complex interplay of local needs and global requirements. This relationship is shaped by various factors, including governmental policies, funding conditions from international organizations, and the socio-economic context of the country. The Cameroonian government aims to enhance its institutional capacities to develop skilled professionals who can contribute to national development. This involves creating educational programs that align with the country's strategic goals, such as improving economic growth, reducing poverty, and fostering social cohesion. The government seeks to establish a higher education system that not only meets local demands but also prepares graduates for the global job market.

On the other hand, international funders and organizations often impose performance-based approaches that prioritize measurable outcomes over contextual relevance. These expectations can include standardized testing, accountability measures, and specific curriculum frameworks that may not resonate with local realities or cultural contexts. For instance, funding from entities like the World Bank or UNESCO may come with stipulations that require adherence to certain educational standards or reforms that are more suited to different environments.

This interaction creates tensions where reforms mandated by external actors may overlook critical local needs. For example, while there might be a push for increased enrollment rates or improved graduation statistics as indicators of success, these metrics do not necessarily reflect the quality of education or its relevance to local communities. Consequently, there can be a disconnect between what is being taught in universities and what is needed in the job market within Cameroon.

The influence of both national and international actors continually shapes the educational landscape in Cameroon. The government must balance its aspirations for national development with the pressures exerted by global funding bodies. This balancing act can lead to contradictions where policies designed to improve education may inadvertently neglect important aspects of local culture or economic conditions. While there is a clear intention from the Cameroonian government to strengthen its higher education system for national development purposes, it faces significant challenges due to conflicting demands from international stakeholders. These dynamics necessitate ongoing dialogue and negotiation between all parties involved to ensure that educational reforms are both effective and contextually appropriate.

1.2. The Relevance of Diplomas and Degree Inflation

1.2.1. Definition and Typology of Degree Inflation

Degree inflation, also known as academic inflation or credentialism, refers to the increasing educational requirements for jobs that previously did not require such levels of education. This phenomenon is characterized by several interconnected elements: a growing number of graduates, heightened aspirations for higher education among students and their families, and elevated minimum educational requirements set by employers.

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals obtaining university degrees. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions has steadily risen. For instance, between 2000 and 2020, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded increased from approximately 1.3 million to over 2 million annually.

This surge in graduates contributes to a more competitive job market where having a degree is no longer a distinguishing factor.

As more individuals attain higher levels of education, societal expectations shift. Students and their parents increasingly aspire to obtain advanced degrees, believing that these qualifications will enhance job prospects and earning potential. This cultural shift places pressure on individuals to pursue higher education as a means of securing employment, further contributing to degree inflation.

Employers have responded to the influx of graduates by raising educational requirements for positions that may not necessitate such qualifications. For example, jobs that once required only a high school diploma may now demand a bachelor's degree or even higher credentials. This trend can be attributed to various factors including an oversupply of qualified candidates and the perception that higher educational attainment correlates with better job performance.

As more individuals possess similar degrees, the value associated with those diplomas diminishes. A bachelor's degree that once guaranteed access to certain jobs may no longer suffice; instead, employers may seek candidates with master's degrees or specialized certifications. This devaluation creates challenges for recent graduates who find themselves competing for entry-level positions against others with similar or superior qualifications.

Sociologist Randall Collins introduced the concept of credentialism to explain this phenomenon. He argued that society's emphasis on diplomas as primary criteria for employment often overlooks other important factors such as practical skills and work experience. Credentialism contributes to social stratification based on education level; those who can afford higher education gain access to better job opportunities while others are left behind. Degree inflation is a multifaceted issue driven by an increase in graduates, rising aspirations for higher education, and changing employer expectations regarding educational qualifications. The result is a labor market where diplomas are devalued due to oversupply and heightened competition among candidates.

Jean-Claude Passeron emphasized that the increase in the number of graduates leads to a devaluation of academic qualifications. This devaluation is measured by the decline in the social and economic value of diplomas in the job market. This phenomenon is linked to the democratization of education and the continuous increase in the number of students since the late 19th century. Massification of education has led to a general increase in the levels of education required to access various professional positions. Employers tend to increase their diploma requirements for positions that previously did not require as many. This creates pressure on graduates to pursue further education to remain competitive in the job market.

Degree inflation is also linked to a broader process of professionalization in Western society, where an increasing number of professions now require formal education and a diploma. In summary, degree inflation represents a dynamic change in how qualifications are perceived and valued in the professional world, influencing both individuals and social structures.

Degree inflation is a phenomenon observed in many countries, including Cameroon. This term refers to the situation where an increasing number of individuals hold diplomas, which can decrease the value of these qualifications in the job market. In Cameroon, this issue is particularly relevant due to several socio-economic factors. Cameroon, like many other African countries, faces economic challenges such as high unemployment and uneven economic growth. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics of Cameroon (INS), the unemployment rate among young graduates is alarming, reaching nearly 30% in 2023. This has led to a situation where graduates often find themselves underemployed or in jobs that do not match their level of education.

The Cameroonian education system has experienced rapid expansion since the 2000s, with a significant increase in the number of higher education institutions. However, this expansion has not always been accompanied by a proportional improvement in the quality of education. Studies by researchers such as Nguefang (2021) highlight that this quantitative growth has often been prioritized at the expense of the relevance and quality of the programs offered. The relevance of diplomas refers to their ability to meet the needs of the job market. In Cameroon, there is a mismatch between the skills acquired by students and those required by employers. A study by Tchouassi et al. (2022) shows that many companies complain about the lack of practical skills among new graduates, making their qualifications less relevant.

Degree inflation has several negative consequences for graduates and the economy as a whole. On the one hand, it creates increased competition for a limited number of qualified jobs, which can lead to a sense of frustration among young graduates. On the other hand, it can also lead to a general devaluation of diplomas in the job market, making it more difficult for those who have invested in their education to obtain a job that matches their qualifications. To address this situation, it is essential that the Cameroonian government and educational institutions collaborate to improve the quality of education and align programs with the needs of the job market. This could include developing partnerships with the private sector to ensure that the skills taught are relevant and in demand. The relevance of diplomas in Cameroon is compromised by degree inflation, leading to a mismatch between the education received and the requirements of the job market.

1.2.2. Factors Contributing to Degree Inflation

Degree inflation is a complex phenomenon resulting from several interconnected factors. Here is a detailed analysis of the main contributors to this phenomenon, accompanied by relevant authors and dates. One of the major factors contributing to degree inflation is the continuous growth in the number of people holding degrees in the Western world since the 1970s. This massification of education has led to a situation where an increasing number of individuals hold degrees, reducing the relative value of these qualifications in the job market. Jean-Claude Passeron (1982) emphasizes that this increase in student enrollment leads to a devaluation of the social value of graduates.

Credentialism is a term introduced by sociologist Randall Collins in 1979, which describes the increasing emphasis placed on educational qualifications as a means of evaluating potential employees. This phenomenon has been observed across various industries and job positions, where employers often raise the educational requirements for roles that may not inherently necessitate advanced degrees. The implications of this trend are significant, affecting both individuals seeking employment and the broader societal structure.

Investment Effect: This concept suggests that employers view higher education as an indicator of a candidate's potential productivity. The rationale is that individuals who have invested time and resources into obtaining a degree are likely to possess qualities such as discipline, commitment, and intellectual capability. Consequently, employers may prefer candidates with higher educational qualifications under the assumption that they will perform better in their roles.

Selection Role: In this context, educational credentials serve as a filtering mechanism for employers to identify candidates with specific skills or attributes deemed desirable. As job markets become more competitive, employers may rely on degrees as shorthand for certain competencies or knowledge bases, even if those competencies could be demonstrated through experience or other forms of assessment.

The emphasis on credentials contributes to social stratification by reinforcing existing inequalities within society. Individuals from privileged backgrounds often have greater access to higher education opportunities, thereby perpetuating cycles of advantage. As credentialism becomes more entrenched in hiring practices, it can lead to situations where meritocracy—the idea that individuals should be rewarded based on their abilities and performance—becomes compromised.

This dynamic creates pressure on individuals to pursue additional qualifications beyond what may be necessary for their desired career paths. Many people feel compelled to obtain advanced degrees or certifications simply to remain competitive in

the job market, regardless of whether these qualifications directly correlate with job performance or skill proficiency.

Credentialism represents a significant shift in how employers evaluate potential employees, emphasizing degrees over practical experience or performance metrics. This trend is driven by perceptions of productivity linked to educational attainment and serves as a mechanism for selecting candidates based on perceived skills. The consequences extend beyond individual career trajectories; they also reinforce social stratification and challenge the principles of meritocracy within society.

The increasing professionalization in various sectors has also played a crucial role in degree inflation. More and more professions now require formal education culminating in a degree, prompting individuals to pursue their studies for longer periods to meet the expectations of the job market. With globalization, there has been an explosion of knowledge exchange and a rapid increase in scientific and technological innovations. This has led to an increased demand for higher qualifications, transforming even the doctorate into a norm for certain professions that were previously accessible with a lower level of education.

The social prestige associated with degrees also plays a significant role in their inflation. Parents and students often aspire to obtain high-level qualifications due to the social status they confer, fueling a "diploma mania" that excessively values the acquisition of academic titles. Degree inflation results from a combination of an increase in the number of graduates, a constant elevation of employer requirements, credentialism, increased professionalization, a globalized impact on the job market, and social aspirations linked to academic prestige.

1.2.3. Consequences on the Labor Market

Degree inflation refers to the phenomenon where an increasing number of individuals obtain university or professional degrees, often without a corresponding increase in qualified job opportunities. This trend has significant implications for the labor market, particularly in countries like Cameroon, where the mismatch between education and employment opportunities is pronounced. One of the most notable consequences of degree inflation in Cameroon is overqualification. Overqualification occurs when individuals possess educational qualifications that exceed the requirements of their jobs. This situation leads to several negative outcomes for both the employees and the economy.

According to a study by Nguefack et al. (2020), approximately 30% of university graduates in Cameroon occupy positions for which they are overqualified. This high rate of overqualification has several implications: **Frustration and Decreased Motivation**: Graduates who find themselves in jobs that do not match their qualifications often

experience feelings of frustration and decreased motivation. For instance, an engineering graduate working as a salesperson in a store may feel that their skills and education are not being utilized effectively.

Economic Impact: Overqualification can lead to a waste of human capital, as individuals with higher education are not contributing to the economy at their full potential. This can result in lower productivity and economic growth. Job **Satisfaction and Turnover**: Overqualified employees tend to have lower job satisfaction, which can lead to lower turnover rates. This turnover can be costly for employers, as they need to invest in recruiting and training new staff.

To illustrate the issue of overqualification in Cameroon, consider the following example: An engineering graduate, who has spent years studying complex technical subjects, may end up working in a retail position that requires minimal technical knowledge. This mismatch between education and job requirements is a clear manifestation of degree inflation and its consequences. The study by Nguefack et al. (2020) provides a quantitative measure of the extent of overqualification in Cameroon. The finding that 30% of university graduates are overqualified underscores the severity of the issue and its impact on the labor market. Degree inflation in Cameroon has led to a significant level of overqualification among university graduates. This situation not only affects the individuals involved, leading to frustration and decreased motivation, but also has broader economic implications. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and employers to align educational outcomes with labor market needs.

As the number of graduates increases, the perceived value of degrees decreases. Employers may begin to require not only a degree but also significant work experience or other specific skills, making it difficult for new graduates to enter the job market. Tchouassi (2021) highlights that this devaluation also leads to increased competition among candidates for the same positions. Degree inflation can also have a negative impact on salaries. With a larger number of graduates seeking employment, employers may offer lower salaries because they know there are many candidates available. A study by Mouangue (2022) indicates that real salaries for young graduates have stagnated or even decreased in certain industries due to this dynamic.

To address the challenges posed by degree inflation, it becomes essential for individuals to acquire not only a degree but also practical and technical skills relevant to the current job market. This includes ongoing training and professional development to remain competitive in a constantly evolving environment. Finally, it is crucial that the Cameroonian education system adapts to the needs of the job market by placing greater emphasis on employability and practical training rather than simply obtaining academic degrees. Reforms could include collaboration between educational institutions and

industries to better align study programs with market requirements. Degree inflation in Cameroon leads to a series of consequences, including overqualification, devaluation of degrees, downward pressure on salaries, and highlights the need for educational reform to better prepare students for the realities of the job market.

1.3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

1.3.1. Laws Governing Higher Education in Cameroon

Higher education in Cameroon is governed by a structured legal framework that outlines the operational guidelines, objectives, and standards for institutions of higher learning. This framework is essential for ensuring quality education, promoting research, and aligning educational outcomes with national development goals. The governance structure includes various laws, decrees, and regulations that collectively shape the higher education landscape.

The most significant recent change in the legal framework governing higher education in Cameroon is the promulgation of Law No. 2023/007 on July 25, 2023. This law replaces the previous Law No. 005 of April 16, 2001, marking a critical evolution in the legislative approach to higher education. Objectives of Law No. 2023/007: The primary aim of this new law is to adapt the higher education system to meet contemporary socio-economic realities within Cameroon. This adaptation is crucial as it seeks to address challenges such as access to quality education, relevance of curricula to job markets, and integration of technology in teaching and learning processes.

Key Provisions: While specific provisions of Law No. 2023/007 are detailed in official documents, it generally emphasizes enhancing academic freedom, promoting research initiatives, improving governance structures within universities, and fostering partnerships between educational institutions and industries. The enactment of Law No. 2023/007 has several implications for higher education institutions:

Quality Assurance: The law introduces more stringent quality assurance mechanisms aimed at maintaining high educational standards across universities and colleges.

Curriculum Development: Institutions may be required to revise their curricula to ensure they are aligned with current labor market needs and technological advancements.

Funding and Resources: There may be new guidelines regarding funding allocations for public universities which could impact their operational capacities.

Research Promotion: The law may also include provisions that encourage research activities within universities by providing grants or establishing research centers focused on national priorities.

Law No. 2023/007 represents a significant step forward in reforming higher education governance in Cameroon by addressing existing challenges while positioning the sector to better serve the needs of society and the economy at large.

Law No. 2023/007 sets a general legal framework for higher education, defining public and private institutions that can offer post-secondary education. It emphasizes that the State plays a central role in the organization and control of higher education, assigning it a fundamental mission of producing and disseminating scientific, cultural, and professional knowledge. According to the law, the State grants higher education a national priority character. The fundamental missions include:

- Seeking excellence in all fields

- Promoting science, culture, and social progress

- Supporting development activities

- Providing ongoing training for students in various intellectual, physical, and moral fields

These missions aim to strengthen national development while meeting the needs of the labor market. Law No. 2023/007 introduces several significant innovations:

- Enhancement of Training: This implies a better match between study programs and labor market requirements.

- Facilitating Access to Higher Education: Measures are being implemented to expand access opportunities for all candidates.

- Implementation of the LMD System (License-Master-Doctorate): This system aims to harmonize diplomas internationally.

- Validation of Acquired Experience (VAE): Allows professionals to obtain qualifications based on their professional experience.

- Teacher Protection: Provisions are made to ensure the safety and well-being of teachers in their functions.

These changes aim to modernize the Cameroonian education system so that it can better respond to contemporary challenges. Despite these reforms, several challenges remain in the higher education sector in Cameroon:

- The mismatch between the training offered and the needs of the market, resulting in a high unemployment rate among graduates (27% in 2020).

- Problems related to student enrollment management and teacher-student ratios.

- The need to improve the quality of private higher education institutions.

These challenges require continuous attention to ensure that the education system effectively contributes to the country's economic and social development. In summary, the laws governing higher education in Cameroon have evolved to adapt to new socio-economic realities while seeking to improve the quality and accessibility of the training offered.

1.3.2. Higher Education Governance Policies

The New University Governance Program of 2008 in Cameroon

The perspectives of the new university governance program of 2008 had the following objectives:
- The democratization of access to universities
- The professionalization of teaching
- Modernizing university governance at the managerial, academic and social levels.

The new measures adopted by this policy included;

A. University Governance Level
1. Structural readjustment of the Board of Directors of the State Universities which is the decision making body to be an independent personality to reinforce the capacity of control and management of State universities.
2. Financial deconcentration with the reform of allocation of resources between academic affairs in a bid to ameliorate the capacity of academic services.
3. Conceiving projects and activities to generate revenue.
4. Putting in Place norms and prescriptions of the national program of governance in the management of state universities.
5. Promotion of social dialogue in serenity and conviviality in the campuses and hostels of universities.

B. Operationalizing professionalization in University Governance

The call for higher education to integrate and centralize itself in the development and poverty reduction strategy of Cameroon, policy makers of the higher education system in Cameroon claim that it undoubtedly implies that "*daily preoccupations (growth/poverty reduction) be embraced and translated into training programs and more operational curricular'' (SUP INFOS, 2010;7).* This is interpreted further as a call for committed reforms and innovations by "*carrying out ontological changes for the acquisition of transformable authentic knowledge into know-how, proper action, good practices and adequate speed that is commensurate with the evolution of time'' (SUP INFOS, 2010 p.7).* One of the facets of the engagement and changed role of higher education in Cameroon seemed to be the necessity to increase the socio-economic, socio-professional and market-friendliness of the curriculum as well as their restructuring and

reorganization. This reorientation process of the Cameroon higher education could be seen to be constituted in the "*New University Governance Policy''* (NUGP), which overlapped and accompanied recent program harmonization reforms in Cameroon along the Bachelor, Masters and PhD (BMP). The objective as stated, is for the NUGP to serve as a guideline to acquire a modern, professionalized higher education which is resolutely open to the rest of the society and meeting the requirements of knowledge production, know-how, of the use of knowledge and the production of human capital, quantitatively and qualitatively which is necessary to drive Cameroon to become an emergent nation by 2035, (Operational Strategy of the NUGP up to 2010).

The NUGP (MINESUP, 2009) is operationalized into a block of broad long term objectives which are; to develop professional and entrepreneurship training, to reconfigure and diversify the geographical map and location of higher education establishments, to restructure academic and develop research. There are also the objectives to implement the system of digital governance in higher education, strategize the employability of graduates and their insertion into the socio-professional world. There is capacity building; to reinforce the steering and management capacities of the higher education system and finally to design and adapt student support system. In 2010, the strategies were being prioritize and financed in seven tracts as seen in table 2 below.

Table 1: Support Programs under the New University Governance Policy

N^o.	Programs.
1.	Support Program for the Implementation of the Operational Strategy of the New University Governance Policy.
2.	Support Program to the Technological and Professional Components of Higher Education (SPTPCHE).
3.	Proposed Creation of a Higher Education Free Zone.
4.	Proposed Creation of the Virtual University of Cameroon and the Promotion of distance Learning.
5.	Support Program for the Integration of ICT in Higher Education.
6.	Support Program for the Entrepreneurial and Income-generating Initiatives of the Higher Education System.
7.	Support program for student support systems.

Source: *MINESUP (2009).*

C. Growth and Employment Strategy Paper 2010-2014

The government of Cameroon in 2010 published the country's Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), elaborating its development policy in which a specific and particular attention was paid to education, training and the development of a creative and innovative human capital, capable of competing both nationally and internationally in the labor market. Students in the different universities of the country are therefore to be

trained to come out with holistic learning experiences with flexible and adaptable marketable skills and competences that can help breach the interface between university studies and the world of work.

The integration of higher education as a driver of the poverty reduction policy in Cameroon could be said to be rooted in its background as the fruit of discussions with its development partners. It is also a result of the proactive and sensitizing efforts of Cameroonian higher education authorities during the policy processes and debates which culminated to the designing of the recent poverty reduction strategy paper for Cameroon, especially the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP, 2009). From an institutional stand point of view, the integration could be viewed as revolutionary in the sense that the prescriptions of the development partners were contrary, regarding higher education as a luxury at a time when higher education in other parts of the world is a critical instrument for economic development and needed more investments.

Judging from the current state of affairs, it is in curriculum reforms in line with professionalization (technological and professional development perspective) that seem to drive advances in relation to the growth and poverty reduction policies through higher education in Cameroon. This policy perspective would seem to be consistent with the reality that higher education institutions, at least in the global comparative sense in teaching institution. As such, curriculum transformation in line with professionalization seemed above all, to be the prime instrument for engaging Cameroonian university in redressing societal problems within the current context. Thus, the outcome of the professionalization and curriculum reforms can be visible within a few years; and research can be of long term. That is why curriculum reform and professionalization is urgent for the moment. Meanwhile, "*parallel strategies are to be designed in terms of applied research''* as the second main item for the socio-economic involvement of higher education. The research perspective postulate that the higher education sector has to be capable of producing knowledge that can be re-injected into the production system to maintain and sustain the development process.

D. The Sectorial Policy Document 2010

The recent Sectorial Policy Document for Higher Education (Sectorial Policy Document, (SPD, 2010) in Cameroon states that the role of higher education, as required by the current dispensation and dynamics of economic development, goes beyond that of the mere supply of human capital. Besides that the university establishments should be more prepared to train highly qualified personnel, *"such personnel must be adapted to being the knowledge workers that 'the new economy' demands* (SPD, 2010;10).Governance wise, the document emphasizes the implication that these new orientations and especially the quest for "excellence'' in teaching and research usually necessitates a transformation and changes in the relationship between the university and various public, political and private actors; notably between the government and the university and between the university and its establishments (SPD, 2010).

In July 2010, higher education experts set out to revamp university teaching in Cameroon so as to create more competitive universities in the 21st century and to adapt university curriculum to the challenges of the job market. The national expert work groups on university programs examine and re-examined university programs of studies, made an inventory of reforms in the higher training programs and their equivalence with the needs of the labor market, renovate accreditation and assessment procedures of the quality of higher education training programs, defined guiding principles of training there by guaranteeing transparency, accountability of qualification and access to employment as well as drawing up the calendar for the updating of training programs. The work groups define a common language for national higher education stakeholders (training institutions and industries) to enforce the 1993 university reforms which laid emphasis on professionalism as a teaching tool capable of rendering any graduate fit for the job market (Cameroon Tribune, July 2010).

The new paradigm of economic growth, focuses on the relationship between "knowledge'' and economic development as express in the Sectorial Policy Document (SPD, 2010) on higher education in Cameroon. According to the policy makers "economic growth and sustainable development in any modern economy depends heavily on the quality of higher education and scientific research". As a consequence, these changes to the new paradigms of economic growth not only implicate higher education but call for new roles, expectations and orientations where in any modern society higher education institutions come to be seen as "facilitators of innovations; product innovations, process innovations, social innovations, organizational innovations and training and certification innovation" (SPD, 2010:10). Thus the university should be in the business of understanding what it entails to render its disciplines professional and relevant to the world of work. This therefore suggests that one of the strategies through higher education is the necessity for the universities to align their programs and activities to the national development plans as the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP).

The university's role in the current socio-economic vision of Cameroon is about moving further from its traditional position to being able to participate in the development of industries, enterprises and innovations. While this assertion remains a subject of research and debate, it is however clear that the slow growth rate witnessed and the inability of our country to be globally and economically competitive means that the Cameroonian educational system, especially higher education needs to go further. The university is not supposed to evolve in parallel lines with socio-economic and productive actors and structures but in consonance with their activities. The activities of the universities have to be beneficial to industries and enterprises so as to be integrated into national research and development agenda. There is renewed emphasis on the links between higher education and the markets, (Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007), by a scheme of "entrepreneurial universities" and by notions of excellence and the centrality of managerial concepts and goals such as productivity and efficiency. The big question

that remains unanswered is whether Cameroonian university is capable of developing its research which allows it to resolve the problems of governance policies on the professionalization of the teaching/learning process and equipping graduates with the requisite skills to acquired employment or be auto-employed.

Beside education and general government strategy papers, there have been revisions and additions to the 1993 reforms which relate to higher education. Some of these include:

- Law No 005 of 16th April 2001 (LOHE) on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. It defines the orientation of higher education in terms of teaching, research, and contribution to development, bilingualism and cooperation.
- Decree No 2005/383 of 17th October 2005 on New University Governance lays down the financial regulations applicable to universities.
- The 9th August 2008 decree creating the University of Maroua.
- Decree No. 2010/372 of 14th December 2010, creating a second Anglo-Saxon state university, the University of Bamenda.
- The University-Industry Charter signed on 20th December 2010 expressing the values that should be upheld and the rules and regulations in university-industry relations.
- The 2006-2009 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP).
- The 2010-2014 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP).

Higher education objectives result from overlapping national and international conventions related to education. As a developing and aid-dependent country, Cameroon's higher education system is influenced by the World Bank, UNESCO, the African Development Bank and other sub regional organizations which shape what is deemed strategic for higher education (Doh, 2008). The priority was and still is to reform the higher education system and enhance its relevance to societal needs. At independence, higher education was mainly for training of 'cadres' to replace the departing colonialist in the state administrative machinery.

1.3.3. Role of Accreditation Agencies

University accreditation in Cameroon plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of higher education. Accreditation agencies, such as the Ministry of Higher Education and the National Accreditation Commission (NAC), are responsible for evaluating and recognizing higher education institutions. Here are the main functions and roles of these agencies:

Accreditation is a critical process in higher education that ensures academic programs offered by universities meet established national and international standards. This process is conducted by specialized agencies that evaluate various aspects of educational institutions, including their curricula, teaching methods, faculty

qualifications, and available resources. The overarching goal of accreditation is to guarantee that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the job market.

One of the primary functions of accreditation agencies is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the curricula offered by universities. This involves reviewing course content, learning objectives, and the alignment of programs with industry standards. Accreditation bodies assess whether the curriculum provides students with a comprehensive understanding of their field of study and prepares them for real-world applications. For instance, engineering programs may be evaluated based on their adherence to technical standards set by professional organizations such as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).

In addition to curricula, accreditation agencies examine teaching methods employed by educational institutions. This includes assessing instructional strategies, classroom engagement techniques, and the use of technology in delivering education. Effective teaching methods are crucial for fostering student learning and ensuring that graduates can apply their knowledge effectively in professional settings. Accreditation agencies look for evidence that institutions employ best practices in pedagogy and continuously improve their teaching approaches based on feedback from students and industry stakeholders.

Another vital aspect of accreditation is evaluating the resources available to students. This encompasses physical facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and classrooms, as well as access to academic support services like tutoring and career counseling. Accreditation agencies ensure that institutions provide an environment conducive to learning where students have access to necessary tools and support systems. Adequate resources are essential for enhancing student experiences and outcomes.

The ultimate aim of accreditation is to ensure that graduates possess the necessary skills required by employers in their respective fields. By adhering to established standards, accredited programs demonstrate their commitment to producing competent professionals who can contribute effectively to society. Accreditation not only enhances the credibility of educational institutions but also instills confidence among prospective students regarding the quality of education they will receive.

Accreditation agencies play a pivotal role in maintaining high educational standards within universities by thoroughly examining curricula, teaching methods, and available resources. Through this rigorous evaluation process, they ensure that graduates are well-prepared for successful careers in a competitive job market.

Agencies ensure that institutions comply with laws and regulations governing higher education in Cameroon. This includes verifying admission requirements,

administrative management, and compliance with infrastructure and qualified academic staff requirements. The accreditation process is not limited to a one-time evaluation; it also encourages a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions. Recommendations made by agencies after their evaluations encourage institutions to implement changes aimed at improving the quality of their teaching and services.

Accreditation contributes to increasing transparency in the higher education sector by providing students, parents, and employers with reliable information about the quality of educational institutions. This also enables institutions to be held accountable for their academic performance.

Accreditation agencies play a key role in the process of international recognition of Cameroonian diplomas. By accrediting programs according to recognized standards, they help open doors for graduates in the international job market, facilitating their academic and professional mobility. Cameroonian agencies often collaborate with international organizations to align their practices with those observed elsewhere in the world. This includes adopting international standards that can further improve academic quality. University accreditation agencies in Cameroon are essential for ensuring quality, promoting continuous improvement, ensuring regulatory compliance, strengthening transparency, and facilitating international recognition, thereby contributing to a more robust and competitive education system.

CHAPTER 2

Governance and Management of Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon

2.1. Governance Models

2.1.1. Centralized vs Decentralized Governance

The governance of higher education in Cameroon is characterized by a complex interplay between centralized and decentralized structures, which significantly influences various aspects of the educational landscape, including management practices, quality of education, and institutional autonomy. At the core of the governance structure is Law No. 2001/005 of April 16, 2001, which outlines the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. This law establishes a framework that leans heavily towards centralization. The central government plays a pivotal role in determining strategic decisions related to academic programs, funding allocations, and educational policies. This centralized approach aims to create uniformity across institutions; however, it often overlooks the unique needs and contexts of different regions and institutions. The implications of this centralized governance are multifaceted:

Uniformity in Academic Programs: The central government's control over academic programs can lead to a standardized curriculum that may not adequately reflect local or regional demands for specific skills or knowledge areas. This can result in graduates who are ill-prepared for local job markets.

Funding Allocation: Centralized decision-making regarding funding can lead to disparities among institutions. Universities in urban areas may receive more funding compared to those in rural regions, exacerbating inequalities within the higher education system.

Limited Institutional Autonomy: Institutions often have limited autonomy to make independent decisions regarding their operations and strategic direction. This lack of flexibility can stifle innovation and responsiveness to changing educational needs.

In contrast to the centralized framework established by Law No. 2001/005, there have been ongoing discussions about decentralizing certain aspects of governance within higher education in Cameroon. Proponents argue that decentralization could enhance institutional autonomy, allowing universities to tailor their programs and policies more closely to their specific contexts. Decentralization could potentially lead to:

Enhanced Responsiveness: Institutions would be better positioned to respond to local labor market needs and community expectations if they had greater control over their academic offerings.

Improved Quality of Education: With increased autonomy, universities might innovate more effectively and implement quality assurance measures that are relevant to their specific environments.

Equitable Resource Distribution: A decentralized approach could facilitate more equitable distribution of resources by allowing regional authorities or institutions themselves to prioritize funding based on local needs rather than a one-size-fits-all national policy.

However, transitioning from a centralized system poses challenges such as ensuring accountability at the institutional level and maintaining standards across diverse educational settings.

The governance of higher education in Cameroon reflects a tension between centralized control as established by national laws like Law No. 2001/005 and calls for greater decentralization aimed at enhancing institutional autonomy and responsiveness. While centralization provides uniformity and oversight, it risks ignoring regional diversity and specific institutional needs; conversely, decentralization offers opportunities for tailored approaches but requires careful management to ensure quality and accountability across the system.

Strict administrative control: Universities and other higher education institutions must comply with the directives of the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP). This control can limit their ability to innovate or adapt their programs to local needs.

Funding: The funding of institutions is largely determined by the central government, which can create disparities between institutions based on their geographical location and reputation.

Uniform academic programs: Academic programs are often standardized, which can reduce academic diversity and not meet the specific needs of the local labor market. Decentralization could offer several benefits to improve governance in the higher education sector:

Institutional autonomy: By giving universities more autonomy in decision-making, they could better respond to local needs in education and employment.

Local adaptation: Institutions could develop programs adapted to local economic and cultural realities, promoting a better match between training and the labor market.

Community participation: A decentralized approach could encourage greater participation of local communities in the management of higher education institutions, strengthening their social relevance. Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of decentralized governance also presents challenges:

Limited resources: Many universities may lack the necessary resources to function effectively without substantial support from the central government.

Regional inequalities: Decentralization could exacerbate existing inequalities if some regions have better infrastructure or resources than others.

Complex coordination: The multiplication of local actors could make coordination between different institutions and administrative levels difficult, potentially leading to a lack of harmonization in academic standards. In conclusion, although Cameroon has a legal framework that favors a centralized approach in its higher education system, there is significant potential for decentralized governance that could improve the effectiveness and relevance of educational institutions in the face of contemporary challenges.

2.1.2. Role of Boards of Directors

The governance of higher education in Cameroon is characterized by a complex interplay between centralized and decentralized structures, which significantly influences various aspects of the educational landscape, including management practices, quality of education, and institutional autonomy. At the core of the governance structure is Law No. 2001/005 of April 16, 2001, which outlines the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. This law establishes a framework that leans heavily towards centralization. The central government plays a pivotal role in determining strategic decisions related to academic programs, funding allocations, and educational policies. This centralized approach aims to create uniformity across institutions; however, it often overlooks the unique needs and contexts of different regions and institutions. The implications of this centralized governance are multifaceted:

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Equitable Resource Distribution: A decentralized approach could facilitate more equitable distribution of resources by allowing regional authorities or institutions themselves to prioritize funding based on local needs rather than a one-size-fits-all national policy.

However, transitioning from a centralized system poses challenges such as ensuring accountability at the institutional level and maintaining standards across diverse educational settings. The governance of higher education in Cameroon reflects a tension between centralized control as established by national laws like Law No. 2001/005 and calls for greater decentralization aimed at enhancing institutional autonomy and responsiveness. While centralization provides uniformity and oversight, it risks ignoring regional diversity and specific institutional needs; conversely, decentralization offers opportunities for tailored approaches but requires careful management to ensure quality and accountability across the system.

This diversity ensures that all stakeholders have a voice in decision-making, which is essential for responding to the diverse needs of the university community. The board of directors has several key functions:

- Strategic direction: It defines the university's strategic orientations, including academic and administrative development

- Financial management: The board approves the university's budget and ensures its implementation. It ensures that financial resources are used effectively to achieve institutional objectives

- Academic supervision: Although it is not directly involved in the daily management of academic programs, the board supervises the implementation of resolutions taken by the rector regarding teaching and research programs

- Appointment of officials: The board has the power to appoint certain officials within the university, including the rector and other key members of the administrative staff

- Ensuring regulatory compliance: It ensures that the university complies with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring good governance

- Performance evaluation: The board regularly evaluates the university's performance in terms of achieving academic and administrative objectives

- External representation: Board members represent the university to government authorities, international partners, and other external stakeholders

- Session expenses: Although board membership is unpaid, the university covers the expenses related to board sessions, demonstrating a commitment to active participation

The board of directors plays a fundamental role in the governance of universities in Cameroon, ensuring balanced representation of diverse interests while effectively supervising the strategic and operational direction of the institution.

2.1.3. Stakeholder Participation

The participation of stakeholders in Cameroonian universities is a multifaceted issue that encompasses various groups, each with distinct interests and roles. Understanding this participation requires an analysis of the different stakeholders involved, their contributions, and the impact of their engagement on higher education institutions. Key Stakeholders in Cameroonian Universities are:

Students are often viewed as the primary beneficiaries of higher education. Their involvement is critical for ensuring that educational programs meet their needs and aspirations. They participate through: Representation on university councils, where they can voice concerns and influence decision-making. Student associations that advocate for student rights, organize events, and foster community engagement.

Academic staff, including professors and lecturers, play a vital role in shaping the curriculum and academic policies. Their participation includes: Engaging in faculty meetings to discuss academic standards and institutional governance. Collaborating with students on research projects and community service initiatives.

The administration is responsible for implementing policies and managing resources within universities. Their role involves: Facilitating communication between different stakeholder groups. Ensuring that the institution adheres to national education standards while addressing local needs.

Employers represent the external environment that universities must prepare students for. Their involvement can be seen through: Partnerships with universities to develop curricula that align with industry requirements. Providing internships and job placements for graduates, which helps bridge the gap between education and employment.

Civil society organizations contribute by advocating for educational reforms and ensuring accountability within higher education institutions. Their participation includes: Monitoring university performance and promoting transparency. Engaging in public discourse about the importance of higher education in societal development.

Despite the recognized importance of stakeholder participation, several challenges hinder effective engagement:

Communication Barriers: There may be insufficient channels for dialogue among stakeholders, leading to misunderstandings or lack of awareness regarding each group's needs.

Power Dynamics: The hierarchical structure within universities can limit the influence of certain stakeholders, particularly students and civil society organizations.

Resource Constraints: Limited financial resources may restrict opportunities for meaningful engagement activities or initiatives aimed at enhancing stakeholder collaboration.

Stakeholder participation in Cameroonian universities is essential for fostering an inclusive educational environment that meets diverse needs. Each group (students, academic staff, university administration, employers, and civil society) plays a crucial role in shaping higher education policies and practices. Addressing challenges related to communication, power dynamics, and resource allocation will enhance stakeholder engagement and ultimately improve the quality of higher education in Cameroon.

These organizations enable students to voice their concerns on issues such as teaching quality, living conditions on campus, and the relevance of programs to the labor market. However, there are also challenges related to student mobilization, particularly due to potential repression by university or government authorities. Academic staff play a fundamental role in defining and implementing educational policies within universities. Their participation can be translated into their engagement in research, the development of new study programs, and the continuous improvement of pedagogical quality. Teacher-researchers are also involved in initiatives aimed at strengthening links between the university and the private sector, which is essential for providing relevant training to students.

University administration is responsible for the day-to-day management of higher education institutions. Its role includes strategic planning, financial management, and quality assurance. An effective administration must foster an environment conducive to the participatory engagement of all stakeholders. This often involves actively listening to concerns expressed by students and academic staff to adjust institutional policies accordingly.

Employers play a key role in the educational system by providing feedback on the match between the skills acquired by graduates and those required in the labor market. Collaboration between universities and businesses can take several forms, including internships for students, joint research projects, or continuing education programs for professionals. Civil society also has a growing interest in evaluating the performance of universities. Expectations regarding the social responsibility of higher education institutions are increasing, prompting these institutions to engage more with their local communities. Despite these positive dynamics, several challenges persist regarding the effective participation of these stakeholders.

The lack of adequate financial resources to support genuine participatory governance is often cited as a major obstacle. Furthermore, there is sometimes resistance to change within university administrative structures that can hinder innovation and community engagement. In conclusion, although various stakeholders are involved in the functioning of Cameroonian universities, their ability to participate effectively largely depends on the institutional framework in place and their collective willingness to work towards continuous improvement of the educational system.

2.2. Financial Management of Institutions

2.2.1. Sources of Funding

Universities in Cameroon are facing increasing financial challenges due to the economic crisis affecting both public and private institutions. To overcome these difficulties, they must diversify their sources of funding. Here is a detailed overview of the main sources of funding available to Cameroonian universities:

Government grants: Universities receive grants from the state, which are essential for covering part of their operating expenses. For example, the University of Dschang received a grant of one billion FCFA for a basic budget of 880 million FCFA, while the University of Douala received a higher grant despite similar expenses.

Revenue generated by internal activities: Higher education institutions also mobilize resources through various revenue-generating activities. This includes:

Rent from infrastructure: Rent from university towns and other facilities contributes significantly to finances.

Specialized centers: Centers such as the medico-social center, the distance learning center, and the reprography center also generate revenue.

Academic publications: The "Dschang University Press" is an example where the sale of publications contributes to financial resources.

Partnerships with the private sector: Universities establish collaborations with companies to fund certain academic programs or specific projects. For example, MTN funded doctoral training at the École supérieure des sciences et techniques de l'information et de la communication (ESSTIC) to the tune of 4 million FCFA.

Universities in Cameroon, like many institutions around the world, rely on a diverse array of financial sources to support their operations, infrastructure, and educational programs. Understanding these sources is crucial for grasping how higher education institutions function within the economic landscape of the country. One of the primary sources of funding for universities in Cameroon comes from government grants. The Cameroonian government allocates a portion of its budget to support higher education institutions. This funding is essential for maintaining academic programs, paying faculty salaries, and supporting research initiatives. The amount of government funding can vary based on national priorities and economic conditions.

Another significant source of revenue for universities is tuition fees paid by students. These fees can vary widely depending on the institution and the program of study. In addition to tuition, students may also incur other charges related to their training, such as registration fees, laboratory fees, and costs associated with extracurricular activities. The financial contribution from students is vital for universities to cover operational costs and invest in facilities and resources. Universities actively seek private donations and sponsorships as a means to supplement their funding. This involves reaching out to alumni, local businesses, and philanthropic organizations that may be interested in supporting educational initiatives or specific projects within the university. Such contributions can provide critical financial support for scholarships, research projects, infrastructure development, and community outreach programs.

Another avenue through which universities can generate revenue is through the commercialization of their resources. This includes leasing out equipment or facilities for external use or selling products developed through research activities. For instance, if a university has developed a new technology or product as part of its research efforts, it may license this technology to companies or sell it directly to consumers. This not only generates income but also enhances the university's reputation as an innovator.

In addition to external funding sources, universities often engage in various internal activities that generate revenue. These can include hosting conferences, workshops, or training sessions that attract participants from outside the university community who are willing to pay fees for attendance. Additionally, some universities may operate commercial ventures such as bookstores or cafes that contribute financially to their overall budget. Universities in Cameroon rely on a varied combination of financial sources ranging from government grants to private partnerships through revenue generated by their own internal activities and the financial participation of students. This

multifaceted approach helps ensure that they can continue providing quality education while addressing challenges related to funding shortages.

2.2.2. Budgeting and Resource Allocation

Budgeting and resource allocation in Cameroonian universities are crucial processes that influence the quality of higher education and research. These mechanisms are often marked by structural, financial, and administrative challenges that affect their effectiveness. The higher education system in Cameroon consists of public and private universities. Public universities receive a significant portion of their funding from the government, while private institutions rely mainly on tuition fees and other revenue sources. The Cameroonian government has implemented several reforms to improve financial management in universities, but these efforts are often hindered by a lack of adequate resources. Budgeting in Cameroonian universities involves several key steps:

Budget preparation: Each year, universities must prepare a provisional budget that reflects their needs for infrastructure, personnel, and educational equipment. This process requires an accurate assessment of past expenses and realistic forecasts for the upcoming year.

Budget approval: Once the budget is prepared, it must be submitted to the relevant authorities for approval. This often includes the Ministry of Higher Education, which plays a central role in validating university budgets.

Budget execution: After approval, funds are allocated to various administrative and academic units according to the priorities defined in the budget. Effective execution requires good financial management to avoid budget overruns.

Monitoring and evaluation: It is essential to conduct regular monitoring to ensure that funds are used in accordance with the set objectives. Internal audits can be conducted to ensure transparency and efficiency in resource utilization.

Resource allocation in Cameroonian universities is generally based on criteria such as:

Number of enrolled students: Universities with a larger number of students may receive a larger share of the budget to meet their increased needs for infrastructure and personnel.

Academic programs offered: Certain disciplines may require more resources due to their nature (e.g., experimental sciences versus humanities).

Academic performance: Institutions that show continuous improvement in their academic results may benefit from additional allocation to encourage this dynamic. However, despite these criteria, there are often inequalities in fund distribution among different institutions, which can create an imbalance in the quality of education offered. Challenges related to budgeting and resource allocation include:

Insufficient budget: Many universities suffer from chronic underfunding, which limits their ability to invest in infrastructure or recruit qualified personnel.

Corruption and mismanagement: Cases of corruption have been reported in some institutions, which undermines public trust in the education system.

Lack of financial management training: Administrative staff may not have received adequate training on effective budget management, leading to poor utilization of available funds. In conclusion, although Cameroon has established a framework for budgeting and resource allocation in its universities, several challenges persist that require urgent attention to improve the education system overall.

2.2.3. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are essential components of effective governance in higher education institutions. In the context of Cameroonian universities, these principles play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education and fostering socio-economic development. The commitment to transparency involves open communication regarding various operational aspects, including financial management, admissions, and academic evaluations.

Financial Management: Transparency in financial operations is vital for building trust among stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, and government bodies. It ensures that funds allocated for educational purposes are utilized effectively and efficiently. Regular audits and public reporting of financial statements can help mitigate corruption and mismanagement.

Admission Processes: Clear communication about admission criteria and processes is necessary to ensure fairness and equity. When universities provide transparent information regarding how candidates are selected, it helps prevent discrimination or favoritism based on non-academic factors. This transparency can also enhance the credibility of the institution.

Academic Performance Evaluation: Transparent evaluation methods allow students to understand how their performance is assessed. This includes clear grading rubrics, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for appeal if students believe they have been unfairly evaluated. Such practices not only improve student satisfaction but also encourage academic integrity. Accountability Mechanisms

Internal Governance Structures: Establishing robust internal governance frameworks within universities can enhance accountability. This includes creating committees responsible for overseeing different aspects of university operations, such as finance, academics, and student affairs.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engaging various stakeholders—students, faculty members, alumni, and community representatives—in decision-making processes fosters a culture of accountability. Their involvement ensures that diverse perspectives are considered when formulating policies or addressing issues within the institution.

External Oversight: Government agencies or independent bodies should conduct regular assessments of university operations to ensure compliance with established standards and regulations. This external oversight serves as an additional layer of accountability that can help identify areas needing improvement. The relationship between transparency/accountability in universities and socio-economic development is significant:

Quality Education: By ensuring transparency in educational practices, universities can improve the quality of education they provide. A well-educated populace contributes positively to economic growth by enhancing workforce skills.

Trust in Institutions: When universities operate transparently and accountably, they build trust with society at large. This trust encourages investment from both public and private sectors into higher education initiatives.

Social Mobility: Transparent admission processes allow for greater access to higher education for underprivileged groups, promoting social mobility which is essential for equitable socio-economic development.

Transparency and accountability are critical for the effective functioning of Cameroonian universities. They not only enhance educational quality but also contribute significantly to the broader socio-economic landscape of the country by fostering trust, improving governance practices, and ensuring equitable access to education.

This enables stakeholders, including students, parents, and the government, to better understand how resources are used and how decisions are made. Such transparency is essential for building trust between the institution and its various stakeholders. Universities must regularly publish reports on their financial and academic activities. This includes information on allocated budgets, expenses, and student academic performance. By making this information publicly accessible, they can demonstrate their commitment to responsible and ethical management. Social responsibility of universities (SRU) refers to their obligation to act in favor of the well-being of society as a whole. This includes not only educating students but also preparing them to enter the labor market with relevant skills.

Universities must ensure that their educational programs meet the needs of the labor market to reduce unemployment among young graduates. In Cameroon, where the youth unemployment rate is high (8.9% according to the INS in 2012), it is imperative

that higher education institutions adapt their curricula to train "skill providers" rather than just job seekers. This requires close collaboration with the private sector to identify the skills sought by employers. Despite these increasing demands for transparency and accountability, several challenges persist in the Cameroonian education system.

These include: Rigid education system: The current system does not respond quickly enough to changes in the labor market.

Mismatch between training and market needs: The training offered is often too general and does not meet the specific expectations of employers.

Weak internal governance: The quality of governance within institutions can affect their ability to be transparent and accountable. To address these problems, it is essential that all stakeholders - including the government, universities themselves, and the private sector - work together to promote a culture of transparency and accountability. In summary, transparency and accountability in Cameroonian universities are fundamental to ensuring effective higher education that contributes to the country's economic and social development. By improving these aspects, universities will not only strengthen their credibility among students and the general public but also play a key role in improving socio-economic conditions in Cameroon.

2.3. Quality of Education and Evaluation

2.3.1. Academic Norms and Accreditation

The education system in Cameroon is structured to provide quality education that is accessible to all citizens. It operates under a normative framework designed to ensure that higher education institutions maintain high standards in both teaching and research. This framework is essential for fostering an environment conducive to learning and academic excellence.

At the core of this normative framework are several laws and decrees that outline the principles and regulations governing education in Cameroon. One of the most significant pieces of legislation is Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, which focuses on the orientation of education within the country. This law establishes fundamental principles aimed at ensuring access to quality education for all Cameroonians. Key Principles Established by Law No. 98/004

Access to Quality Education: The law emphasizes that every citizen has the right to access quality education, which is crucial for personal development and national progress.

Academic Standards: The law mandates the establishment of academic standards that institutions must adhere to, ensuring that educational programs are relevant and meet international benchmarks.

Accreditation Processes: To maintain these academic standards, there are accreditation processes in place that evaluate institutions based on their performance in teaching and research.

Equity in Education: The law also addresses issues of equity, aiming to eliminate disparities in educational opportunities among different regions and socio-economic groups within Cameroon.

Curriculum Development: The framework encourages continuous improvement and relevance of curricula offered by higher education institutions, aligning them with national development goals.

Research Promotion: There is a strong emphasis on promoting research as a critical component of higher education, which contributes not only to academic growth but also to societal advancement.

Collaboration with Stakeholders: The law encourages collaboration between educational institutions and various stakeholders, including government bodies, private sector entities, and civil society organizations, to enhance educational outcomes.

To implement these principles effectively, various governmental bodies oversee the education sector: The Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) plays a pivotal role in regulating higher education institutions, ensuring compliance with established standards. Accreditation bodies are tasked with evaluating programs offered by universities and colleges to ensure they meet quality benchmarks. Continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are established to assess institutional performance regularly.

The normative framework governing higher education in Cameroon is comprehensive, focusing on quality assurance through legal provisions such as Law No. 98/004. This law lays down essential principles aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education while promoting academic excellence through rigorous standards and accreditation processes.

In addition, Decree No. 2013/004 of January 18, 2013, sets out the accreditation modalities for higher education institutions. This decree specifies the criteria that these institutions must meet to obtain accreditation, such as the qualification of teaching staff, adequate infrastructure, and the relevance of programs offered. Accreditation in Cameroon is managed by the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP), which has

established a rigorous process to evaluate institutions. Institutions must submit a file including their academic programs, human and material resources, and academic results.

Once the file is examined, a panel of experts conducts a site visit to evaluate compliance with established standards. Academic standards define the expectations for pedagogical content, teaching methods, and student evaluation. They are developed taking into account international requirements while integrating the cultural and socio-economic specificities of Cameroon.

For example, the LMD (Licence-Master-Doctorat) system was introduced to harmonize Cameroonian diplomas with those of other African and European countries. Despite efforts to establish a solid normative framework, several challenges persist in the Cameroonian education system. These include the lack of financial resources to fully implement the required standards and the need for ongoing training for teaching staff to adapt to new pedagogical methods.

Cameroon has established a normative framework structured around laws and decrees aimed at ensuring the quality of higher education through strict academic standards and a rigorous accreditation process. However, much remains to be done to overcome existing challenges and ensure accessible and quality education for all.

2.3.2. Internal and External Evaluation Systems

The evaluation of higher education systems in Cameroon involves both internal and external mechanisms aimed at ensuring the quality of education. These systems are essential for ensuring that institutions meet academic and professional standards. Internal evaluation refers to the processes put in place by each university to evaluate its own programs, teachers, and students. This includes tools such as:

Self-assessments: Universities regularly conduct self-assessments to examine their academic programs, infrastructure, and human resources. These assessments help determine whether educational objectives are being met.

Student feedback: Student satisfaction surveys are commonly used to gather information on the quality of teaching, course content, and learning environment.

Quality assurance committees: Many universities have established committees dedicated to quality assurance that oversee internal evaluation processes, analyze results, and propose improvements.

These internal mechanisms are often influenced by national policies on higher education, which encourage a culture of quality within institutions. External evaluation is generally conducted by independent or governmental agencies that examine university performance based on specific criteria. Key elements include:

Accreditation: Universities must obtain accreditation from the Ministry of Higher Education or other recognized agencies. This process involves a rigorous evaluation based on various criteria such as curriculum, teacher qualifications, and academic results.

External audits: Regular audits may be conducted by external experts to evaluate compliance with government-established or internationally recognized standards.

University rankings: National and international rankings also play a role in external evaluation, as they influence an institution's reputation and attractiveness to potential students.

Evaluation reports: Detailed reports are often published after these external evaluations, providing a transparent overview of institutional performance and recommending corrective measures if necessary.

Cameroon's evaluation systems aim to create a robust framework that enables universities to continually improve while meeting societal expectations for higher education. The combination of internal and external evaluations contributes to strengthening the credibility of Cameroon's education system, thereby promoting better professional preparation for graduates.

2.3.3. Feedback Experience and Continuous improvement

The continuous improvement in Cameroonian universities, particularly through the LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) system, has been a subject of concern and analysis since its introduction in March 2006. This system aimed to modernize higher education and meet the needs of the labor market. The key objectives of this reform were the professionalization of training, the diversification of training offers, and the improvement of employability. However, despite these ambitions, challenges persist.

The feedback from experience reveals several critical points, including the mismatch between training and the market, limited partnerships with the private sector, and the need for continuous evaluation. It is crucial to strengthen links with the professional sector, provide continuous training for teachers, and implement post-graduation follow-up to adjust educational programs according to market developments. In conclusion, although the LMD system has introduced promising reforms, there is still much to be done to ensure a genuine match between the training provided and the country's economic needs.

2.4.1 State of University Governance in Cameroon

Today, Cameroon has eight state universities with 4200 permanent teachers who teach over 300,000 students enrolled regularly, (MINESUP, 2015). From the socio-economic context of the last two decades and the perspective of an emerging national economy by 2035, these universities operate in the face of challenges which inhibit their development

and reconstitute an evaluation and a continued renewal of mechanisms of the governance of the system. Governance in Higher Education has four axes (margerial, financial, academic and social) based on the 1993 university reforms which were influenced by professionalization, globalization, information and communication, technology, and the liberation and growth of societal knowledge. The reform of University Governance forms part of the mission of the Ministry of Higher Education. This implies the redefinition of the relation between the university and the state and the relations between the different universities. For example in 2008, the government presented an embodiment of fundamental reforms fixing the new university orientation towards 2020. This concept called the new university governance program which aim at revolutionizing Higher Education, had 07 priority programs among which figured the reinforcement of the national system on teaching and learning.

The decree organizing the Ministry of Higher education brings out the regulatory text. From a national perspective, the management and coordination of activities within universities assures coherence between public university institutions and institutional level which permits every university to express its specific needs. At the national level there exist instances of inter university concertation and the transversal management of higher education. The Coordination Commission of Universities is in charge of examining the coordination and harmonization of university activities, statutory measures related to personnel and the criteria for selection and admission of students. This commission is presided over by the Minister of Higher education and meets twice a year. It comprises a representative of the Prime Minister Head of Government, Heads of University institutions, a representative of the Ministry in charge of Higher Education, Education, Research, Planning and Finance.

2.4.2 The Role of the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP)
The Ministry of Higher Education is the main governance body for the state universities. It defines policies for both the state and private higher education sectors. The Ministry is headed by a Minister who is assisted by a Secretary General, a General Inspector for academics and service control as well as various directors for departments (MINESUP, 2012).The Ministry of Higher Education is charged with the coordination of activities of HE in Cameroon which comprises eight state universities, seven private and one hundred and seventy four private higher education institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education comprises;

- Inspectorate general of services.
- Inspectorate general of academic affairs
- The central administration which further comprises
- The general secretariat and 10 divisions.

The Ministry of Higher Education defines the orientation guidelines on the national policies of HE in Cameroon (legal and regulatory frame work rules and responsibilities of all institutional actors) and carries out control missions, evaluation and information on the activities of university institutions. It is also the competent body that generally elaborates the norms of HE in Cameroon. In the administrative domain, the Minister of HE approves and authorizes the execution of these decisions and deliberation of the administrative council of universities. He equally appoints officials into posts of responsibilities in the different universities up to the rang of sub-director

Decree no 93/027 of January 1993 fixing common dispositions applicable to State universities, defines the judicial status of state universities and their governance structures. The same text guarantees university administrative autonomy. Universities are headed by Rectors or Vice-Chancellors in the French and Anglo-Saxon universities respectively. They are assisted by Vice Rectors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors respectively. In addition to the Rectorates or Vice-Chancellery are the office of the Secretaries General or Registrar for French and Anglo-Saxon Universities respectively. They are in charge of routine administrative matters in the Central Administration of the universities. The Secretaries General or Registrar are statutory secretaries to the various decision-making organs of the Universities (e.g. the Committee of Deans and Directors, Senate and the University Councils). Directors head various services in the Central Administration of the Universities and Deans and Directors head faculties, schools and institutions. In the basic units of the university there are heads of departments and programme coordinators. The University has a governing body presided over by the 'President du Conseil d'Administration' (Chairman of the University Council). In this council, the presidency of the country, the ministries of higher education, finance, public service, planning and labour are represented, as well as external stakeholders (MINESUP, 2013).

There is a conference of Heads of University Institutions. This body is responsible for examining and resolving concrete problems touching on university administration, preparing university coordination meetings and proposing the agenda of the conference of Heads of University Institutions. It meets once every semester and chaired by one of the heads of the institution for a period of two years renewable. The conference of heads of University Institutions examines problems related to the development, structural, academic, and professional life of universities in line with the HE policy in Cameroon. Heads of institutions are not members but invited to attend. It is presided over by the Minister of Education and meets every three years.

French and English are the languages of instruction in higher education in Cameroon. Both languages are used in the Bilingual Universities for teaching and learning depending on the first language of the teacher or the student. Only French or English is used in the monolingual Francophone or Anglo-Saxon Universities

respectively. Admission into university is based on the two high school graduate qualifications- Baccalaureat (BAC) and the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Advance Level for French and English-speaking high school graduates respectively. Other requirements include language proficiency and relevance of high school subjects to the intended field of study. Admission into professional and technical university centres, schools and institutes are based on highly competitive entrance examinations (Njeuma et al., 1999 p.5).

Before 2008, the higher education system in Cameroon comprised of two structures according to French and Anglo-Saxon (or Anglo-American) systems. To ensure mobility between the two subsystems and in response to the pressures of regional integration and globalization, the degree structures were harmonized according to the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral structure. The Francophone structure today is called the LMD system (Licence, Master and Doctoral cycles of 3+2+3 years each) corresponding to BMD (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral cycles) which existed in the Anglophone system. This new and comparable degree structure went operational from 2008.

2.4.3 Components of University Governance in Cameroon

There are different components that constitute the governance process of State Universities in Cameroon. The standards for administrative, financial and digital governance are enshrined in the 1993 University Reforms organizing the functional framework of Public Universities in Cameroon. In the actual context in which Higher Education is evolving in Cameroon in the search for a permanent progress and well-being of the population and coupled with the New University Governance Policy, it calls for a new managerial style based on results and monitoring. This ongoing process of practical innovation for quality assurance is to guarantee efficiency in the system guided by the knowledge economy which is based on inventiveness, creativity, productivity and competitiveness is geared towards quality assurance and the professionalization of Higher Education System in Cameroon (MINESUP, 2014).

A- Administrative governance

Public Universities in Cameroon are placed under the supervision of the government (Ministry of Higher Education). They have an organizational chart which also indicates their links with potential partners and clearly defined lines of duty and authorities to manage the curriculum with an indispensable sufficient budgetary autonomy and the necessary resources which has been allocated to them for the implementation of its curriculum. The universities define the mandate and the composition of the various committees recognized and approved by the head of the HEI. Responsibilities, duties, qualification and hierarchical links of the administrative staffs are defined by the school in consultation with the supervisory Ministry. The universities have a plan for organization and management of enrollment. Meanwhile Private HEI must comply with

the labor regulations notably, issuing contract of employments to employees and registering them to the National Social Insurance fund (NSIF). Students and support staffs are represented in the decision making process of universities by their elected delegates. These delegates have voting powers.

Governance of the higher education system in the Republic of Cameroon is mostly in the hands of appointed administrative personnel. They occupy different positions with varied job demands or role expectations. Some like deans and directors are expected to sign commitment and payment orders, prepare and manage budgets, do performance appraisals for academic and support staff, among others. The responsibilities of a principal officer, regardless of position within the hierarchy, cannot be performed at acceptable, let alone, superior level, without basic training. A major part of the job of a principal officer is to create and nurture optimal conditions for effective and efficient performance of individuals and sub-units. Regardless of how skilled collaborators may be, regardless of available state of the art technology, to guarantee superior performance requires successful combination of resources into a well-functioning system, the ultimate test of administrative excellence. The need to strengthen capacity of staff has been a recognized challenge. For example, in the University of Buea during its academic planning week, the Faculty of Education, under the auspices of the Department of Academic Affairs, usually organizes a workshop on various aspects of teaching for newly recruited academic personnel, (Titanji, 1999). Structures have been put in place to strengthen the capacity of principal officers, who for the most part emerge from classrooms and laboratories. Furthermore, under the auspices of the Association of Africa Universities (AAU), many Senior University Management Workshops (SUMAWs) have been held in various parts of Africa for vice chancellors and top executives from universities across Africa.

The Stakes and Challenges of Governance and Development in Africa do exist. Workshops, according to Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, the AAU's Secretary General, are designed to help university leaders who might have excellent academic credentials but minimal or no managerial experience. The goal has been to increase their understanding of issues and problems relating to the changing environment of higher education in Africa and to strengthen their management and administrative capabilities and providing tools to increase effectiveness and efficiency in African universities (University of Cape town, 1997). Higher education system should copy the example of the AAU and make management and administrative workshops available to all appointed officials. To have a quality higher education system requires, among other things, very qualified personnel (academic, support and administrative). Within our higher education system, considerable attention should be paid to the professional development of academic staff and also to strengthen the capacity of appointed officials. We insist that the possession of a terminal degree or enrolment in a doctorate programme should be a prerequisite for teaching. Staff

development assistance enables teachers conduct research and attend conferences in order to increase their competence and performance. The underlying assumption for our actions is that there are certain characteristics or abilities employees bring to the work situation. Ideally, these characteristics or competencies enable them to perform at acceptable or superior levels. An individual in a given role is expected to draw from his or her competencies to fulfil the responsibilities of a given job. In-service development opportunities have to be embedded into the work of practicing administrators. Generally, the job of a principal officer, regardless of hierarchical level, is to help their respective units achieve stated objectives through the utilization of available, albeit scarce resources. This is done by performing the traditional functions of planning, coordinating, motivating, directing and coordinating these resources.

LEADERSHIP

The university's executive head is first and foremost a political leader. He or she is responsible for designing a long-term vision for the institution and develops the strategy which will help achieve the set goals. To do so, leaders also facilitate and stimulate discussion, engaging the different constituencies of the university. They are ultimately the guardians of the quality of the teaching and research activities of the university and of its internal balance. They strike the compromises necessary to support the ambitions of the faculties and departments while promoting interdisciplinary approaches. To attain these objectives, leaders promote transparency in the decision-making and communication processes. They oversee the partnerships that the institution engages in and ensures that these support the overall strategy.

Externally, the leader is the face of the institution. They engage in the broader policy dialogue with public authorities and stakeholders. It is even more important to be articulate about the added value of universities to societal and economic development as public resources become scarce and competition is high. As an interface between public authorities and the institution, the leader has a particular responsibility to become involved and to contribute to shaping policies that affect the institution and the broader higher education and research landscape.

Managing a complex community

The university community is diverse and to some extent undergoing transformations, as the institutions themselves are evolving. It is therefore all the more important, in such a context, that leaders not only create an environment favorable to continued dialogue, but also generate and nurture enthusiasm for a common project. They are responsible for establishing efficient communication channels that enable the various constituencies to be informed and engaged in rapid change processes. As chief of staff, the university leader manages negotiations between management, staff and unions, steers the development of

recruitment policies that contribute to the strengthening of the institution, and promotes new talent as a vital source of renewal for the university.

Fostering the development of the institution

The university leader drives the professionalization of management and governance of the institution, enhancing the university's capacity to respond to new challenges. In this regard, the rector or president has an important role in developing leadership at the different levels of the institution, to make sure that the adequate profiles, experience and skills are put to the best use for strengthening and further developing the university.

This is particularly relevant for leaders engaged in large-scale change management brought about, for instance, by merger processes. The success of the operation largely depends on solid leadership and sound management teams that can effectively support the strategic and academic case for the merger.

To allow the university to thrive, the leader must address the difficult challenge of over-regulation, so that micromanagement and burdensome bureaucratic requirements do not create a stifling environment harming innovation in both teaching and research activities. They therefore act as a watchdog in that respect and seek to maintain a healthy balance between necessary accountability towards public authorities and society and institutional autonomy.

Responsible for financial sustainability

The Rector or Vice Chancellor, through his or her decisions, works towards the long-term financial sustainability of the institution. This implies addressing multiple challenges, from fostering the development and implementation of a sound income diversification strategy, to ensuring that promising initiatives are identified and supported financially. They manage internal expectations and external constraints. As the policy discourse on performance influences the reforms of funding allocation mechanisms throughout Europe, the university leader has as a priority to define internal allocation of resources, which may differ from public priorities in the field; their concern is to enhance the efficiency of university operations in a way that supports the academic and research missions of the institution. This includes constant care for simplifying internal financial procedures. This brief description of some of the tasks and responsibilities of university leaders today serves only to confirm the need for adequate selection processes for the executive leadership. Continuous skill development is essential to address the complex array of issues rectors and presidents face on a daily basis. EUA's work on governance and funding intends to provide tools, illustrations and recommendations to help today's leaders tackle tomorrow's challenges.

2.4.4 Implementation of University Governance Policies/Reforms

Policies or reforms exist to ensure that our processes and practices align with our strategic directions, our core principles and the regulatory and governance environment, to protect the University and its stakeholders, and to guide change. They describe the

University's position on a particular issue. Procedures for implementation, communication and compliance monitoring are developed for each policy. A University policy is one which is intended to state the University's position on issues which have university-wide application;

 - reflect and uphold the University's governing principles;

- identify and prescribe compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and other policies;

- Promote operational efficiencies;

 - enhance the University's mission and/or reduce institutional risk;

- Provide decision makers with limits, alternatives and guidance.

One of the issues raised in the statement of the problem of this research was the implementation of university governance policies in the enhancement of the professionalization process of higher education in the university milieu. The purpose was to verify if these policies/reforms have guidelines, practices and processes that the university will embrace in fostering excellent internal and external communication in its application. Through implementing its policies, the university will realize its vision, mission and core values by reaching out to its stakeholders with messages that help to create a sense of ownership of the policy. Several reforms or policies have been carried out by the Ministry of Higher Education to foster the professionalization of higher education. This thesis in the chapters ahead will be exploring to know if there are laid down principles to guide the implementation of university governance policies/reforms in the professionalization of higher education in the University of Ngaoundere. These principles include;

- Setting objectives in implementation of policies/reforms
- Monitoring mechanisms
- Fit back from all faculties and departments on the implementation and application of the professionalization process
- Difficulties faced and possible solutions for the way forward

The University Administration headed by the Rector, and his/her collaborators such as the Vice Deans, Directors, Deans and Heads of Departments, all in their respective spheres of competence ensures the implementation of these policies/ reforms in enhancement of the professionalization process in the university.

B- Pedagogic (Academic) Governance

According to the Department of University Accreditations, in order to guarantee quality training and research in Public Private Universities, it is strongly recommended to respect certain minimal exigencies in the domain of academic governance (MINESUP,2015) . This is classified ,into three stages; before, during and after the beginning of the academic year of Higher Institutions of Learning.

Teaching and learning for the Bachelor and Masters' Degree takes place between the 28 to 32 weeks from the month of October and the end of July. The month of August is dedicated to holidays and the month of September for preparation for the new academic year. The BMD system is anchored on the semester model which is centered on the organization of studies into semesters. It compels students to validate individual semesters and not the academic year.

Higher education is receiving increasing attention from governments thanks to growing awareness of the need for highly qualified human resources to play leadership roles in every sector of social and economic life. Projects like the Tuning Africa (2013) attest to this growing interest in Higher Education's role. In Cameroon, for example, the role of Higher Education in development, poverty reduction and employability of graduates has been clearly spelled out in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, which was a followed up of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Consultations were made with the business world to get their responses and contributions in a process aimed at improving higher education curricula to respond to the demands of the labor market. There is a Vice Rector in each State University in Cameroon in charge of Cooperation with the Business World.

Taking into consideration the exponential growth of higher education in African countries, with some growing faster than the populations, it is only but logical for countries to respond in ways that can bring lasting solutions to the consequences of this growth in enrolments. Awono in Tuning Africa (2013;35), while writing the concluding statements of the project, notes:

> More than fifty years after the independence of African States, higher education in the continent has greatly evolved. There are more than 1,000 universities in Africa and one of the problems raised by this exponential growth in higher education include the professionalization of teaching to ensure that they are in accordance with the needs of the countries. In fact, higher education in Africa now has to face the contradictions it has developed and fostered over years. Various forums organized on the issue of graduates' employability adequately show the importance of this issue for the relevance of higher education in Africa. African states face these adverse consequences of uncontrolled development of higher education which leads to increasingly visible unemployment of youths who are yet to graduate (p. 35).

Developing countries therefore, need well-resourced universities to generate their own knowledge base and to avoid relying entirely on knowledge produced for a different context. Developing countries need strong academic programs that are able to sustain themselves and meet the needs of the labour market. Higher education institutions should

in addition provide a forum of critical thinking and cutting edge research to break new ground.

During the 4th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation, in Madrid-Spain Leroux, (2011: 49), speaking on the professionalization of degree courses, and presenting the case of France, said:

> The question of the professionalization of university courses is not new. It has been an issue since the modern systems of higher education were set up in the last third of the 19th century. In broad outline, there are conflicting views. According to the first of these, universities are firstly places of culture whereas the second considers that courses in higher education should provide the productive system with a flow of high-skilled workers that is in phase with the demand for labour (p.49).

Leroux's conceptualization of professionalization of graduates in terms of better equipping them with skills and competences through learning, so as to better adapt them with the labour market will be the principal focus of this research. The rational for adopting Leroux's conceptualization is because we think that professionalization of higher education courses should lead to high employability of graduates by responding to the demands of the labour market. This may lead to employment either by the private sector, the government or self-employment of holders of professional degrees and diplomas.

The expansion of knowledge in the 21st century with constant technological advancements and quick changes in the economy, are indications that higher education curricula have to be updated accordingly. The rapid changes in technological advances also cause the demand for specialized and more professional higher labor, driving individuals to return to universities and other professional higher education institutes in order to acquire the new technical and professional skills to improve their employability. The pressure on universities to include professionalization in their curricula is growing, since universities are looked upon as producers of innovative and specialized knowledge that can become driving forces of national growth and prosperity, (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

Economic and technological changes in the 21st century have given rise to expectations that higher education should become more complex, instead of building only academic knowledge, it is supposed to build personal traits and professional skills in students to make them adaptable and employable in the job market. This can be accomplished in different means, (Knight &Yorke, 2003), suggested creating a work experience, entrepreneurship program, improving careers advice and the use of portfolios. This new turn of events in the 21st century has caused many countries in the world and particularly in Africa to mainstream their higher education in their economic development strategies. Examples of such African countries include Zambia, Malawi and

Cameroon which have highlighted the use of higher education in their economic development strategies, employability and poverty reduction strategy papers. Cameroon and Ethiopia saw an increase in their higher education budgets to correspond to the new vision. This was reflected in Cameroon's current Growth and Employment strategy Paper (GESP) of 2009. According to SUPINFOS (2010), the engagement and new role of higher education in Cameroon seemed to be the necessity to increase the socio-economic, socio-professional and market-friendliness of the higher education curriculum as well as their restructuring and reorganization.

2.4.5 Measures Taken to improve Pedagogy in Training Programmes
In 1993, the government of Cameroon carried out major structural reforms in the country's higher education system. The main features of these reform were; the creation of six new universities, the introduction of the course credit or modular system, the revamping of syllabuses to reflect professionalization, the introduction of registration fees, and abolition of government stipends or subventions to individual students. The year 2008, marks a land mark in the history of higher education in Cameroon with the introduction of the Bachelor-Masters-PhD (BMP) system in conformity with the Declaration of CEMAC Heads of States on the 11th of February 2005, in Libreville Gabon. The aim of the BMP is a sectorial strategy in education to ameliorate access and quality assurance of education. It is also in a bid to assure young people to study and follow up training in regard to the socio-professional milieu and the exigencies of employability and competition.

The BMD is a change in the paradigm of lear ning which obliges the teacher or researcher to question the professional finality of the training which is offered to students. It goes beyond the traditional classical transmission of   knowledge between teachers and students. Thus henceforth, the student is place at the centre and to help to prepare him/her for future professional insertion by transmission of competences (know-how knowledge and scientific knowledge), this new approach calls for multi-disciplinary learning of courses in departments of the school. Hence much is been done by Rectors, Deans and Directors to reform the programs in the best manner to enhanced the professionalization process especially in the faculties which trains the greatest number of students. It is in a bid to help teachers and researchers in this heavy task of reforming the curricular that the French cooperation in 2007 and 2008 organized four sessions on the theme""How to construct a professional training program based or centered on the acquisition of competences". The training that held in Yaounde, Ngaoundere, Douala and Dschang had as participants', teachers and researchers of the various faculties of state universities and professional schools such as IVT and ENSET. The biggest question now is how do we transform the traditional system of training where trainers offer to the students' knowledge and know-how and allowed the students to carry his/her knowledge and struggle to integrate in a job market to the new paradigm (BMP) where the trainer look for competence to be acquired by the learner (student) to permit him/her to integrate

in or many professional domains. Now, what are the methodological tools to accomplish this mission without which we risked to fall back in a simply reforming the same existing training.

The modernization of higher education in Cameroon in 2008 was geared towards the New University Governance Policy prescribed by the Head of State, which permitted the government to effectively kick start the BMP system. The training curricular was tailored to match the development needs of an emerging Cameroon by 2035. One of the permanent missions of the ministry of higher education enshrined in the Action program of 2008 and specifically in the global objectives of the ministry was to ameliorate the governance and management of the university system. An underlining objective of the reforms was to make higher education more responsive to the world of work, which is to professionalize university training. 22 years have elapsed since the reforms were launched. Several batches of students have graduated from the reformed universities. It is pertinent to examine what impact the reforms have had in the professionalization of the teaching-learning process in the university.

The strength of the above is mirrored in the "New University Governance Policy" (NUGP) (cf.1.2), in line with the new university reforms of the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate (BMD) with the objective being that of professionalizing higher education courses, with the aim of producing a skilled and innovative human capital that is more employable and able to pilot the emergence of the nation by 2035, (Operational strategy of the NUGP up to 2010). There is increasing pressure on Cameroonian universities to produce skilled and knowledgeable graduates and establishing stronger mutual beneficial partnerships with all stakeholders in the public and private sector. While maintaining their vision of offering quality teaching, schools should develop and promote within them Income Generating Activities (IGA) through initiatives such as:

- Diversification of study programmes and adaptation to the job market
- Introduction of distance teaching.
- Development of closed links with the private sectors: and
- Exploitation of License and pattern

The teaching and research staffs are encouraged to associate their research and teaching to concrete realities. These associations of research and teaching concrete realities should be transmitted to marketable goods and services in order to increase the applicability of the study programmes of HEIs.

Social Governance

The professionalization process of higher education in Cameroon cannot be attained without adequate infrastructural, equipment and personnel. According to the Resource theory of pedagogy, (Astin, 1984), Physical facilities like spacious lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, audio-visual aids are believed to enhance students' learning. The theory maintains that if adequate resources are brought together in one place, student

learning will improve and development will occur. Space plays a vital role in HE. The classroom is being reinvented to support new pedagogies (Ball, 2010). So the use of student centered learning is hall mark of the 2007 BMP reform goal which requires space and necessitates every university library to occupy a central position in its placement and prominence. According to American Economist Robert Barro (2013), heavy public sector spending on infrastructure is a favorable component to boost economic growth. In the same light, heavy investment in infrastructure, personnel and equipment in higher education will enhance the professionalization process in higher education. Baldwin (2009) believed that academics play an important role in the success of universities, but that governance is required for the infrastructure and personnel to realize quality and innovation.

Infrastructure

According to Teshome Yizengaw, (2008), higher education institutions in Africa have seen little or no infrastructure improvements for the last few decades. Learning infrastructure is widely deficient due to insufficient budget and overdependence on public financing. Infrastructure, such as internet access, library, textbooks, equipment, laboratories and classroom space are critical bottlenecks resulting in deterioration of quality of education and learning. The poor state of facilities also affects the quality of research and its ability to contribute to societal development and progress. Africa's higher education institutions face a decline in quality of education, learning and research. Universities operate with overcrowded and deteriorating physical facilities, limited and obsolete library resources, insufficient equipment and instructional materials,

According to the MINESUP 2015 Document "University Standards" Universities must maintain a constructive interaction in their areas of concentration and must have enough structures for lectures, tutorials and practical works as well as sufficient secured laboratories/workshops that meet the required technical standard.

Universities offering training in medicine, pharmacy and dentistry among others must;

- have a clinical teaching site which has an adequate numbers of patients and materials necessary for clinical teaching.
- have a University teaching hospital.
- have a pharmacy.
- establish, with teaching hospitals, conventions, define their respective roles: and
- include in the resources for clinical training, first aid services, secondary and tertiary hospital services, emergency services, ambulatory structures and structures for basic treatments as well as health centers, and others.

The current context of globalization, socio-linguistic disparities and socio-economic vulnerability of many necessitates HEIs in Cameroon, anxious to be part of the modernity, certain requirements of social governance. A HEI should have at least a

university hall of residence, which is functional, with enough capacity as regards enrolment. Every school should define a policy for housing students which encourages agreements and conventions with private operators. A HEI should make available a quota of the rooms of their Halls of Residence to vulnerable students (physically and socially challenged students, foreign students...). A HEI should have at least a restaurant which is functional and ensures strict respect for hygiene and cleanliness.

I- Health

On health infrastructure, every HEI should have a Community Health Centre (CHC) which has a capacity of at least five halls wherein general services and consultation take place. A HEI which has an enrolment of at least seven thousand (7000) students should have:

- emergency service;
- a laboratory;
- an audience and counseling unit;
- a pro-pharmacy with basic drugs;
- an observation hall with a minimum of eight (8) beds; and
- a radiography unit.

A HEI, which has an enrolment of less than seven thousand (7000) students, should have a well-equipped infirmary. In terms of functioning, a HEI should have a health insurance service for everybody involved in the running of the HEI (lecturers, students and support staff):

- The CHC should offer, on a monthly basis, specialized consultations in ophthalmology, gynecology, etc);
- The Radiology Unit of the CHC should employ a part-time radiologist to read radiological snapshots.

In terms of human resources, the CHC should have at least:

- a full-time general practitioner for a student population of seven thousand (7000);
- Two additional general practitioners for a student population of more the seven thousand (7000+);
- at least, a State Registered Nurse and qualified nurses or nursing auxiliaries for a student population of seven thousand (7000):
- a laboratory technician and a laboratory auxiliary;
- a radiology technician and a radiology auxiliary;
- a part-time doctor in radiology:
- a part-time doctor and a nurse for the infirmary;
- a full-time psychologist and a female social worker for the psycho-social aspect.

In terms of financial resources, a budgetary line of up to 40% of the medical fee paid by the students should be allocated to the functioning of the CHC

II- Lodging

In terms of lodging infrastructure, HEIs must define a futuristic environment for students' housing which is substantial with catering, sports facilities, shopping centers and leisure centers. Government or private student halls of residence should be built in relation to students' enrolment and the standards which have taken the disabled students into account. All the disabled students, especially those with motor disability, should be offered accommodation if they ask for one. The quality of the rooms should meet the standards set by the Ministry of Commerce. For security reasons, all HEIs of learning should make provision for campus police. HELs should ensure a balanced and quality catering. The space for the disabled students in the restaurants and elsewhere should be materialized by creating parking space, space for conviviality, and movement that guarantees access to disabled students.

In terms of functioning and with regard to hygiene and cleanliness, the Steward should carry out an assessment or a control on the accommodation situation, at the beginning of every semester and for restaurants, once a semester. The employee must do a medical examination every semester with a full-Time general practitioner in the CHC.

III - Sports

In terms of sports facilities, HEIs Should nave a multi-sports complex (basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, etc.) and a playground which is in accordance with official standards with regard to sports education as defined by the Ministry of Sports. In terms of functioning, HEIs should:

- organize a sporting activity at least once a year;
- check sports facilities in a systematic manner to ensure a fortnightly maintenance, a biannual inspection and an annual rehabilitation;
- Organize annual sports competition which ends up with a cup in the most practiced sports disciplines. The University games which holds every year is an example of celebrating excellence in sports.

In terms of human resources, HEIs should have at least:

- two qualified physical education educators who hold a certificate in Physical Education;
- a sports doctor:
- a physiotherapist;
- a psychologist/ Counsellor

During the university games, additional doctors should be recruited with regard to the heavy workload.

In terms of financial resources, a budgetary line for sports activities should be included in the budget of HEIs.

IV- Culture

In terms of infrastructure to enhance cultural activities, each university must have a multicultural hall of at least a thousand seats. This hall should be equipped, air conditioned with a mobile screen, and have a sound system. In terms of functioning, HEIs must organize, at least, one cultural activity each term. Every HEI must have an Open Day at least once a year. In terms of human resources, each HEI should have a qualified main coordinator with a certificate of Senior Coordinator and Youth Counselor

Equipment

HEIs should have digital governance strategy for the modernization and visibility of their practices. The question of network, quality, availability, and security as well as access to campus or mobility on campus has to be taken into account in the development of projects and services. They must adapt their information n system management and piloting to paperless internal processes in an efficient manner. For this to be possible it will rely as much as possible on the solutions thought about beforehand with regard to all HEIs in Cameroon. HEIs must ensure and facilitate access to content and services through coherent innovative platforms which are adapted to current technologies and key developments interim of content personalization and mobility. A HEI must set up a distinct and an exemplary management approach to students and university life. This allows the institution to have unique and personalized information in the system of management of relationship between students as well as follow-up of students.

HEI must incorporate innovative services in the realm of promoting training and research. This is done through a digital knowledge manufacturing bank of the production of teachers, researchers, and students as well as the digital library which integrates the resources acquired or produced by the institution itself. The essence of this is to institute, manage and enhance the digital heritage of the institution.

The use of equipment like the information and communication technology (The Internet) is an important tool in the facilitation of the teaching/learning process of today. The usage of internet technologies in teaching has recorded some achievements: There is increased accessibility of reference materials and data of all categories of users, quickness of information retrieval, decrease in the cost of information delivery to users, individualized learning and teaching (UNESCO, 2003). Daniel (1996) asserts that technology equips students with the generic skills for lifelong learning. One of the

Bachelor-Masters-Ph.D. (BMP) implementation strategies was the improvement of teaching through the use of appropriate technologies and methods. Even if there were sufficient human resources and knowledge of the appropriate teaching/learning activities, without ICTs and other materials, student centered teaching and assessment cannot attain a certain quality. Current research is given credence when updated materials or books are consulted and exploited. It is therefore important for the university to always update books in the library to enable students have updated materials for their research. The absence of departmental and faculty libraries impedes research and expert knowledge in various disciplines. Expert knowledge is an essential ingredient for professionalization.

Personnel

Investment in teaching personnel (Human resources) is very important for any effective student centred teaching to take place. Astin (1984) asserts that one resource measure that is particularly popular is the student-faculty ratio. Many administrators believe that the lower the ratio the greater the learning and personal development that will occur. Without sufficient teachers, Graduate Assistants and non-academic staff, it is likely that the class sizes may be large, the teacher overworked and lectures becomes the predominant teaching method. Gibbs (1992) argues that one of the reasons why university lecturers use lecture is because they are overworked. This is confirmed by the findings on teaching methods and activities where teachers say they use lectures most of the time due to time constraints and overcrowded halls. In such an environment, student-centred learning may be compromised, critical thinking and creativity necessary for the workplace may not be achieved and the goal of professionalization may not be attained.

In the review of contemporary human resources management (HRM) literature, there are methods and procedures traditionally used in the context of employment situations that may be applied to improve the experiences of those serving in a voluntary governance role at a not-for-profit organization. The goals of HRM are four-fold: attracting qualified applicants to an organization; motivating the individual to commit themselves to a contributing role; creating meaningful opportunities whereby the person may maximize their professional talents; and retaining experienced members for a sufficient period of time in order to capitalize on their competencies and experiences. If done well, such HRM programming may stimulate strategic applications for the organization where such efforts are aligned with the mission, values and goals of the institution (Dessler, Rekar-Munro and Cole, 2011).

Insufficient Funding

Higher education has a significant impact on the economy of every country. Insufficient funding is a *major* problem in Cameroon's higher education affecting infrastructural development, staff shortages, digital drive and teachers' incentives. Government low

educational budget in higher education falls below global recommendation hence pushing institutions face with enrolment growth to rely on students' fees Universities created in Cameroon in the past 17 years face enormous   Despite government efforts and international aid; universities struggle to meet demands due to insufficient state budgets and resource misallocation, creating a cycle of decline.

- Government Initiatives:** Efforts to increase funding and modernize the system, with some budget increases noted.

- ** Performance-Based Financing:** Exploring models like performance-linked grants to improve accountability and fund use.

- ** <u>Union Advocacy</u>:** Trade unions are campaigning for deeper system transformation and better funding for education.

In essence, funding remains the backbone issue, impacting everything from basic amenities to staff retention and quality assurance in Cameroon's higher education sector.

CHAPTER 3

Socio-Economic Impact of Degree Inflation

3.1. Impact on the Labor Market

3.1.1. Unemployment Rates Among Graduates

The unemployment rate among young graduates in Cameroon, particularly those aged 25 to 35, is a worrying issue. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS), the unemployment rate for this age group and level of education is 14.8%. This figure is particularly alarming as it is five times higher than that of unschooled youth in the same age group, which is estimated at 3%. Upon examining education levels, it is clear that the unemployment rate also varies according to the level of education attained. For those whose education stopped at primary school, the unemployment rate is 4.2%, while it rises to 7.2% for those who completed the first cycle of secondary school and 10.2% for those who completed the second cycle of secondary school.

These figures show a paradoxical trend where a higher level of education does not guarantee better integration into the labor market. The INS emphasizes that this situation results from a mismatch between the training offered and the real needs of the labor market. In fact, most available jobs require little or no qualifications, creating a gap between the qualifications of graduates and the professional opportunities available to them. In 2022, only 41.7% of graduates from the vocational training system managed to integrate into the labor market. This dynamic highlights a structural problem in the Cameroonian labor market where young graduates struggle to find decent jobs despite a continuous increase in education levels.

The report also notes that enrollment in higher education has progressed by an average of 12.14% between 2018 and 2022, with a significant increase in scientific and technical fields. In summary, although the education level of young Cameroonians is increasing, this does not necessarily translate to improved job prospects. The paradox lies in the fact that those who have received formal education encounter more difficulties in accessing stable and well-paying jobs.

3.1.2. The Perceived Value of Diplomas by Employers

The perceived value of diplomas by employers in Cameroon is a complex issue that reflects both the expectations of the labor market and the reality of graduates' skills. Several studies and reports have highlighted this problem, emphasizing that despite the increase in the number of graduates, employers often express concerns about their adequacy with the real needs of the market.

According to the Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Issa Tchiroma (2021), about 88% of Cameroon's education system continues to produce skills

that businesses do not need. This statement highlights a significant gap between the academic training provided and the practical requirements of employers.

Companies often complain that graduates lack the technical and professional skills necessary to meet contemporary challenges. Unemployment among young graduates is also alarming. In fact, according to a study conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (INS) in 2018, only 8.8% of entrepreneurs hold a higher education degree, while a significant proportion of the active population is underemployed or works in the informal sector.

This indicates that even if these graduates have a high level of education, their integration into the labor market remains problematic. Research conducted by Nga Ndjobo and Abessolo (2017) reveals that many graduates struggle to make the transition from their studies to the professional world, highlighting a mismatch between the education received and professional expectations.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that many choose to accept jobs that do not match their level of education or initial aspirations. The LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) reforms implemented in Cameroon aimed to improve this situation by promoting more profession-oriented training (Fame Ndongo, 2018). However, so far, these reforms have not yet produced all the expected effects in terms of employability.

Finally, it is worth noting that a survey conducted by Gallup (2016) revealed that only one in ten people in Cameroon is satisfied with their job, indicating a general dissatisfaction among those who have managed to find employment after graduating. Although Cameroon's education system has evolved with the introduction of new reforms aimed at improving the quality of higher education, there is still a significant gap between what universities produce and what employers really need in the labor market.

3.1.3. Adaptability of Diplomas to the Needs of the Job Market

The adaptability of graduates to the needs of the market in Cameroon is a complex issue that has been extensively studied in the context of higher education reforms, particularly with the introduction of the LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) system. This system was adopted in March 2006 by the member states of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) to improve the quality of education and better meet the requirements of the labor market. The LMD reforms aimed to produce versatile graduates capable of effectively integrating into the professional world.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP), these reforms aimed to "help build modern states by training and developing the human resources necessary in all sectors of national life and activity" (Ministerial Circular No. 07/0003 MINESUP/CAB/IGA/CE, October 19, 2007). However, despite these intentions, there is

a gap between the skills acquired by graduates and the expectations of the market. Studies conducted by Nga Ndjobo et al. (2011) and Nga Ndjobo and Abessolo (2017) show that Cameroonian graduates do not always meet the expectations of the market.

In fact, although the public sector remains a major aspiration for these young graduates, it employs only a tiny fraction of them (less than 6% according to the National Institute of Statistics [INS], 2010). This highlights a mismatch between the training received and the skills required in the field. The LMD reform also introduced a dimension of professionalization through partnerships with the private sector. Fame Ndongo (2018) emphasizes that this approach aims to diversify the training offer to better meet the specific needs of the country's economic development.

The new fields created are supposed to be aligned with current market demands, but their effectiveness largely depends on the effective implementation of these partnerships. Despite these efforts, several challenges persist regarding the adaptability of graduates. Minyono Nkodo (2008b) mentions that it is crucial to focus training on professionalization to ensure that each student is prepared to enter the labor market with a qualifying degree. However, this requires a profound transformation of pedagogical methods and a continued commitment to improving the qualitative aspects of higher education.

Although the LMD reforms were designed to improve the adaptability of Cameroonian graduates to the needs of the market, there is still a significant gap between the academic training offered and the skills required by employers. Professionalization through partnerships with the private sector represents a promising avenue but requires rigorous execution to be truly effective.

3.2. For the Cameroonian Society

3.2.1. Education as a Factor of Social Emancipation
Education plays a crucial role in social emancipation in Cameroon, enabling individuals to access economic opportunities, actively participate in political life, and promote social change. The historical development of education in Cameroon, particularly after World War II, has been marked by significant stages that have contributed to this emancipation.

After World War II, education in Cameroon underwent a major transformation with the creation of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) in 1948. This organization played a key role in the fight for independence and highlighted the importance of education as a means of emancipation. According to David Kom, the UPC integrated African nationalists and promoted ideas that favored educational development.

Following independence in 1960, the Cameroonian government implemented several reforms to improve the education system. The revised Constitution of January 20, 1996, proclaimed primary education compulsory, followed by Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, which recognized education as a national priority. These measures aimed to ensure equitable access to quality education for all Cameroonian children.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 further reinforced this commitment to education. Goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This underscores the essential role of education in both individual development and the country's social and economic progress.

Despite these advances, challenges persist, particularly in northern Cameroon, where enrollment rates remain low. Factors such as financial poverty, socio-cultural constraints, and environmental crises like desertification further complicate the educational situation in these areas. In summary, education is a key factor in social emancipation in Cameroon, enabling individuals to improve their living conditions and access economic opportunities. Continuous efforts to strengthen the education system are essential to overcome existing obstacles and fully realize the transformative potential of education in this country.

3.2.2. Inequality in Access to Higher Education

Access to higher education in Cameroon is marked by significant inequalities influenced by various socio-economic factors. These inequalities manifest mainly through disparities between different social classes, gender, and geographical location of students. Research shows that students from socio-economically favored backgrounds have disproportionate access to higher education. According to a study by Saint (2005), higher education contributes to economic development by enhancing productivity and reducing poverty, but access remains limited for those from less wealthy households. This perpetuates an elitist system where only students from affluent families can fully benefit from higher education.

Another dimension of access inequalities is related to gender. Data indicates that enrollment in higher education institutions is often imbalanced in favor of men, limiting opportunities for women. This phenomenon is corroborated by studies highlighting that cultural and economic obstacles continue to restrict women's access to higher education (Roche, 2017).

Geographical location also plays a crucial role in accessing higher education. Students living in rural or remote areas often face difficulties accessing university institutions mainly located in major cities like Yaoundé or Douala. This creates an

additional barrier for those lacking financial or logistical means to relocate to these educational centers.

The high dropout rate among students enrolled in university cycles is another indicator of access inequalities. For instance, at the FALSH of the University of Yaoundé I, it was reported that approximately 65.46% of students from the 2015 cohort dropped out before obtaining their diplomas (information provided). This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including lack of financial support and family pressures.

Access inequalities to higher education in Cameroon are deeply rooted in complex socio-economic structures that favor certain groups while marginalizing others. Efforts to improve this situation must consider these multiple dimensions to promote more equitable and accessible education for all.

3.2.3. Effects on Social Mobility

The question of the effects of a university degree on social mobility in Cameroon is complex and multidimensional. In the Cameroonian context, a university degree is often perceived as an essential vector for social promotion, but economic and political realities strongly influence this dynamic.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Cameroon experienced a strong demand for qualified labor to support its post-independence development. Universities were then considered key institutions for training executives capable of managing the emerging state (Fourcade, Paul & Vernières, 1994). However, from the 1980s onwards, this demand began to stagnate due to various economic factors, including structural adjustments imposed by donors (Roubaud, 1994). This led to a saturation of the labor market for university graduates.

The university degree is traditionally valued in Cameroonian society. It is often associated with job opportunities in the civil service or liberal professions. However, with the increase in the number of graduates and the stagnation of recruitment in these sectors, the perceived value of the degree has been questioned (Mbembe, 1993). Graduates often find themselves facing high unemployment or precarious jobs that do not match their level of education.

Studies show that while a degree may offer some opportunities for social mobility, it does not necessarily guarantee an effective social elevator. Inequalities in access to higher education and the resources needed to succeed in this educational system exacerbate existing social disparities (Ngwana, 2003). Additionally, local dynamics and social structures also influence individuals' ability to leverage their education to improve their socio-economic status.

Educational reforms implemented by the government and supported by international institutions aim to improve the efficiency of the Cameroonian education system (Samoff & Bidemi, 2004). However, these reforms must be accompanied by consideration of socio-economic realities to ensure that the university degree can truly serve as a lever for social mobility.

In conclusion, while a university degree has the potential to positively influence social mobility in Cameroon, various contextual factors limit its effectiveness as a tool for social ascension. The current situation requires in-depth reflection on educational policies and their alignment with labor market needs.

3.3. National Economic Development

3.3.1. Contribution to Economic Growth

Education, measured by the level of diploma, plays a crucial role in the economic growth of a country. Several studies have been conducted to examine this relationship, and various authors have contributed to the understanding of the impact of diplomas on the economy. Endogenous growth models, developed by economists such as Robert Barro in his book "Determinants of Economic Growth" (1996), argue that technological progress and the accumulation of human capital are essential drivers of economic growth. Barro showed that investments in education increase human capital, which in turn stimulates productivity and promotes GDP growth.

Empirical research has demonstrated that the level of education of workers directly influences their productivity. For example, a study by Aghion and Howitt in "The Economics of Growth" (2010) highlights that innovation and education are interconnected; a better level of education enables individuals to innovate more, contributing to an overall increase in productivity within businesses.

A specific study on Senegal revealed that only 3% of traditional businesses were effective in using human capital. This indicates that there is untapped potential related to education that could significantly improve productivity and thus contribute to economic growth. This research was conducted using methods such as stochastic frontier analysis and data envelopment analysis (DEA).

Gordon R., in "The Rise and Fall of American Growth" (2016), also addresses the long-term effects of education on economic growth, emphasizing that past gains related to educational innovations may not be replicated with current technologies. This highlights a critical perspective on the return on investment in education in the face of contemporary challenges. In summary, it is widely recognized that diplomas contribute positively to economic growth by improving human capital, thereby increasing productivity within businesses and stimulating innovation.

3.3.2. Innovation and Research in Universities

Innovation and research in Cameroonian universities are of crucial importance for the country's economic and social development. Universities play a key role as centers of research, training, and innovation, contributing to the creation of knowledge and the improvement of living conditions. Cameroon has a university system that includes several public and private institutions. These universities are engaged in various fields of research, ranging from exact sciences to humanities, technology, and agriculture.

Innovation is often linked to applied research, aiming to solve local problems or improve existing processes. The Cameroonian government has implemented several initiatives to encourage research and innovation in universities. For example, the National Research Program (PNR) was launched to fund research projects that meet the country's socio-economic needs. This program also aims to strengthen partnerships between universities and the private sector.

Cameroonian universities collaborate with foreign institutions to strengthen their research capacities. These partnerships enable Cameroonian researchers to access additional resources, such as funding, modern equipment, and international expertise. Programs like Erasmus+ facilitate these academic exchanges. Priority areas for research include public health, sustainable agriculture, information and communication technologies (ICT), and renewable energy. For instance, some research focuses on developing disease-resistant crop varieties to improve food security in Cameroon.

Despite these efforts, several challenges persist in the field of innovation and research in Cameroon. Insufficient funding is a major problem that limits the scope of research projects. Additionally, there is a lack of adequate infrastructure and a weak culture of innovation among some academic actors. To improve innovation and research in Cameroonian universities, it is essential to increase public and private funding, improve research infrastructure, and promote a culture of innovation within higher education institutions. Networking between local and international researchers could also foster an environment conducive to the emergence of innovative ideas. In summary, innovation and research in Cameroonian universities are essential for the country's development, but require increased support, both financially and institutionally.

3.3.3. Relationship between Higher Education and the Private Sector

The interaction between higher education and the private sector in Cameroon is a complex topic that has been explored by several researchers and institutions. This relationship is essential for understanding how university graduates can meet the needs of the labor market and how private companies can influence academic training.

Higher education in Cameroon has experienced significant expansion since the 1990s, with the opening of numerous public and private universities. This expansion was

motivated by the need to train a qualified workforce to support the country's economic development. According to Nguefack (2018), this dynamic has led to increased collaboration between higher education institutions and the private sector, aiming to align academic programs with market requirements.

Partnerships between universities and companies have become increasingly common. For example, initiatives such as mandatory internships for students, joint research projects, and continuing education programs have been implemented to strengthen this collaboration. According to Tchouassi (2020), these relationships enable students to acquire practical skills while providing companies with direct access to emerging talent.

Despite these collaborations, several challenges persist. One of the main problems is the mismatch between academic training and the skills required by the labor market. According to Mvondo (2021), many companies complain that graduates lack the necessary technical skills to meet professional requirements, highlighting the need for a revision of university curricula.

The Cameroonian government has also recognized the importance of this relationship by implementing policies aimed at encouraging the private sector's integration into higher education. Programs such as the National Development Plan (PND) 2020-2030 aim to strengthen cooperation between these two sectors to promote sustainable economic development.

In the future, it is crucial that higher education institutions continue to evolve in response to the changing needs of the private sector. This could include an increase in entrepreneurship and technological innovation-oriented training, as suggested by Nguiffo (2022). Additionally, improved communication between the two sectors could facilitate mutual understanding of expectations and needs. In summary, the relationship between higher education and the private sector in Cameroon is marked by increasing collaboration but also significant challenges related to the mismatch between training and employment.

3.3.4. The Link between Higher Education and the World of Work

Nowadays the main reasons most people enter higher education institutions is to graduate and get employment, get promotion or get a new employment (Gokuladas, 2011). It is therefore important that higher education institutions equip their graduates with employability skills (Wittekind, Raeder & Grote, 2010). While higher education institutions around the world are graduating increasing numbers of graduates; most of them are increasingly finding it hard to get jobs. This is because the skills they acquired do not match the skills required by the employers (Baker & Henson, 2010). Youth Unemployment is a worldwide phenomenon. According to the ILO report of 2012 about

12.4 percent of people aged 15 to 24 worldwide were unemployed as of 2012, up from 12.3 percent in 2011. The youth unemployment rate was expected to climb to 12.8 in 2018 with an estimated 73.4 million young people out of work.

In six of ten developing countries surveyed, more than 60 percent of the young people were either unemployed or trapped in low-paying jobs, the report stated. According to the International Labour Organization's 2013 report, the unemployment rate in Cameroon is 30% and that of underemployment is 75%. The report states that, even by the most conservative standards, there are about 4-6 million, mostly educated, able and ready to work young people who are currently jobless in Cameroon. Cameroon remains very strategic in terms of institutional arrangement which also covers issues of the younger generation, yet the lack of adequate technical and professional education for youth remains a major concern and is one of the main causes for massive youth unemployment in Cameroon.

In this 21st knowledge economy, there is a growing expectation for universities to produce human capital with the right kind of capabilities and skills to meet the rapidly changing needs of the labour markets. (Foray & Lundvall, 1996). Universities are also expected to facilitate the shift to the new knowledge-based economies and high technologies through effective connections between research and the labour markets. (UNESCO, 2009). In response to this higher education was highlighted in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, (GESP), (2009), in terms of policy as a driver of economic growth and development. According to the ministry of higher education quarterly review, SUP INFOS, (2010c), one of the roles higher education (HE), is to increase the socio-economic, socio-professional and market friendliness of the curriculum. This role was reconceptualised in their New University Governance Policy (NUGP), with the objective of acquiring: a modern, professionalized higher education which is resolutely open to the rest of the society and meeting the requirements of knowledge production, of knowhow, of the use of knowledge and the production of human capital, quantitatively and qualitatively which is necessary to drive Cameroon to become an emergent nation (Operational Strategy of the NUGP up to 2010:2).

Also, the global HE arena and labour markets are preoccupied with concepts of graduate employability in recent years. Harvey (2004:3), defines employability in its core sense "as the acquisition of attributes (knowledge, skills, and abilities) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations (whether paid employment or not)." It is the aspect of the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities that was considered in this paper. These knowledge and skills are supposed to be acquired in the universities or institutes of higher learning. It therefore stands to reason that in order for graduates to be gainfully employed after university, they must possess the necessary skills and attributes required in the workplace. Higher education institutions in Cameroon, both public and private are thus confronted with the need to develop study programmes that meet employability challenges.

There is a growing interest through research on how higher education can become influential economic growth and development as well as employability of graduates. Studies on Cameroon include: Fonkeng and Ntembe (2009), investigated the potential of HE in the development of Cameroon, using household survey data from the first Cameroon household survey, analyzing the effect of education attainment on earnings and private returns to education, revealing among other things, a positive and significant relationship between HE and economic growth. Doh (2012), investigating the responses of HE in the alleviation of poverty in the country and in triggering economic growth, analyzed the transformation processes used by the Cameroonian government to use HE as a driver of its poverty reduction strategies in becoming an emergent nation by 2035. He used the National Innovative System (NIS) in depicting the systemic environment of HE to suggest that university's contribution to socio-economic development in Cameroon could be more direct given a strong macro support system with linkages. Samfoga (2015), evaluated the Strategic objectives of HE through the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), evaluating the increasing need of accountability and relevance to varying stakeholders with differing expectations. She concluded that Cameroon could learn from business organizations to manage strategic objectives, using the BSC. This paper is a contribution of how skill oriented HE curricula could become the safest route of escaping the unemployment trap and growing individual employability once in the world of work.

Internationally, there is a wide variety of studies on the phenomena of skills and graduate employability: McNair (2003) thinks that even though successful higher education teaching supports the production of employable graduates, the significance of this is most often missed by the learners if not made clear in the curriculum. He therefore suggests that in addressing employability in higher education curriculum, whether directly or indirectly, the link with employability must always be made crystal clear to maximize student benefit. (York and Knight, 2004). York and Knight (2004) point out that a needs analysis is necessary from the beginning, where HE providers find out the skills that make students employable and how these can be embedded in the curricula, to achieve desired employability. Phillips (2007) argued for the inclusion of work experience in the higher education curriculum on the basis that work experience improves students' employability and equips them with such skills as team building and business awareness. From their extensive research within the higher education community Knight and York (2004) came out with additional 39 attributes important for employability. The attributes have been grouped under the following headings: personal qualities, core skills and process skills. Knight and York equally outlined four main strategies currently in use within higher education for embedding employability in the curriculum. These are:

☐ Embedding employability through the whole curriculum;
☐ Embedding employability in the core curriculum;
☐ Incorporating employability-related modules within the curriculum and

 Work-based or work-related learning within or in parallel with the curriculum

Teneng (2016), held that Most of the graduate jobseekers said they were never exposed to internships and other work related activities. This implies that universities teach mostly theoretically with hardly any practice, which can be very detrimental to 21st century graduates in the knowledge economy. Universities should increase their efforts in embedding work-related activities into their curricula, either through internships, or other co-curricular or extra curricula activities. In consonance with this, Phillips (2007) observed that for youths to acquire skills required for future employment there must be an on-going partnership between universities and the world of work. According to Phillips, inclusion of work experiences in higher education curricula will improve students' employability and equip them with skills such as team building and business awareness. Higher education must therefore adapt and continue to adapt contents of curricula to reflect labour market needs, if they want to produce work ready and competitively employable graduates because contents of higher education curricula have a high and positive influence on graduate employability.

Chapter 4:

International Perspectives on Higher Education Governance

4.1. Comparison with Other African Countries

4.1.1. Successful Models in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced significant evolution in its higher education system over the past few decades, with several university models proving effective in the continent's socio-economic context. Here are some examples of successful models, along with relevant authors and dates. Universities that emphasize research and innovation have shown a positive impact on economic and social development. For instance, Makerere University in Uganda has been recognized for its contributions to agricultural research and public health. According to Friesenhahn (2023), this institution has established partnerships with international organizations to strengthen its research capacities.

The community university model, such as the one developed by the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, promotes local engagement and sustainable development. Nyamba (2007) highlights that this approach enables students to work on projects that directly address their community's needs, thereby strengthening ties between the university and society. Technological universities, such as the Botswana University of Technology, focus on practical and technical skills required to meet labor market demands. Makosso (2006) indicates that these institutions play a crucial role in training a qualified workforce capable of supporting the country's industrial development.

Partnerships between African universities and those from other regions have also been a key factor in success. Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar has established collaborations with several European institutions to improve its academic programs and research, as mentioned by Alexia (2006). Some universities adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that integrate digital technologies into learning. For example, the Virtual University of Senegal uses online platforms to expand access to higher education, which is essential in a context where physical infrastructure may be limited. In summary, successful university models in sub-Saharan Africa include a strong focus on research and innovation, active community engagement, market-adapted technical training, strategic international partnerships, and modern pedagogical approaches.

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4.1.2. Lessons learnt from other failed educational sysytems

The analysis of failures in educational systems has been a concern for many researchers and educators over the decades. Here are some key lessons learned from these failures, along with relevant authors and dates. Philippe Perrenoud (1999) emphasizes that educational reforms are often hindered by inconsistency and programmed ineffectiveness. Attempts at reform can seem futile in the face of mechanisms that neutralize efforts to reduce academic failure and inequality. This indicates that change in education requires a systematic and coherent approach rather than a series of isolated initiatives.

Perrenoud (1999) also highlights that despite efforts to improve teacher training, there remains a gap between the skills targeted by educational systems and those actually acquired by students. This suggests that the quality of teaching is crucial for educational success, and that without adequate training, even the best policies can fail. Hutmacher (1993) evokes the concept that "reality resists," implying that even with reforms in place, it is essential to continuously evaluate their impact on academic failure. Formative evaluation can help adjust pedagogical methods and respond to students' specific needs.

Isambert-Jamati (1985) notes that the emergence of academic failure as a social problem has been influenced by various socio-economic factors. Social inequalities play a significant role in access to quality education, meaning that any reform must consider the socio-economic context to be effective. Research also shows that community and family engagement in the educational process is essential for overcoming challenges related to academic failure. Open dialogue between schools and families can strengthen support for students, as mentioned in several studies on academic success. In summary, these lessons highlight the complexity of the educational system and emphasize that significant change requires an integrated approach that considers teacher training, continuous evaluation, socio-economic context, and community engagement.

4.1.3. Adapting foreign models to the Cameroonian context

The adaptability of foreign models to the Cameroonian context is a complex issue that requires an in-depth analysis of the country's cultural, economic, and social specificities. Several studies have been conducted to evaluate how these models can be effectively adapted. Cameroon is a Central African country with significant ethnic and cultural diversity. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS) of Cameroon, the country presents a mix of African traditions and colonial influences, making the adoption of foreign models sometimes delicate. Economic challenges, such as high poverty rates and unemployment, also influence how foreign models can be integrated.

In the field of education, several researchers have studied the application of Western educational systems in Cameroon. For example, Ngwa (2018) highlighted that active learning-based pedagogical methods must be adapted to take into account local realities. It has been observed that student-centered approaches, although effective in other contexts, require revision to adjust to traditional Cameroonian learning styles.

In terms of economic development, several authors, such as Tchamyou (2020), have examined how sustainable development models applied in Europe can be adapted to Cameroon. Tchamyou noted that initiatives such as sustainable agriculture must take into account local agricultural practices and the needs of rural communities to be effective.

In the public health sector, research conducted by Kengne (2021) showed that health systems inspired by Western models must integrate local cultural beliefs to succeed. Kengne proposed that health awareness programs be designed taking into account traditional practices to improve their acceptance by the population. In summary, while some foreign models may offer potential solutions to the challenges faced by Cameroon, their success will largely depend on their ability to adapt to local realities. This implies not only an in-depth understanding of the cultural and socio-economic context but also collaboration with local stakeholders to co-create relevant solutions.

4.2. Influence of international organisations

4.2.1. The Role of UNESCO in the promotion of educational norms

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO plays a crucial role in promoting and developing university educational standards in Cameroon. Its commitment is reflected in several initiatives and programs aimed at improving the quality of higher education in the country. UNESCO collaborates with the Cameroonian government to develop educational policies that meet the country's specific needs. For example, in 2015, UNESCO supported Cameroon in developing a national framework for inclusive education, which aims to ensure that all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to quality education (UNESCO, 2015).

The organization also works on strengthening the capacities of higher education institutions. This includes training teachers and administrative staff to improve pedagogical methods and university management. In 2018, a training program was implemented to train trainers on best practices in higher education (UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO also encourages research and innovation in Cameroonian universities. In 2020, it launched a call for projects to support research focused on sustainable development within higher education institutions in Cameroon (UNESCO, 2020). This financial and technical support aims to strengthen the capacity of universities to contribute to societal challenges. Another important aspect of UNESCO's role is the continuous evaluation of educational standards. The organization regularly conducts studies to evaluate the quality of higher education in Cameroon and provides recommendations based on these evaluations.

For example, in 2021, a study was conducted to analyze the challenges faced by Cameroonian universities in terms of academic quality (UNESCO, 2021). Finally, UNESCO also facilitates partnerships between Cameroonian institutions and other international universities to encourage academic and cultural exchanges. These collaborations enable Cameroonian students to access diversified and enriching education. In summary, UNESCO plays a fundamental role in promoting university educational standards in Cameroon through the development of adapted educational policies, strengthening institutional capacities, promoting research and innovation, and continuous evaluation and support for international partnerships.

4.2.2. Regional Initiatives (CEMAC, UEMOA) in the harmonisation of educational systems

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4.2.3. Partnerships with NGOs to ameliorate quality

The harmonization of educational systems in West and Central Africa is a major challenge for the socio-economic development of the member countries of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). These two organizations have implemented several initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education, facilitating student mobility, and strengthening professional skills within their member states.

CEMAC has launched several programs to harmonize educational systems in its member states. In 2009, the Conference of Heads of State adopted an action plan for education aimed at promoting quality education accessible to all. This plan includes measures such as:

Creating a regional framework for harmonization: CEMAC has established a common framework for school curricula to ensure consistency between different educational systems. This includes the development of standardized study programs that meet the needs of the labor market.

Establishing a system of mutual recognition of diplomas: This initiative aims to facilitate academic mobility between member countries by recognizing diplomas issued by educational institutions in other states.

Strengthening institutional capacities: Training is organized for educational staff to improve the quality of teaching in the region. These efforts are supported by various international partners, including UNESCO, which has provided technical expertise.

For its part, UEMOA has also taken significant steps to harmonize educational systems. In 2000, it adopted a master plan for education that includes:

Developing a common regional framework: UEMOA has developed a common framework for school and university curricula to ensure a certain uniformity in the teaching provided in its member states.

Promoting vocational training: The organization places particular emphasis on the development of vocational training programs adapted to local economic needs, which is essential for reducing youth unemployment.

Education information system: UEMOA has established an information system designed to collect and analyze data on education in its member countries, facilitating better decision-making based on evidence.

These initiatives aim not only to improve the quality of education but also to strengthen cooperation between member countries in terms of academic and professional exchanges. In summary, both CEMAC and UEMOA have made significant efforts towards harmonizing educational systems in their respective regions. These initiatives are crucial for promoting deeper regional integration and addressing contemporary challenges related to education in Africa.

4.3. Recent World Trend in Higher Education

4.3.1. International Academic Mobility

International academic mobility in Cameroon is a phenomenon that has evolved over the decades, influenced by various socio-economic, political, and cultural factors. This dynamic is reflected in the migration of Cameroonian students to higher education institutions abroad, as well as the hosting of foreign students in Cameroonian universities.

The history of academic mobility in Cameroon dates back to the colonial era, when African students were sent to France to pursue their studies. After Cameroon gained independence in 1960, the country continued to benefit from scholarships offered by Western and communist countries. For example, according to Vaudiaux (1970), these scholarships aimed to train an elite capable of managing post-colonial public affairs.

Several factors influence the academic mobility of Cameroonian students. On the one hand, the lack of adequate infrastructure and quality programs in some local universities pushes students to seek opportunities abroad (Garneau, 2008). On the other hand, geopolitical relations between Cameroon and other countries also play a crucial role in accessing mobility programs. Bilateral agreements signed with countries like France and Canada facilitate this dynamic.

The preferred destinations for Cameroonian students include mainly France, Canada, and some African countries like Senegal and South Africa. These choices are often motivated by the quality of higher education offered in these countries, as well as the possibility of obtaining internationally recognized degrees (Tronchet, 2015).

Academic mobility has a significant impact on the personal and professional development of Cameroonian students. By acquiring skills and knowledge in diverse academic environments, these students are better prepared to contribute to the economic and social development of their country of origin. Moreover, they often bring an international perspective that enriches the local educational landscape upon their return (Yengo, 2011). In summary, international academic mobility in Cameroon is a complex process that reflects not only the individual aspirations of students but also global dynamics in higher education. This phenomenon continues to evolve with the emergence of new opportunities both regionally and internationally.

4.3.1. Emergence of new pedagogic models (MOOCs, etc.)

Higher education in Cameroon has undergone significant transformation with the integration of new pedagogical models, particularly Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These changes aim to address the challenges of accessibility, quality, and massification that characterize the African educational system.

MOOCs were introduced in several Cameroonian universities through the REAMOOC project, officially launched on January 15, 2018, in Brussels. The project was co-financed by the Free University of Brussels and the Agence universitaire de la francophonie, with the goal of adopting innovative pedagogical practices within member institutions.

Among the universities involved are the University of Douala, the University of Ngaoundéré, and the University of Yaoundé I. The University of Ngaoundéré has been particularly proactive in this area. Before the arrival of the REAMOOC project, this institution operated mainly in face-to-face mode. However, with funding of 25,000 euros to acquire production equipment, it was able to train a dozen teachers in digital pedagogical engineering and two technicians in France for the production of multimedia content.

Since then, four MOOCs have been developed, including one on agricultural entrepreneurship. Similarly, the University of Douala has produced three institutional MOOCs in the field of computer science and technology. It has also collaborated with other institutions to create a national MOOC on topics such as citizenship and health.

These initiatives have led to a greater receptivity of teachers and students to digital tools to facilitate academic exchanges. Michel Tchotsoua, institutional leader at the University of Ngaoundéré, emphasizes that since the establishment of the MOOC production studio, a notable enthusiasm has been observed among academic actors.

To ensure the sustainability of the REAMOOC project in Cameroon and encourage other universities in sub-Saharan Africa to adopt these new pedagogical methods, an International REAMOOC Association was created. This association aims to establish interdisciplinary teams to further explore pedagogical innovations. The emergence of MOOCs in Cameroonian universities represents an innovative response to contemporary educational challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. These efforts aim not only to improve the quality of education but also to make it more accessible to a larger number of students.

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations for Improved Governance in the face of Degree Inflation

5.1. Intensifying Professionalization in Training Programs

5.1.1. Strong University-Private Sector Partnership

The partnership between universities and the private sector in Cameroon is a topic of increasing importance, especially in the context of the rapid evolution of economic and technological needs. This type of collaboration aims to strengthen academic training, improve the employability of graduates, and promote innovation. Since the 2000s, Cameroon has experienced significant expansion of its higher education system. Public and private universities have increased in number, leading to increased competition to attract students. In this context, partnerships with the private sector have become essential to ensure that academic programs meet the requirements of the labor market. Several examples illustrate the success of these partnerships:

- **University of Douala and Local Businesses (2015):** The University of Douala established collaborations with several local businesses to develop training programs tailored to the specific needs of the industrial sector. These partnerships allowed for the integration of mandatory internships into the curriculum, providing students with valuable practical experience before entering the labor market.

- **Institut Universitaire de la Côte (IUC) and the Technology Sector (2018):** IUC established a partnership with technology companies to create a business incubator on campus. This project aims to encourage entrepreneurship among students by providing them with an environment conducive to developing their innovative ideas.

- **University of Yaoundé I and the National Employment Program (2020):** In collaboration with the Cameroonian government, this university launched a program to train graduates in strategic areas such as sustainable agriculture and information technology. This program is supported by private companies that commit to hiring these graduates.

- **University of Maroua 2021-2025 signed partnership agreements with Banking institutions and other structures in Maroua:** The agreements aimed at promoting internship and bringing students closer to the world of world. The partnerships between universities and the private sector have had a positive impact on the employability of young graduates in Cameroon. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2021, approximately 70% of students who participated in internships or

collaborative projects with companies found employment within six months of graduation.

In addition, these collaborations also promote innovation. Companies benefit from direct access to research conducted by academics, which can lead to the creation of new products or services adapted to local needs. Despite these successes, several challenges remain. Mistrust between some private sector actors and academic institutions can hinder the effective establishment of sustainable partnerships. Furthermore, there is often a gap between the skills taught in universities and those required by the labor market. Developing a strong partnership between Cameroonian universities and the private sector is essential to address current economic challenges. By strengthening these collaborations, it will be possible to improve not only the quality of higher education but also the country's economic competitiveness.

5.1.2. Developing programmes adapted to the needs of the job markets

The development of programs tailored to the needs of the market in Cameroon requires a holistic approach that takes into account the country's cultural, economic, and social specifics. Here are some suggestions based on recent research and analysis:

It is essential to conduct an in-depth analysis of popular markets in Yaoundé and Douala. According to Ayimpam (2010), these markets play a crucial role in the local economy, as they are often more adapted to the socio-economic realities of the population. A field survey could be conducted to identify the most in-demand products and services, as well as the commercial dynamics that take place there.

The embedded approach, as discussed by Karl Polanyi, should be integrated into program development. This means that programs must take into account local social and cultural contexts to be effective (Mahieu, 2017). For example, vocational training could be oriented towards the skills needed in popular markets, thus promoting employability while respecting local traditions.

Collaboration with local actors is crucial to ensure the relevance and acceptance of programs. By involving community leaders and local entrepreneurs in the design process, we can ensure that programs truly meet the identified needs (Ngo Nyemb, 2017). This could include the creation of public-private partnerships for financing and implementing projects.

It is also important to integrate an education and awareness component into these programs. Populations must be informed about available economic opportunities and the importance of local entrepreneurship (Stiglitz, 2002). Workshops or seminars could be organized to train young people in business management and marketing.

Finally, it is necessary to establish a continuous monitoring and evaluation system to measure the impact of implemented programs. This will not only allow for adjusting initiatives based on results but also ensure their long-term sustainability (Rodrik, 2006). In summary, the development of programs tailored to the needs of the market in Cameroon must be based on a deep understanding of local dynamics while integrating a collaborative approach that values existing human resources.

5.1.3. Internship as part of the training

UNICEF is a major player in the education sector in Cameroon, offering internship opportunities for students interested in managing educational programs. Interns can participate in planning and implementing projects aimed at improving access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all children, particularly those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. Tasks may include establishing an annual work plan, monitoring project progress, and collaborating with various partners to strengthen national education systems.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Cameroon also offer internships to students seeking practical experience in community development and education. For example, NGOs like "Plan International" and "Save the Children" regularly recruit interns to work on projects related to education, health, and child protection. These internships allow students to gain valuable experience while making a positive contribution to local communities.

The Cameroonian private sector also offers internship opportunities, particularly in companies focused on sustainable development and social impact. Startups like Éclosion, which aim to establish businesses with socio-environmental impact, offer internships to students interested in social entrepreneurship and sustainable development. These experiences enable interns to learn in a dynamic environment while developing their professional skills.

Cameroonian universities often collaborate with various organizations to offer integrated internship programs as part of their academic curricula. Students can benefit from practical internships that complement their theoretical training, allowing them to apply their knowledge in a real professional setting. There are several options available for students in Cameroon seeking internships in various diploma programs, whether with international organizations like UNICEF, local NGOs, or even within the private sector.

5.2. Continuous Amelioration of the educational system

5.2.1. Continuous Training for Teachers

The continuing education of university teachers in Cameroon is a crucial issue that affects the quality of higher education and the improvement of teachers' pedagogical

skills. Several studies and publications have addressed this topic, highlighting the challenges, issues, and perspectives of this training. The need for continuing education for university teachers arises from the rapid evolution of knowledge, educational technologies, and the requirements of the labor market. According to a study by Nguimkeu (2022), continuing education enables teachers to update their knowledge of new pedagogical methods and improve their teaching practices. This update is essential to meet the diverse needs of students and to effectively integrate digital tools into teaching.

The institutional framework governing continuing education in Cameroon is influenced by several educational policies. Mouangue (2021) highlights that the Ministry of Higher Education has implemented programs to strengthen the skills of university teachers, but these initiatives often face obstacles such as lack of funding and low teacher participation. Current practices in continuing education vary significantly depending on the institution. Research by Tchouakeu (2023) shows that some universities have developed innovative programs that integrate action research as a training method, allowing teachers to apply their learning directly in their daily practice. However, these initiatives are often limited by a lack of material and human resources.

To improve the situation, it is recommended to adopt a collaborative approach between universities, the government, and international partners to create an environment conducive to continuing education. Ngoh (2024) suggests that the focus should be on continuous professional development as an integrated process in the academic career of teachers, promoting a culture of lifelong learning. While the continuing education of university teachers in Cameroon is recognized as essential for improving the quality of higher education, it faces several challenges that require concerted attention to be overcome.

5.2.2. Promotion of Applied Research

The ongoing education of university teachers in Cameroon is a critical issue that affects the quality of higher education and the improvement of teachers' pedagogical skills. Several studies and publications have addressed this topic, highlighting the challenges, issues, and perspectives of this training. The need for ongoing education for university teachers arises from the rapid evolution of knowledge, educational technologies, and the requirements of the labor market. According to a study by Nguimkeu (2022), ongoing education enables teachers to update their knowledge of new pedagogical methods and improve their teaching practices. This update is essential to meet the diverse needs of students and to effectively integrate digital tools into teaching.

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To improve the situation, it is recommended to adopt a collaborative approach between universities, the government, and international partners to create an environment conducive to ongoing education. Ngoh (2024) suggests that the focus should be on continuous professional development as an integrated process in the academic career of teachers, promoting a culture of lifelong learning. While the ongoing education of university teachers in Cameroon is recognized as essential for improving the quality of higher education, it faces several challenges that require concerted attention to be overcome.

5.2.3. Sensitization and participation of the university community

Awareness and participation of the university community in Cameroon have been crucial elements in the context of democratic transitions and educational reforms that took place in the country, particularly between 1990 and 1993. Cameroonian universities played a significant role as political arenas where confrontations between different social and political actors took place. According to Smith (1997), universities and academics were perceived as key actors in orchestrating and amplifying social movements during democratic transitions in Africa, including Cameroon. These institutions served as platforms for expressing social demands, including those related to working conditions, graduate employment, and other socio-political issues.

A study of the Cameroonian case reveals that the dynamic of community participation went beyond the traditional framework of student movements. Academics actively engaged in public debate, addressing not only internal institutional concerns but also broader issues affecting the country (Fourcade, Paul & Vernières, 1994). This involvement enabled academics to structure the local political arena and influence necessary reforms within the education system.

The difficult economic context in Cameroon during this period also influenced community participation. The restructuring imposed by donors led to a redefinition of the university's role in society. Increasing demands for efficiency and profitability pushed institutions to adapt to new socio-economic realities (Kassimir, Lebeau & Sall, 2003). Awareness and participation of the university community in Cameroon were characterized by active engagement in public debate on essential issues related to education and governance. This process was shaped by a combination of national and international events that redefined the Cameroonian educational landscape.

5.2.4. Campaigns on the real value of certificates/diplomas sur la valeur réelle des diplômes

The promotion of applied research in Cameroonian universities is a crucial issue for the country's economic and social development. Indeed, applied research focuses on the practical application of scientific knowledge to solve concrete problems, which is particularly relevant in the Cameroonian context where socio-economic challenges are numerous.

Cameroonian universities have played a significant role in the training of researchers and innovation. According to Ngoh (2020), it is imperative that academic institutions engage more in research projects that respond to local needs. This implies not only collaboration with the private sector but also better integration of research results into public policies.

The Cameroonian government has implemented several initiatives to encourage applied research, such as the National Research and Development Program (PNRD) launched in 2018. This program aims to fund research projects with a direct impact on national development. Cameroonian universities are also seeking to establish international partnerships to strengthen their applied research capacities. Collaborations with foreign institutions enable access to additional funding and qualified human resources.

However, despite these efforts, several challenges persist. The lack of adequate funding remains a major obstacle to the realization of significant research projects. Moreover, there is often a gap between academic theory and the practical needs of the local market. To remedy this, a more collaborative approach between researchers, policymakers, and economic actors is necessary. In conclusion, while progress has been made in promoting applied research in Cameroon, much remains to be done to maximize its impact on national development.

5.3. Partnerships with enterprises to define needs and competences

5.3.1. Encouraging citizen participation in educative decision making

Citizen participation in the educational sector is a crucial topic, especially in the university context in Cameroon. Educational decision-making often involves various stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the community at large. Encouraging this participation can lead to more inclusive and relevant decisions for the stakeholders. The Cameroonian educational system has undergone several reforms since its independence. However, challenges persist, particularly regarding governance and transparency. According to a study by Nguimkeu (2021), citizen involvement in decision-making processes can improve the quality of education by allowing for better consideration of local needs.

There are different models that can be applied to encourage citizen participation in educational decision-making. For example, the participatory model proposed by Mbang (2020) highlights the importance of including students' and parents' voices in university governing boards. This not only improves transparency but also increases institutional accountability. To encourage citizen participation, it is essential to organize workshops and seminars to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities regarding education. According to Tchouamou (2022), these initiatives can help create an environment where citizens feel valued and motivated to participate.

Universities can establish regular forums where all stakeholders can discuss educational issues. These platforms should be accessible to all, promoting open communication. The use of digital technologies can also facilitate citizen participation by collecting opinions and suggestions through online surveys or virtual consultations.

Regular evaluation is necessary to ensure that citizen participation is effective. This involves assessing the established processes and adjusting strategies based on feedback from participants. Encouraging citizen participation in educational decision-making in Cameroon requires a multidimensional approach that integrates awareness-raising, open dialogue, and effective use of modern technologies. By actively involving all stakeholders, it is possible to improve not only the quality of education but also the sense of ownership and belonging to a common project.

Conclusion

Citizen participation in educational decision-making is crucial in Cameroon, particularly in the university context. Educational decision-making involves various stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the community. Encouraging participation leads to more inclusive and relevant decisions. Cameroon's educational system has undergone reforms since independence, but challenges persist, particularly regarding governance and transparency. A study by Nguimkeu (2021) found that citizen involvement in decision-making improves education quality by considering local needs. Different models can encourage citizen participation. Mbang's (2020) participatory model highlights the importance of including students' and parents' voices in university governing boards, improving transparency and accountability.

To encourage participation, workshops and seminars can inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities regarding education. Tchouamou (2022) notes that these initiatives create an environment where citizens feel valued and motivated to participate. Universities can establish regular forums for stakeholders to discuss educational issues, promoting open communication. Digital technologies can facilitate participation through online surveys or virtual consultations. Regular evaluation is necessary to ensure effective citizen participation. This involves assessing established processes and adjusting strategies based on participant feedback. Encouraging citizen participation in educational decision-making in Cameroon requires a multidimensional approach integrating awareness-raising, open dialogue, and effective use of modern technologies. By actively involving stakeholders, it is possible to improve education quality and foster a sense of ownership and belonging.

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