



**THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS' COLLABORATIVE
PARTICIPATION ON EFFECTIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION OF
CAMEROON**

Tambeagbor Heritah Taku¹

¹Educational Foundations and Administration, University of Buea, Cameroon

Email: henriettaayuk@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the influence of parents' collaborative participation on effective secondary school administration in the South West Region of Cameroon. The mixed-methods research approach specifically using the concurrent research design. Questionnaires and an interview guide were the instruments used for the study. The questionnaire was for parents, students and community members and an interview guide for principals. The sample population for the study was made up of 100 participants. The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling approaches to come out with the sample in phases. Data from the questioners were analyzed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while the interviews were analyzed thematically. The Spearman's rho was used to test the research hypotheses formulated in the study. Findings showed that the positive sign of the correlation value implies that continues parents' collaborative participation in decision making will contribute significantly to effective school administration and this is supported with an explanatory power of 77.9% (Nagelkerke statistics= 0. 77.9). Therefore, it was generally recommended that to enhance effective secondary school administration in the South West Region, it is essential to formalize and institutionalize inclusive decision-making structures that actively engage teachers, parents, students, and community members. School leaders should implement regular forums and workshops that facilitate open communication, foster trust, and encourage collaborative input from all stakeholders.

Key words:

Shared decision making, parents' collaborative participation, effective secondary school administration and South West Region of Cameroon.



INTRODUCTION

Historically, collaborative efforts in decision making is still a central theme of research, policy, and practice in business organizations (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006) as well as in schools. This has been the subject of extensive research for more than 30 years in education first from a stand point of decision making to shared decision making (Smylie, 1992). The concept of decision-making has evolved significantly over time, beginning with early classical administrative theories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Early scholars such as Henri Fayol (1916) emphasized centralized authority and hierarchical control in organizations. Fayol's administrative theory positioned decision-making as the exclusive responsibility of top management, embedded within functions such as planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling (Bacharach et al., 1990). This era, often associated with classical management theory, viewed organizations as rigid structures where decisions flowed from the top downward, leaving little or no room for subordinate participation.

By mid-20th century, organizational scholars introduced systems and contingency perspectives that further diversified understandings of decision making. Katz and Kahn (1966) argued organizations are open systems interacting with environments, implying decisions must be adaptive. Contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) held that there is no one best way to decide; effective decision making depends on context (environmental uncertainty, task complexity). Concurrently, participative management and democratic approaches in public administration and education gained traction (Likert, 1961; Argyris, 1964), advocating involvement of subordinates in decisions to increase commitment and information flow. These ideas began to reshape educational administration, encouraging principals and administrators to consult teachers and stakeholders rather than rely solely on hierarchical directives.

In the field of education, shared decision-making gained traction as part of school-based management reforms in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Educational theorists such as Chapman (1990s) and Caldwell & Spinks (1992) advocated for decentralization in school governance, promoting the involvement of teachers, parents, and even students in administrative decisions. This approach was seen as a way to improve school effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness to local needs, particularly in diverse and dynamic educational environments. Donor-driven reforms and global policy discourse in the 1990s–2000s stressed community participation in managing schools, notably through school-based management (SBM) and school management committees (SMCs). UNESCO and the World Bank promoted community involvement as a means of accountability and local ownership (World Bank, 1995; UNESCO, 2000). In sub-Saharan Africa, studies by Grant and Hallman (2006) and Okanga (2002) examined how SMCs and community participation altered decision-making patterns at the school level. In Cameroon specifically, decentralization policies and the creation of parent–teacher associations and school management structures created formal avenues for shared decisions, though effectiveness varied with local capacity, resources and political dynamics (UNICEF & MINEDUC reports, 2000s).

By the 2000s, empirical studies assessed the effects of SDM and related arrangements on school outcomes. Reviews by Leithwood et al. (2004; 2008) found positive associations

between teacher participation in decisions and school effectiveness, though results depended on implementation fidelity, the nature of decisions, and contextual supports. At the same time, research in African contexts documented constraints: elite capture of participatory bodies, weak capacity at the school level, resource insufficiencies, and political interference limited the potential of SDM (De Grauwe, 2004; Ladd & Fiske, 2009 applied comparatively).

In the African context, including Cameroon, shared decision-making has been influenced by decentralization policies and reforms in educational administration. Since the 2000s, many African countries have shifted from highly centralized systems to more participatory models, encouraging stakeholder involvement in school governance (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006). In Cameroon, this evolution reflects broader socio-political and educational reforms aimed at improving school management, enhancing teacher morale, and addressing local educational challenges through inclusive leadership practices. In Cameroon's Anglophone regions, practical obstacles administrative centralization, resource shortages and political tensions shaped how shared decision making functioned at school level (Neba, 2003; MINEDUC evaluations, 2000s).

Today, shared decision-making is regarded as a critical facet of effective secondary school administration. It integrates earlier theoretical developments rational, behavioral, and contingency approaches into a collaborative framework that values participation, dialogue, and consensus-building (San Antonio & Gamage 2007). Modern administrators are expected to act not only as decision-makers but also as facilitators who engage teachers, students, and communities in shaping school policies and practices. Recent scholarly and practitioner discussions frame SDM as both a normative and pragmatic strategy for improving secondary school administration in regions like South West Cameroon. Normatively, SDM aligns with democratic education principles and the aim of building school communities (Sergiovanni, 1992; Bush & Glover, 2012). Practically, SDM is promoted to harness local knowledge, increase teacher commitment, and diversify problem-solving capacity in resource-constrained settings (Prah, 2011; Fonkeng & Nkemele, 2015). Studies focusing on Cameroon's English-speaking regions (e.g., Fonkeng, 2014; Ngu & Abang, 2017) and ministry policy documents emphasize the potential for shared decision structures (SMCs, PTA boards, teacher committees) to support curriculum implementation, student discipline, and community mobilization while warning that political instability, capacity gaps and unclear role definitions can undermine SDM if not addressed. This contemporary perspective underscores that effective school administration, particularly in regions like the South West Region of Cameroon, depends on inclusive and shared decision-making processes.

Regarding parental involvement in shared decision making, there is a general view that is valuable to have parental involvement in school activities and decision making and there is considerable evidence that parents can bring particular skills and support to students and teachers (Akkok, 1999; Caplan, Hall, Lubin, Fleming, 1997; & Thomson, 2001). Since in the 1960s-1970s, the trend of increased parental involvement in school councils and school boards has been accelerated all over the world (Hill et al., 1990; Marshall, 2000; Leithwood, Allison, Drake, Laveault, McElheron-Hopkins, Wideman, & Zederayko, 2004). This is because the aim of education is to develop the child's physical skills and parents

are at the center of the child's education. They are also responsible for the decisions made as regards the child's physical, intellectual and psychological development.

More recently, there has also been increased attention regarding the need for parent and community voices to play an active role in educational decision making, as schools are a public institution (Weng, 2008; Westbury, 2008). Moreover, in the last two decades, businesses, nonprofit leaders, and community advocates, previously left out of the dialogue within public education, began to push for educational reforms and have had considerable influence over what happens in schools (Brill, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). Thus, parents' involvements in decision making has become part of the educational reform landscape, inclusive of parents, business, and broader community involvement to improve schools (Epstein, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In the light above, many countries have developed programmes to encourage parents to become more involved in their children's schools and education (Hill et al., 1990; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999; MacNeil & Patin, 2005). In Cameroon, the purpose of education according to Law No 98/004 of 14th April, 1998 on the orientation of education in Cameroon was for the immediate integration of the child into the society and the preparation for a responsible adult life thus intellectual growth and development through observation, imitation and participation was the main learning (education). Since decision making involve choosing from alternative ways of achieving an objective, the educational administrators of the child's education (traditional rulers and parents) came up with the best possible method and strategies to enable the child acquire and develop the abilities, attitudes, skills and other forms of behaviors which rendered him a useful member of his society. Such skills include fishing, hunting, cooking, carving, story-telling, dancing, and wrestling to name a few (Fonkeng, 2004; Mac-Ojong, 2008)

During the colonial and post-colonial periods, parental involvement was well structured and re-organized. Ministerial decision No.242/C/729 MINEDUC/MJS of 25th October 1979 officially recognized and encouraged the creation of Parents Teachers Association (PTA), throughout the country. By this, the government did not only adhere to international declarations in favour of parental involvement in education but also saw in these associations a financial potential which could be exploited. Today PTAs exist throughout the country in state and private schools, in urban as well as rural areas; in primary/Nursery as well as secondary schools (General and Technical) involving all parents regardless of their economic or social status. They collectively build classrooms and undertake many financial projects of the school. In consultation with the administrative authorities, the PTA employs and pays auxiliary staff, part-time teachers and participates in most financial decisions and engagements of the schools (Ndongko, 1989; Mbua, 2003; Fonkeng and Tamajong, 2009). In addition, the 1998 law of education stipulates that parents shall assist the nation in the education of the child. One of such way is in participative school decision making.

Conceptually, shared decision making (SDM) in the context of secondary schools is a collaborative process through which school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and sometimes community stakeholders share responsibility for defining school goals, making policy choices, and solving problems that affect teaching and learning. Unlike

autocratic decision styles where administrators unilaterally set direction, SDM distributes authority and blends professional expertise with local knowledge and stakeholder values. In secondary schools this typically involves formal and informal mechanisms such as school management committees, departmental meetings, teacher caucuses, parent–teacher associations, and student councils that allow multiple voices to contribute to curricular planning, discipline policies, staff development priorities, resource allocation, and school improvement initiatives (Fullan, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The underlying rationale is both practical and ethical: pooling diverse perspectives improves problem identification and solution quality, increases acceptance and ownership of decisions, and fosters professional learning among staff and civic engagement among stakeholders (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Bryk et al., 2010).

Parents' collaborative participation in decision making involves structured partnerships between families and schools in areas such as policy formulation, curriculum support, and school governance. Epstein (2011) highlights that meaningful parental involvement extends beyond attendance at school events to active engagement in decision-making processes that affect student learning and welfare. Similarly, Hill and Tyson (2009) found that parental engagement in academic-related decision making is strongly associated with improved student performance, particularly at the secondary level. Collaborative participation builds mutual trust, ensures cultural responsiveness, and aligns home–school expectations, thereby reinforcing a supportive educational environment (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Effective secondary school administration refers to the coordinated processes through which school leaders plan, organize, direct, and evaluate human and material resources to achieve educational goals at the secondary level (Usman, 2016). It involves the strategic management of teaching and learning, staff development, student discipline, financial resources, and community relations in ways that promote academic excellence and holistic student development. Effective School administration (Qiong, 2003; Miantao & Zhe, 1994) refers to the rational use of educational resources by schools' administrators to achieve educational goals and to meet the needs of other so as to make the school, its members and society get correspondingly developed, characteristic and effective functions. A school cannot operate effectively unless it is satisfying its objectives. The more objectives the school can satisfy, the more effective the school is deemed to be. Thus, for the school administration to be termed effective, they are expected to rationally use educational resources to achieve their educational goals and meet the requirements (Miantao & Zhe, 1994).

One key element of effective secondary school administration is administrative efficiency. Administrative efficiency refers to the optimal use of available resources human, financial, and material to achieve school goals with minimal waste and maximum output. It includes timely decision making, proper record keeping, transparent financial management, and effective supervision of staff and students. According to Okumbe (2012), administrative efficiency is demonstrated when school leaders coordinate activities systematically and ensure that institutional processes function smoothly. Similarly, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) note that efficient administrators establish clear structures, delegate

responsibilities appropriately, and monitor performance to maintain organizational effectiveness.

Contextually in Cameroon, one of the major objectives of the government's vision 2035 is to enhance national unity and consolidate democracy by promoting the ideals of peace, freedom, justice, social progress and national solidarity (Department of prospective and strategic planning, February 2009). In the pursuit to accomplish this, the government, has specific objectives which she intends to ensure greater participation of the population and consolidate social liberties as well as strengthen decentralized and local development. MINESEC is interested in offering to Cameroon, youths who are well learned, more creative, better trained and well educated by the year 2035. In this light, it has set major objectives, amongst which are training and improvement of management skills of administrative personnel of secondary schools, effective partnership with other stakeholders in education. Thus, to implement these objectives, effective decisions have to be made by the various educational managers and administrators, and heads of the ministries of the different sectors of the national territory (MINESEC, 2015).

Fonkeng and Tamajong (2009) note that Ministerial Decision No. 242/C/729/MINEDUC/MJS of 25 October 1979 marked a significant milestone in Cameroon's educational governance by officially recognizing and encouraging the establishment of Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs) nationwide. This policy institutionalized parental involvement in school affairs, transforming PTAs from informal support groups into legally acknowledged stakeholders within the education system. Over time, the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) further clarified the structure and functioning of PTAs through Circular No. 07/08/MINESEC/CAB of 25 February 2008, which outlined operational modalities in public secondary schools, and Circular No. 15/08/MINESEC/CAB of 19 August 2008, which amended and complemented earlier provisions. These regulatory frameworks define the scope of PTA activities, leadership structures, financial management procedures, and their collaboration with school administrators, thereby formalizing shared governance practices within secondary schools.

In addition to PTAs, Decree No. 2001/041 of 19 February 2001 established School Management Boards as central administrative organs in secondary schools. Article 19 of the decree stipulates that each secondary school shall be administered by a board composed of not more than 28 members, including 12 statutory members and 16 elected representatives from various stakeholder associations. This composition reflects a deliberate attempt to ensure broad-based representation and participatory governance. The Board is entrusted with overseeing the human, material, and financial management of the school, thereby playing a supervisory and advisory role in institutional administration. Through this structure, the government promotes decentralization and accountability, enabling stakeholders to contribute to policy direction, resource mobilization, and oversight functions within schools (Fonkeng & Tamajong, 2009).

The collaborative involvement of PTAs and School Management Boards underscores the broader principle that educational stakeholders possess both administrative and pedagogical roles that are vital to school effectiveness. As Mbua (2003) and Ndongko

(1989) argue, schools' function optimally when administrators, teachers, parents, and community representatives work in partnership toward clearly defined goals. Stakeholders are not merely financial supporters; they also contribute to discipline policies, infrastructural development, student welfare, and, increasingly, consultative input on instructional matters. Such collaboration strengthens accountability, enhances transparency, and fosters shared ownership of school outcomes. In this sense, the legal recognition of PTAs and School Management Boards in Cameroon reflects a policy commitment to participatory management as a pathway to achieving educational goals and improving secondary school administration.

Statement of the Problem

Effective secondary school administration is essential for fostering an educational environment that promotes student success teachers and staff in their roles. In the south west region of Cameroon, effective administration involves not only the implementation of policies and curricular, but also the integration of shared decision-making practices. Ideally, this incorporates the inputs of administrators, teachers, students and parents, creating a collaborative framework where decisions regarding school governance are made collectively. However, in reality, many schools in this region experience a top-down approach, leading to the marginalization of critical stakeholders.

In the south west region, evidence suggests that shared decision making practices are not broadly implemented. According to a survey conducted by the Cameroon ministry of education in 2021, only 35% of teachers reported being involved in significant decision-making processes at their schools (Cameroon Ministry of Secondary Education, 2021). This lack of inclusion can lead to disengagement amongst staff and students, as their insights and needs are often overlooked. The absence of shared decision-making creates barriers to effective administration, resulting in decrease morale, lowered academic achievements, and increased drop-out rates. Research shows that, schools practicing shared decision-making tend to have improved educational outcomes, including higher student performance and greater teacher satisfaction (Fullan, 2016). Conversely, the lack of such practices, in the South West Region has resulted in persistent challenges, such as poor academic results and a higher incidence of conflict amongst stakeholders. A 2022 study indicated that schools without inclusive decision-making frameworks have an average dropout rate 15% compared to just 8% in schools that practice shared decision-making (National Institute of Statistics, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the Government of Cameroon has introduced policies aimed at fostering a more participatory approach to school administration, including leadership training programs for principals and awareness campaigns designed to enhance parental engagement. However, implementation remains inconsistent and, in many cases, superficial, as numerous schools continue to operate within traditional hierarchical structures that limit genuine stakeholder involvement. As of 2023, only about 40% of secondary schools reported significant changes in their decision-making processes (International Education Association, 2023), highlighting the slow pace of reform. Consequently, ineffective administration linked to limited shared decision-making practices continues to impede academic performance and the overall development of secondary education in the South West Region of Cameroon. This

situation reveals a clear gap between what educational administrators and stakeholders understand about shared decision making and what is required for its effective practice. Therefore, this study underscores the necessity of strengthening parental involvement and promoting collegial, participatory governance as essential strategies for achieving educational goals and objectives.

Research Objective

The study generally sought to examine the influence of parents' collaborative participation on effective secondary school administration in the South West Region of Cameroon

Research Question

To what extent does parents' collaborative participation in decision making influence effective school administration in the South West Region of Cameroon?

Research Hypothesis

Ha: There is a significant relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration.

Significance of the Study

This study will enable the researcher to deepen her understanding of shared decision-making as an essential component of effective secondary school administration, particularly within the context of the South West Region of Cameroon. It will enhance her research, analytical, and critical thinking skills while contributing to her academic and professional growth. Additionally, the study will provide firsthand insight into administrative practices, challenges, and opportunities in schools, thereby equipping her with practical knowledge that can be applied in future educational leadership roles or further research.

For parents, the study highlights the importance of their participation in school governance and decision-making as it encourages parents to engage more actively in their children's education, fostering stronger home-school relationships. Also, it provides parents with the opportunity to contribute to policies and decisions that directly impact student welfare and academic success. It will build trust and transparency between parents and school authorities, leading to a more cooperative and supportive educational environment.

The study is significant to principals as it provides insights into effective administrative strategies centered on shared decision-making. It will equip principals with approaches to foster collaboration and inclusiveness in school management. Secondly, it helps principals build stronger relationships with teachers, students, and parents, thereby improving school climate and performance. The study will enhance leadership

effectiveness by promoting transparency, accountability, and collective responsibility in decision-making processes.

The study is important to policy makers as it offers empirical evidence on the role of shared decision making in improving secondary school administration. The findings can inform the formulation and revision of educational policies that promote participatory governance and decentralization in schools. By understanding the benefits and challenges of collaborative administration, policy makers can design frameworks that encourage stakeholder involvement while maintaining accountability and efficiency. In the context of the South West Region of Cameroon, such policy directions can strengthen educational reforms and contribute to sustainable school development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Decision Making in Educational Administration

Decision making is a fundamental concept in administration and management. Agure, Miyeso & Abdullahi (2024) defined decision making as, a cognitive and systematic process of selecting a course of action from among several alternatives in order to achieve a desired goal. Simon (1945, 1997) conceptualized decision making as the heart of administration, describing it as a choice directed toward organizational objectives. Similarly, DeMathews et al. (2015) view decision making as a process involving problem identification, generation of alternatives, evaluation of options, and selection of the most appropriate course of action. In this sense, decision making is both a rational and purposeful activity aimed at resolving problems or improving organizational performance.

Hoy and Miskel (1987, 1991) emphasize that decision making is the central responsibility of administrators, arguing that schools, like other formal organizations, are essentially decision-making structures. Okumbe (1998) defines decision making as the process of specifying the nature of a problem and selecting from available alternatives to solve it. This definition underscores two important elements: the existence of a problem and the availability of alternative solutions. Gemechu (2014) further explains that decision making is a sequential process culminating in actions intended to bring about a desired future state. Thus, in educational administration, decision making involves conscious, informed, and goal-oriented choices that shape the direction and effectiveness of the school system.

Scholars in educational administration consistently regard decision making as the core function of school leadership. Mbua (2003) asserts that decision making is a “sine qua non” of educational administration because daily school operations such as resource allocation, discipline, staffing, and instructional planning depend on it. Duze (2011) adds that administrators at all levels influence school outcomes through the decisions they make, whether related to curriculum, student welfare, or infrastructure. These decisions ultimately determine the quality of teaching and learning within the school environment.

Researchers have also stressed the importance of informed and rational decision making. Gemechu (2014) argues that poor decisions, especially those made without adequate information, can lower staff morale and hinder the attainment of school goals. Lunenburg (2010) maintains that administrators must not only make sound decisions but also ensure their effective implementation by securing the cooperation of those affected. This highlights the managerial responsibility of analyzing risk, uncertainty, and consequences before committing organizational resources.

Shared Decision-Making Process in Schools

Shared decision making (SDM) is a collaborative process in which multiple stakeholders' teachers, administrators, parents, students and sometimes community members participate in making educational decisions that affect the daily life and long-term direction of a school (Aoki et al. 2022). SDM shifts authority from a single decision maker toward a network of actors closest to the action, on the premise that those who work most directly with students bring vital knowledge, perspectives and responsibilities that improve both the quality and the implementation of decisions (Allen & Glickman, 1992; Bauer, 1992). Meadows (1990) emphasizes SDM as an ongoing process rather than a one-time reform: it requires continuous interaction, deliberation and revisiting of decisions as circumstances change. SDM stress that its core aims are increasing stakeholder ownership, improving the fit between local needs and programs, and strengthening accountability for results. Lontos and Balste (1994) describe SDM as a complex reform movement that alters roles and relationships within schools; Lange (1993) and Bauer (1993) argue the primary purpose is to improve school effectiveness and student learning by boosting staff commitment and responsiveness to community needs. At the same time, researchers note that SDM does not remove the principal's ultimate responsibility for school leadership; rather, it transforms the principal's role into organizer, adviser and consensus builder (Lontos, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994).

To effectively attain an enabling environment for teaching/learning in secondary schools, principals as the school administrators must possess a high level of imagination, vision, initiative, as well as be cautious to demonstrate a collective concern for fairness, boldness and love as they exercise their authority in making decisions. This would demand that subordinates are involved in decision making as much as the situation allows. If the administrator understands the need dispositions of his subordinates as well as their values, aesthetics, and the general working environment, he will do well to determine the favorable limits of involvement. This is necessary because it has been observed that too much involvement of subordinates in decision making than they would have preferred is as detrimental as too little (Belasco and Alutto, 1972; Hoy and Miskel, 1987; Yukl, 1975; Nwogwugwu, 1986; Peretomode, 1992; Duze, 2007, 2005).

Parents' Collaborative Participation in Decision Making and Effective Secondary School Administration

Parents' collaborative participation in decision-making is a critical aspect of effective school governance and educational success. This involvement refers to the active engagement of parents in discussions and decisions about various aspects of their children's education, including curriculum choices, school policies, and community

engagement initiatives. Research has shown that when parents collaborate with educators, it fosters a supportive learning environment and improves student outcomes (Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

When infants are born into the world, their first place of contact is the family. Family is the first agent of socialization. It plays a major role in shaping the life of the child. Therefore, parental involvement in decision making is a necessary element of today's education in order to meet with diverse and constantly changing communities and culture; parent voices are essential to creating schools that can nurture and develop our students (Clutter, 2010; Gorard, See & Davies, 2012; and Umeana, 2017).

According to Miquel (2014), and other scholars, parent involvement can be described as the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood; recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children's lives (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010; Miquel, 2014; and Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Parents' involvements, still according to Miquel (2014), and other scholars, take many forms, including:

- Two-way communication between parents and schools;
- Supporting parents as children's primary educators and integral to their learning;
- Encouraging parents to participate in volunteer work;
- Sharing responsibility for decision making about children's education, health, and well-being; and
- Collaborating with community organizations that reflect schools' aspirations for all children (Miquel, 2014; Ahmad *et al.*, 2017; and Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Adeyemo (2015), and other scholars, indicated that when parents are participating in their children's education, there would be increase in their achievement (Ebuta & Ekpo-Eloma, 2014; Adeyemo, 2015; and Umeana, 2017). Oloyede (2018), and other scholars, also posited that parents who insist on checking student's school assignments at home tend to produce students with better academic performance than parents with careless attitudes towards their children school work (El-Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Oloyede, 2018; and Ugwuegbulem, 2018).

One significant impact of parental involvement in decision-making is enhanced communication between schools and families. According to Hill and Tyson (2009), effective communication fosters trust and partnership, which are essential for a collaborative school environment. When parents are involved, they can express their concerns and suggestions, leading to more informed administrative decisions. Parental participation in school governance contributes to a more positive school climate. Studies by Sheldon and Epstein (2005) show that schools with active parent involvement report higher levels of satisfaction among staff, students, and parents alike. A supportive climate encourages better student behavior and increased motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes.

Collaborative decision-making promotes shared leadership within schools. According to Spillane (2006), when parents are involved in governance, they bring diverse perspectives that enrich the decision-making process. This shared leadership model not

only empowers parents but also cultivates a sense of community ownership in school policies and practices. Parents can play a crucial role in resource allocation within schools. Research by Chavkin and Williams (2015) indicates that parental involvement can lead to more effective use of resources, ensuring that programs and initiatives align with community needs. Collaborative decision-making allows schools to prioritize funding and resources based on direct input from families.

Involving parents in decision-making processes enhances accountability and transparency in school administration. According to Baker et al. (2019), when parents have a seat at the table, school leaders are more likely to be held accountable for their decisions. This transparency can lead to increased trust in school leadership and a stronger commitment to educational goals. Parental involvement helps schools become more culturally competent. Research by Ladson-Billings (2014) emphasizes the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives in decision-making. When parents from different cultural backgrounds participate, schools can develop more inclusive policies that reflect the needs of all students, fostering equity in education.

Collaborative participation allows parents to influence policy development in schools. According to the work of Dempsey (2020), parent input is invaluable in shaping policies that affect student welfare. By involving parents in discussions about discipline, curriculum, and extracurricular activities, schools can create policies that are more responsive to community needs. The impact of parental involvement on student outcomes is well-documented. Research by Jeynes (2016) indicates that students whose parents are actively involved in school decision-making show higher levels of academic achievement, better attendance, and improved behavior. This correlation underscores the importance of fostering collaborative environments in schools.

Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations, for example PTA (Parent-Teacher Association). They can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork, providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior (such as reading for pleasure), monitoring homework, and actively tutoring their children at home. Outside the home, parents can serve as advocates for the school; they can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom; or they can take an active role in the governance and decision making necessary for planning, developing, and providing an education for the community's children (El-Nokali, Bachman & Votruba- Drzal, 2010; Martinez, 2015; and Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Effective Secondary School Administration

Effective secondary school administration refers to the ability of school leadership, particularly the principal, to achieve predetermined educational goals at the secondary school level through efficient utilization of human and material resources, as well as sound decision-making processes (Niyi, 2023). Amirize and Ololube (2018) define effective school administration as the attainment of institutional goals, while Usman (2016) views it as the implementation of programmes designed to achieve educational objectives. Similarly, Ukaogba and Nwankwo (2020) emphasize that effectiveness lies in successfully achieving these objectives through available resources. In the context of

secondary schools, this definition highlights the importance of leadership competence in managing adolescent learners, coordinating subject-specialist teachers, and preparing students for both examinations and future careers.

Secondary school administration is particularly significant because of the strategic role secondary education plays in national development. Schools serve as organized institutions for socialization, skill acquisition, and personal development (Doş & Savaş, 2015). Açıkalın (1994) further notes that schools are the most functional units of the education system, translating national educational policies into practical outcomes. Therefore, effective administration at the secondary level ensures that societal expectations, such as academic excellence, moral development, and workforce readiness, are adequately met through deliberate leadership and decision-making processes.

The importance of effective administration in secondary schools is also underscored by its role in achieving educational objectives. Education is widely recognized as a tool for societal transformation and human capital development. Ukaogba and Nwankwo (2020) assert that the goals of education can only be realized through effective administration, while Alabi (2017) maintains that no educational institution can succeed without it. This places a strong responsibility on secondary school principals to provide leadership that ensures efficient coordination of teaching and learning activities.

The administrative responsibilities of secondary school principals are extensive and are clearly outlined in the Handbook of School Heads. These responsibilities include planning school programmes, organizing staff and students, supervising instruction, managing school resources, maintaining discipline, and fostering relationships with parents and the community. Mbuja (2003) emphasizes that effective leadership enhances organizational efficiency, while Fullan (2005) highlights the principal's role in driving school improvement. Through these responsibilities, principals translate policies into actionable strategies that directly influence school effectiveness.

In addition to managerial duties, secondary school principals are responsible for instructional leadership, which involves guiding curriculum implementation and monitoring teaching quality. Schulte, Slate, and Onwuegbuzie (2010) and Wong and Nicotera (2007) stress that effective school leaders focus on improving classroom practices and student outcomes. This requires continuous supervision, evaluation of teachers, and the creation of an enabling environment for learning. As such, instructional leadership is a critical component of effective secondary school administration.

Theoretical Review

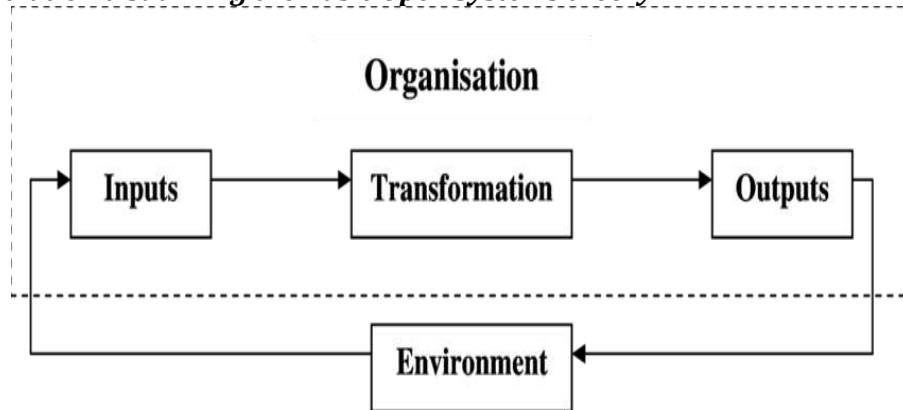
The Systems Theory by Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1956)

The theory was initially developed by Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1956) and this theory was developed as a reaction to former rational and natural system theories that described schools as independent of their external environment. Open systems are affected from outer forces while being simultaneously dependent on them. Their boundaries are broader than those classical closed systems, and hard to identify clearly.

The main element that distinguishes open systems from the others is the transformation process. It is the process of raw materials (in-puts) into products (outputs). In an educational setting (e.g. school), inputs can be considered as pupils and outputs as graduates. Therefore, the system continuously takes sources from its environment and then transforms them according to the environment's needs. An important element of this interaction called feedback, information about the quality of the process, lets the system correct and enhance itself (Mbua, 2003; Scott, 2008). Talcott Parsons was the first formulator of social systems. They are based on interpersonal relationships regardless of their size and complexity, and they consist of individual actors interacting in a culturally structured system full of shared symbols (Parsons, 1951). Social systems have three basic characteristics called the interdependence of the parts, their organization into some sort of whole, and the intrinsic presence of both individuals and institutions (Getzels, Lipham & Campbell, 1968).

Figure 1

An illustration visualizing the Basic Open Systems theory



Source; Adapted by Researcher (2021) from Mbua (2003).

Early theorists of social systems identified them as closed systems (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Luhmann, 1995). Bozkus (2014) propounded that, the perspective did not work for schools as they are strongly interrelated to their environment. Schools are dependent on external sources by nature. In a simplistic sense, they need funds and children from the outside of their boundaries. They are accountable for producing ends that are not specified by themselves but by their communities. By acknowledging these realities, Hoy and Miskel (2005) assert that social systems are, at the same time, open systems. Thus, to understand social systems, it is helpful to delve into the main characteristics that asserted by researchers contributing to the development of this theory. Hoy and Miskel (2005) bring together the assumptions of various researchers and incorporate them into educational settings.

Many researchers asserted that social systems are people, goal oriented, structural, normative, sanction bearing, political, and open systems. Hoy and Miskel (2005) visualize the elements of social systems. Their model resembles Getzel and Guba's (1957) open systems model. However, they incorporate their own perspective of social systems by blending rational and natural systems models. They inject four sub-systems (structural, cultural, political and individual) into the transformation process. As social systems,

schools' structures have characteristics of rational, natural, and open systems. They have hierarchies of authority, goals, and role expectations similar to bureaucratic organizations. Individual needs affect employee behavior, organizational goals are not firm, informal organizations derive from interactions among individuals, and schools have to interact with their environment. Kowalski (2010) asserts that schools are social systems and have three qualities: arbitrary and consequential boundaries, interrelated subsystems, and multiple causation- events happen as a consequence of more than one cause.

In social systems of schools an important aspect of leadership is the quality and systematic effects of functions and behaviours of principals as leaders. Principals' behaviours can be inspected under social systems theory. In many schools, principals' social behaviour surrounds all other individuals and processes from decision making to the evaluation of organizational efficiency. Kowalski (2010) offers school improvement through decision making as the main focus of school leadership. However, there may be times when teachers do not agree and follow. The functional perspective of Getzels, Lipham and Campbell's (1968) administrative process may shed light on these situations. Functions are considered as the allocation of roles and facilities. Therefore, principals should revise the functions of administrative processes. Leaders in similar social systems exhibit divergent behavior which is associated with organizational role and personality (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Kowalski, 2010). Kowalski (2010) explains why school principals even in the same districts behave differently. He extends Getzels and Guba's (1957) social behavior theory by adding a new dimension called work context. Formal role expectations and personal facets are the dimensions inherited from the social behavior theory. Work context consists of culture and politics within and around (e.g. community) schools. His assertion is based on open systems theory and is an attempt to conceive of social systems as open systems opposing to Getzels and Guba's (1957) closed social systems perspective. Therefore, he implies that schools interact with their environments, and they are under the influence of outer forces just like any other open and social system. Principals' leadership is influenced by cultural standards and political forces even when they are inconsistent with the principal's formal role expectations and personal facets.

The study is neatly related to the open systems theory because schools are social systems in which two or more persons work together in a coordinated manner to attain common goals. The school as a social network is a structure comprising of interaction of both members that make up the school as well as those of the community. The school is basically a decision-making structure. Decision making within the school involves people. Unfortunately, in the Cameroon educational system although principals may believe in broad participation but the avenue for involving other stakeholders in decision making process narrow.

They are more involved in traditional activities such as fund raising, organizing Parents teachers' association events, students' welfare and voluntary work within the school than decisions in relations to pedagogy (Mbua, 2003; Fonkeng and Tamajong, 2009). Thus, this may affect the relationships between the internal and external stakeholders as well as their environments. And if principals cannot effectively and efficiently involve other stakeholders in decision making, school goals/objectives may not be attained.

The implications of this theory to secondary school leadership is that, as the main person involved in the reception and transformation of inputs, the school principal needs to be rugged and highly skilled in the discharge of his activities (Luneburg, 2010; Mbua, 2003). He has a number of stakeholders to work in close collaboration to achieve the school objectives and get the required output. Like the theory, the principal must be open in his/her decision-making practices to satisfy all stakeholders and effectively attain school objectives. The quality of the output (students) could be tied to the performance of the all the stakeholders (Luneburg, 2010; Mbua, 2003). Thus, with recognition of the five basic elements of the open system and the school being a social system, it is important for the principals to know and learn how encourage internal and external stakeholders' participation in school with shared decision making as one of its facets. This implies principals are to relate efficiently and effectively with the internal and external environment for effective school administration consequently the attainment of school objectives. And for this to be realized certain structures should be put in place to provide more active involvement and voice of other stakeholders in education an important step in the work of school change.

The Human Relations and the Human Resources Models of Management by Miles (1975)

According to Miles (1975) cited in Nwankwo (2014), managers subscribe to two of the three management models. Which are (traditional, human relations and human resources models). Miles (1975) human relations and human resources models of management in the light of educational administration view schools as an organization in relation to human relation model accepts the fact that stakeholders in education/school share a common set of needs: to belong, to be liked and to be respected while the human resources model professes that:

Stakeholders not only share the needs to belong and be respected, they also desire to contribute effectively and creatively to the accomplishment of worthwhile organizational objectives.

Secondly, stakeholders want to feel useful to their organization according to the human relations model. The human resources model has it that school stakeholders not only feel useful to their organizations, but they are capable of exercising far more initiative, responsibility, and creativity than their present jobs, or work circumstances require or allow.

According to the human relations model in relation to this study, the task of the school administrator is to make subordinates know that they are useful and important members of the team; to explain his/her decisions and to discuss subordinates' objections to his/her plans. On routine matters, he/she encourages his/her subordinates in planning and in decision making. The human resources model on the other hand advances the view that the principal's basic task in reference to subordinates is to create an environment in which subordinates can contribute their full range of talents to the accomplishment of the school goals. He/he allows and encourages subordinates to participate in important as well as routine decisions and he/she works to expand the areas where subordinates

exercise self-direction and self-control as they develop and demonstrate the greater insight and ability.

METHODS

Research Design

The mixed-methods research approach specifically using the concurrent research design. The concurrent mixed-methods research design is appropriate for this study because it allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of shared decision making as a facet of effective secondary school administration in the South West Region of Cameroon. Since shared decision making involves measurable practices (such as parents) as well as in-depth perceptions, experiences, and contextual realities, collecting both forms of data at the same time enables the researcher to triangulate findings, enhance validity, and obtain a more complete picture of the phenomenon. The quantitative data can reveal patterns, relationships, and the extent of participation, while the qualitative data can explain how and why shared decision making operates within schools. Using the concurrent design also saves time and ensures that both strands of data reflect the same time frame and contextual conditions, thereby strengthening the credibility and complementarity of the findings.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample

The sample for this study was limited to form five and upper sixth students' parents and in selected public secondary general schools in Meme and Manyu Divisions of the South west Region. This study used a sample of 100 parents, and 10 principals selected from 10 schools in both divisions. Five schools were selected in each division. All the principals in the selected schools were interviewed and the other participants responded to the questionnaires.

Table 1

Sampled Population

Division	Schools	Parents	Principals
Meme	CCAS Kumba	10	1
	GHS		
	BangaBagundu	10	1
	GHS Kake	10	1
	GBHS Kumba-		
	Mbeng	10	1
Manyu	GHS Malende	10	1
	GBHS Mamfe	10	1
	GHS Bachuo-Ntai		
		10	1
	GHS Kendem	10	1
	GHS Ossing	10	1
	GHS Tinto	10	1
	Total	100	10

Source; Researcher, 2025

Parents were part of the population under study because they are also stakeholders of the school and their opinions and inputs are very vital for the smooth functioning of the school and they can better evaluate their involvement in decision making in schools. Lastly, principals were included in this study because they are the school administrators and without the institution will not be effectively and efficiently administered. They work with all other stakeholders daily to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the curriculum, as such; they can provide the necessary information needed for the study.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling approaches to come out with the sample in phases. In phase one, non-probability sampling, notably purposive or judgmental sampling was used to select the area of the study. That is the Meme and Manyu Divisions. This was based on the personal judgment of the researcher that, respondents in these regions possess all the necessary information about the target population, especially as they all had similar characteristics. In addition, because of time and financial constraints the researcher could not cover the entire national territory. Phase two consisted of selecting the number of, parents and principals for the study and the type of research instruments employed to capture data for the study. That is the questionnaire and the Interview Guide.

Cluster random sampling technique was used to select participating schools for the sample. Purposive sampling was used to choose five schools per division. That is urban and rural schools. In carrying out these, two hearts labelled 'A' and 'B' for rural and urban schools respectively were used. For instance, in Meme Division, all rural and urban government general schools were written in slips of paper, folded and put in different hats and labelled 'A' and 'B' respectively. These slips were thoroughly shuffled and school two or three from each hat were randomly drawn to give the five participating schools (cluster) for Meme division.

To select parents' participants in this study, the researcher purposively or judgmentally selected parents and community members who have been attending PTA meetings for at least three years. This criterion is because, without at least three years PTA meetings experience, it would be difficult for the parents and community to provide the necessary information on shared decision making needed for the study.

A total of ten (10) respondents were interviewed for this study. The researcher used the simple, random sampling techniques to select the principals who responded to the interview. A principal was selected from each sub division from the respective divisions hence 10 in both the Meme and Manyu.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Parents

Demographic information		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	15	15.0
	Male	85	85.0
Age range	25-30	8	8.0
	31-40	20	20.0
	41-50	47	47.0

	51-60	25	25.0
	61 years and above	0	0.0
Type of secondary school	Private	45	45.0
	Public	55	55.0
Highest Academic Qualification	First degree	61	61.0
	Master degree	25	25.0
	Doctorate	3	3.0
	Other	11	11.0
Site	Manyu	44	44.0
	Meme	56	56.0
Profession	Accountant	5	5.0
	Agriculture Technician	2	2.0
	Business	14	14.0
	Clerk	5	5.0
	Electrician	2	2.0
	Engineer	2	2.0
	Farmer	6	6.0
	Lecturer	2	2.0
	Nurse	3	3.0
	Painter	2	2.0
	Retired Teacher	3	3.0
	Secretary	5	5.0
	Teaching	38	38.0
	Transporter	7	7.0

N=100 Source: Field survey (2025)

Among the 100 parents successfully work with, 15(15.0%) of them were females while 85(85.0%) were males. In line with age range majority of parents are aged 41-50 years (47%), followed by 51-60 years (25%) and 31-40 years (20%) while only 8% are aged 25-30 years. Based on the type of secondary school, parents are nearly evenly split between private (45%) and public (55%) secondary schools. Also, most parents hold at least a first degree (61%), a significant proportion (25%) have a master's degree, a small number (3%) have doctorate degrees and the remaining 11% have other types of qualifications. Again, more parents are from Meme (56%) than from Manyu (44%). Teaching is the most common profession among parents (38%), Other notable professions include business (14%) and transporter (7%), Various other professions are represented in smaller proportions, such as accountant, clerk, farmer, nurse, retired teacher, and others, each ranging between 2% and 6%.

Instruments for Data Collection

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach in which data were collected in multiple stages, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data (structured questionnaires) and qualitative data (interviews) were gathered concurrently, meaning at the same time rather than separately. Collecting both types of data simultaneously allowed the researcher to compare, complement, and validate findings from different sources, thereby providing a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of the research problem.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was employed as the main tool for data collection in the study because it is a one-time data-gathering device on variables of interest in this study. In addition it is relatively less expensive data collection method, can be filled at respondents' convenience, offers greater assurance of anonymity and covers a wide geographical area. That is very practical and allows the researcher to gather information from a large audience.

Questionnaire directed to parents comprised of a cover page which stated the purpose of the study and two (02) sections namely, Sections A and B. In addition, the questionnaire was closed-ended, items with four-point Likert-Type scale response options (Strongly Agree-SA, Agree-A, Strongly Disagree-SD and Disagree-D) designed by the researcher. Section A focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, section B dwelled on items on parents and the dependent variable (effective school administration) of the study.

Interview Guide/Schedule

As earlier mentioned, the qualitative interview was used to capture additional quality information from principals on all the constructs of the study with emphasizes on the dependent variable. Interview was viewed as an appropriate method in this study because of its ability to explore people's experiences in shared decision making for effective school administration. In addition, interviews were used because the sincerity, frankness, truthfulness and Insights of the interview can be better judged through cross-questioning and there is no chance for the respondent to rectify, modify and edit the earlier answers. In addition, people are more willing to talk than write especially on current and delicate issues like their shared decision making. The study employed the unstructured (open-ended questions) interview

To achieve this objective, ten (10) principals (reflecting the nine divisions) in the sample randomly selected from the participating secondary general schools and were interviewed on the issues at stake in this study. They were asked questions during interviews which focused on rating the extent to which parents' participation in decision making influences effective school administration with Meme and Manyu Divisions in focus.

Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative methods were used in analyzing the data for the study.

Analysis of quantitative data

The data collected from the field was first processed using EPiData 3.1 whereby, all the participants' responses were keyed, in accordance with each of the test items. During this process of data entering, the demographic information and the test items were coded with numbers to facilitate the data entering and the questionnaires were also be assigned with serial numbers. The reason for coding and assigning each questionnaire a serial number was to ensure that on the data base, one should easily trace the individual responses of

participants and to carry out any verification in areas of uncertainty if arise. After the data were completely entered for all the participants, the data based were exported to SPSS version 25 for further consistency, data range and validation checks with the purpose to first identify invalid codes (data cleaning) with the aid of exploratory statistics.

After the data were thoroughly checked for possible errors, the quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. To test the hypotheses of the study, the Spearman rho test was used because the data for the variables were not normally distributed based on the statistics of the test of normality assumption trend of the data as seen on the test of normality table below. Furthermore, the Cox and Snell test was also used to explain in terms of percentage the extent to which parents' collaborative participation in decision making, students' consultative participation in decision making influences effective school administration.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used in testing the normality trend of the data because the sample size is above 50. With less than 50%, the Shapiro-Wilk test is used. As earlier mentioned, statistics from the test of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and descriptive statistics with the mean not equal to median shows the data significantly deviate from the normal distribution pattern for all variables (p -value < 0.05). The negative skewness above zero relevance showed that the data are more skewed to the left while the positive skewness value implies that the data are more drifted to the right. For a data to be normally distributed with equal data above and below the mean, the skewness value should zero or very close to zero.

Testing for normality was necessary even though the sample was relatively large (100 parents) because many parametric statistical techniques, such as Pearson's correlation and regression analysis, assume that the data are approximately normally distributed. When the sample size is above 50, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors significance correction is appropriate for assessing whether the distribution significantly deviates from normality, whereas the Shapiro-Wilk test is typically recommended for smaller samples.

FINDINGS

To what extent does parents' collaborative participation in decision making influence effective school administration?

Table 3

Parents Opinion on their collaborative participation in decision making

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Allows parents to participate in decision making in my child's school.	2 (2.0%)	10 (10.0%)	62 (62.0%)	26 (26.0%)	12 (12.0%)	88 (88.0%)
Ensures that parents contribute their opinions to improve students' academic performance.	0 (0.0%)	10 (10.0%)	63 (63.0%)	27 (27.0%)	10 (10.0%)	90 (90.0%)
Ensures that PTA meetings are held regularly	0 (0.0%)	13 (13.0%)	62 (62.0%)	25 (25.0%)	13 (13.0%)	87 (87.0%)

Allows parents air relevant views freely even if they differ with the staff.	0 (0.0%)	25 (25.0%)	62 (62.0%)	13 (13.0%)	25 (25.0%)	75 (75.0%)
Operates an open-gate policy	9 (9.0%)	25 (25.0%)	54 (54.0%)	12 (12.0%)	34 (34.0%)	66 (66.0%)
Ask my opinion directly on special issues	4 (4.0%)	50 (50.0%)	30 (30.0%)	16 (16.0%)	54 (54.0%)	46 (46.0%)
Encourages parents to contribute promptly in solving problems relating to pedagogy in my child's school.	0 (0.0%)	47 (47.0%)	35 (35.0%)	18 (18.0%)	47 (47.0%)	54 (54.0%)
Builds and maintains rapport with the school community and other stakeholders	0 (0.0%)	25 (25.0%)	58 (58.0%)	17 (17.0%)	25 (25.0%)	75 (75.0%)
Delegates leadership responsibilities to teachers and parents	4 (4.0%)	27 (27.0%)	54 (54.0%)	15 (15.0%)	31 (31.0%)	69 (69.0%)
Supports the culture of trust, collaboration and support	0 (0.0%)	18 (18.0%)	64 (64.0%)	18 (18.0%)	18 (18.0%)	82 (82.0%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	19 (1.9%)	250 (25.0%)	544 (54.4%)	127 (12.7%)	269 (26.9%)	671 (67.1%)

N=100 Source: Field survey (2025)

In aggregate, 67.1% of the parents disagreed to the fact that their collaborative participation in decision making influence effective school administration while 26.9% agreed. Specifically, 90(90.0%) of parents disagreed to the fact that the principal ensures that parents contribute their opinions to improve students' academic performance. Similarly, 88(88.0%) disagreed to the fact that the principal allows them to participate in decision making in their children's school. Also, 87(87.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that the principal ensures that PTA meetings are held regularly. Again, 82(82.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that the principal supports the culture of trust, collaboration and support.

Moreover, 75(75.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that the principal builds and maintains rapport with the school community and other stakeholders and allows parents air relevant views freely even if they differ with the staff. Also 69(69.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that the principal delegates leadership responsibilities to teachers and parents. Furthermore, 66(66.0%) disagreed to the fact that the principal operates an open-gate policy, with 54(54.0%) parents disagreed to the fact that the principal encourages parents to contribute promptly in solving problems relating to pedagogy in my child's school. Finally, 54(54.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that the principal ask their opinion directly on special issues.

Table 4
Parents Opinion on Effective School Administration

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Performance in official exams has been good	10 (10.0%)	44 (44.0%)	40 (40.0%)	6 (6.0%)	54 (54.0%)	46 (46.0%)
Maximum security and safety provided to the students and school staff	12 (12.0%)	30 (30.0%)	46 (46.0%)	11 (11.0%)	43 (43.0%)	57 (57.0%)
Effective discipline of students	18 (18.0%)	25 (25.0%)	48 (48.0%)	9 (9.0%)	43 (43.0%)	57 (57.0%)

Effective Communication amongst school staff, parents and community members	17 (17.0%)	51 (51.0%)	30 (30.0%)	2 (2.0%)	68 (68.0%)	32 (32.0%)
Respect and harmonious living amongst students, parents, community and school staff	17 (17.0%)	41 (41.0%)	40 (40.0%)	2 (2.0%)	58 (58.0%)	42 (42.0%)
Availability of school equipment and facilities	11 (11.0%)	33 (33.0%)	45 (45.0%)	11 (11.0%)	44 (44.0%)	56 (56.0%)
Promotes, respect and practice of cultural diversity	23 (23.0%)	66 (66.0%)	7 (7.0%)	4 (4.0%)	89 (89.0%)	11 (11.0%)
Recognize parents' efforts and motivates them	16 (16.0%)	19 (19.0%)	48 (48.0%)	17 (17.0%)	35 (35.0%)	65 (65.0%)
Effective conflict management resolutions	22 (22.0%)	21 (21.0%)	41 (41.0%)	16 (16.0%)	43 (43.0%)	57 (57.0%)
Increases productivity by cooperating with the external community.	14 (14.0%)	36 (36.0%)	37 (37.0%)	13 (13.0%)	50 (50.0%)	50 (50.0%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	160 (16.0%)	366 (36.6%)	382 (38.2%)	91 (9.1%)	526 (52.6%)	473 (47.3%)

N=100 Source: Field survey (2025)

In aggregate, 52.6% of the parents agreed that there is effective school administration while 47.3% said there is no effective school administration. Specifically, 89(89.0%) of parents agreed the principals promotes, respect and practice of cultural diversity. Similarly, 68(68.0%) accepted that there is effective communication amongst school staff, parents and community members. Also, 58(58.0%) of the parents accepted that there is respect and harmonious living amongst students, parents, community and school staff. Likewise, 54(54.0%) of the parents agreed that performance in official exams has been good. Equally, 50(50.0%) of the parents agreed that there is increase productivity by cooperating with the external community while another 50(50.0%) said there is no increase in productivity by cooperating with the external community.

On the contrary, 65(65.0%) disagreed to the fact that the principal recognizes parents' efforts and motivates them. Also, 57(57.0%) of the parents disagreed to the fact that there is effective discipline of students, conflict management resolutions and maximum security and safety provided to the students and school staff. Finally, 56(56.0%) of parents disagreed to the fact that there is the availability of school equipment and facilities.

Table 5

Principals Opinion on the ways in which parents collaboratively participate in the decision-making process in schools

Theme	Sample Quotation
Formal Governance and Advisory Structures	"Elected parent representatives on the PTA executive work directly with the school administration to set agendas, approve budgets for parent-raised funds, and shape school policy. The PTA Executive sits with me monthly to review parental concerns and co-draft proposals for school improvements." (P7)
	"Parent representatives serve on the Board, which is the highest decision-making body for major policy, financial, and strategic directions." (P3)
	"Before general PTA meetings, parents meet by class to discuss specific issues, elect representatives, and consolidate their points. We encourage each class to form a committee; this ensures every voice is heard, not just the loudest, before decisions are brought to the larger assembly." (P10)
	"For initiatives like building a new library or planning a major cultural event, we form committees with significant parent membership." (P2)
	"Parent representatives are invited to participate in our annual planning retreats to help set the school's goals for the coming years. Our five-year plan on digital literacy

was directly influenced by the insights parents shared during our last retreat on preparing students for the modern world." (P5)

Source: Field survey (2025)

Continuation of Table 6

Principals Opinion on the ways in which parents collaboratively participate in the decision-making process in schools

Theme	Sample Quotation
Academic and Curricular Collaboration	<p>" Parents provide feedback on the relevance of the curriculum and suggest co-curricular activities like clubs. Parent feedback was instrumental in our decision to strengthen our practical ICT lessons and introduce a Coding Club." (P8)</p> <p>" Parents from various professions come in to advise students on career choices, shaping their academic pathways." (P5)</p> <p>" We present anonymized academic performance trends to the PTA to collaboratively diagnose challenges and devise support strategies." (P6)</p> <p>" Parents are consulted on the choice of major textbooks and learning aids, especially considering their cost and durability. A parent committee helped evaluate and choose the most cost-effective and robust textbook series for our literature classes." (P1)</p> <p>" We seek collective parent input on the balance and volume of homework to ensure it is manageable and effective. A collaborative review with parents led to our new 'no homework on weekends' policy, which emphasizes quality over quantity and family time." (P9)</p>
Operational and Financial Management Support	<p>" Parents have full oversight and decision-making power over funds they contribute, deciding on projects like building classrooms or buying buses." (P10)</p> <p>" While the government sets base fees, the PTA assembly collectively debates and approves any proposed parent-led levies for specific projects. Any additional levy for a school project is never a decree from my office; it is a motion presented, debated, and voted upon by the parent body in a general assembly." (P7)</p> <p>" Parents decide on the priority of maintenance projects and often contribute labour or materials through community effort ("njangi" or "coming together"). Just last term, parents collectively decided that repairing the dormitory roofs was a higher priority than painting the walls, and they organized the work teams themselves." (P5)</p> <p>" A committee of parents oversees the canteen's menu, pricing, and hygiene standards. Our parent-led canteen committee ensures the food is not only affordable but also nutritious and culturally appropriate for our children." (P9)</p> <p>" Parents collaborate in developing policies on campus security, visitor protocols, and student safety during excursions. After a joint meeting with parents, we revised our excursion policy to include a mandatory parent representative on every trip." (P8)</p>
Community, Culture, and Event Participation	<p>" In cases of major infractions, nominated parents sit on the disciplinary committee to ensure fairness and community values are upheld." (P2)</p> <p>" Parents often connect the school with its alumni, facilitating mentorship and fundraising decisions. Parents who are alumni themselves help us decide how best to engage former students for the benefit of our current ones." (P4)</p> <p>" Parents with expertise offer workshops on topics like teenage health, digital citizenship, or financial literacy, shaping the school's pastoral care offerings eg. a group of parents, who are health professionals, proposed and designed a very successful series of talks on adolescent health and well-being." (P1)</p> <p>" Parents are consulted on any changes to the school uniform or the general dress code to ensure it is practical, affordable, and respectable." (P10)</p>

Source: Field survey (2025)

The findings illustrate the substantial role parents play in the decision-making process within schools, particularly through formal governance and advisory structures. Principals highlight the importance of elected parent representatives on bodies like the PTA, (P7) stating, "Elected parent representatives on the PTA executive work directly with the school administration to set agendas, approve budgets for parent-raised funds, and shape school policy." This collaborative approach ensures that parental concerns are

consistently addressed and that their insights contribute to significant school initiatives. For example, parent representatives participate in annual planning retreats that help shape the school's long-term goals, with (P5) noting, *"Our five-year plan on digital literacy was directly influenced by the insights parents shared during our last retreat."*

In addition to governance, parents contribute to academic and curricular collaboration, significantly influencing the educational offerings of the school. Their feedback has led to enhancements in the curriculum and the introduction of new programs, such as the Coding Club. (P8) remarked, *"Parents provide feedback on the relevance of the curriculum and suggest co-curricular activities like clubs."* Furthermore, parents are involved in decisions regarding textbooks and homework policies, ensuring that these choices reflect both educational effectiveness and family needs. A notable change came from a collaborative review that resulted in a "no homework on weekends" policy, prioritizing family time while maintaining academic rigor.

Operationally, parents exercise significant oversight and decision-making power regarding financial and logistical aspects of the school. They actively decide on projects funded by their contributions, such as classroom construction and transportation needs. As (P10) stated, *"Parents have full oversight and decision-making power over funds they contribute, deciding on projects like building classrooms or buying buses."* This sense of ownership extends to practical matters, such as maintaining school facilities and ensuring that school menus meet nutritional standards. Furthermore, parents play a crucial role in shaping community culture by organizing events and participating in disciplinary committees, thus reinforcing their integral role in fostering a supportive and engaged school community.

Table 7

Principals Opinion if parents' collaborative participation in school decision making process influence effective school administration

Response	Theme	Sample Quotation
Yes	Enhancing Legitimacy, Trust, and Shared Ownership	<p><i>"When we had to implement a necessary but unpopular fee increase for security upgrades, it was the parent-led PTA committee that presented the budget and rationale to the wider community. The decision was accepted because it came from their peers, not just an edict from my office." (P10)</i></p> <p><i>"Transparency in decision-making shows parents we have nothing to hide. This trust is the currency that allows us to administer the school smoothly, especially during challenging times." (P5)</i></p> <p><i>"Parents who help decide on a project, like our new computer lab, become its fiercest protectors and champions. They don't see it as the school's lab; they see it as their lab." (P4)</i></p> <p><i>"A collaborative process means issues are aired and addressed early around the table, rather than becoming destructive rumours at the school gate." (P1)</i></p> <p><i>"When we succeed in exams or sports, the parents celebrate as partners in that victory. They understand the role their decisions played in that success." (P9)</i></p>
	Improving the Quality and Relevance of Decisions	<p><i>"Parents are the first to hear about emerging social trends affecting students. Their input helps us proactively shape our counseling and disciplinary policies to be relevant and effective." (P7)</i></p> <p><i>"A teacher might propose an idealistic solution, but a parent will ask, 'How will this work logistically? Who will maintain it? Can our</i></p>

	<p>community truly afford it?' This grounds our administration in reality." (P9)</p> <p>"As a school in the South West, our decisions regarding cultural events, language use, or holiday schedules must respect our traditions. Parents are the guardians of this cultural context." (P8)</p> <p>"While I may prioritize academic resources, a parent survey might reveal that student safety on the commute to school is the overwhelming parental concern. This directly influences where we focus our administrative energy and resources." (P3)</p> <p>"We have parents who are engineers, health workers, and project managers. Their voluntary input on infrastructure projects, health policies, and event planning elevates the quality of our work immensely." (P10)</p>
Mobilizing Resources and Support	<p>"A decision made with parents is a decision they are willing to invest in. They are far more likely to contribute financially or in-kind to a project they helped design and approve." (P2)</p> <p>"Parents connect us to local businesses, NGOs, and government officials, opening doors for partnerships, sponsorships, and support that would otherwise be closed to us." (P4)</p> <p>"Administering a large school event is a logistical challenge. Parent volunteers, who have a stake in its success, become an extension of our administrative team, managing everything from traffic to catering." (P1)</p> <p>"When parents are involved in selecting and funding assets, like a school bus, they take personal responsibility for its upkeep, reducing the administrative burden on my staff." (P5)</p>

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 8

Principals Opinion if parents' collaborative participation in school decision making process influence effective school administration

Response	Theme	Sample Quotation
Yes	Strengthening Student Support and Holistic Development	<p>"When disciplinary policies are co-developed with parents, they reinforce the same values at home. This consistency makes administration far more effective than if the school acted alone." (P7)</p> <p>"A collaborative decision with parents on a student's academic challenges leads to a tailored home-and-school support plan that has a much higher chance of success." (P6)</p> <p>"The decision to use WhatsApp groups for class updates was a parent-led initiative. This direct line of communication has made the administration of day-to-day information incredibly efficient." (P10)</p> <p>"This process teaches parents how the system works. An informed parent who knows how to navigate the system is a partner, not a passive recipient, making the administration of each child's journey smoother." (P1)</p>

Source: Field survey (2025)

Findings on principals' opinion if parents' collaborative participation in school decision making process influence effective school administration, Principals noted that yes, involving parents enhances legitimacy and trust within the school community. For instance, when faced with implementing an unpopular fee increase for security upgrades, (P10) shared, "It was the parent-led PTA committee that presented the budget and rationale to the wider community. The decision was accepted because it came from their peers, not just an edict from my office." This highlights how transparency and collaboration foster a

sense of shared ownership, enabling parents to become champions of school initiatives. As noted, when parents feel included in the decision-making process, they celebrate school successes as their own, reinforcing a strong partnership between the school and families.

Moreover, parental involvement significantly improves the quality and relevance of decisions made within the school. Principals emphasized that parents bring essential insights regarding social trends and community needs that inform policies and practices. (P7) remarked, *“Parents are the first to hear about emerging social trends affecting students. Their input helps us proactively shape our counseling and disciplinary policies to be relevant and effective.”* Additionally, parents' practical perspectives contribute to grounded solutions, as highlighted by a principal who noted that while teachers may propose idealistic ideas, parents often ask critical logistical questions that ensure decisions are feasible. This collaboration helps align administrative priorities with parental concerns, such as safety during commutes, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of school management.

Finally, the findings indicate that parents play a crucial role in mobilizing resources and support for school initiatives, further strengthening the administration's capabilities. When decisions are made collaboratively, parents are more likely to invest their time and resources into projects they helped design. (P2) explained, *“A decision made with parents is a decision they are willing to invest in,”* underscoring the importance of shared ownership. Parents also facilitate connections to local businesses and organizations, expanding the school's resource network. Their involvement in logistical aspects of school events, as noted by a principal, allows them to act as extensions of the administrative team, enhancing operational efficiency. The collaborative approach not only supports specific initiatives but also strengthens the overall framework for student support and holistic development, leading to more effective educational outcomes.

Verification of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration.

Table 9

Relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration

		Parents' collaborative participation in decision making	Effective school administration	Explanatory power of relationship in terms of percentage (Nagelkerke statistics)
Spearman's rho	R-value	1	.314**	77.9% (0.779)
	p-value	.	.001	
	N	100	100	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The hypothetical statistics showed that there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration (R- value 0.314**, p -value $< 0.001 < 0.05$). The positive sign of the correlation value implies that continues parents' collaborative participation in decision making will contribute significantly to effective school administration and this is supported with an explanatory power of 77.9% (Nagelkerke statistics= 0. 77.9). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative that states there is a significant relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration was accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Parents' Collaborative Participation in Decision Making and Effective School Administration

The findings also showed that the majority of parents agreed that their collaborative participation in decision making influence effective school administration, and further analysis revealed that there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between parents' collaborative participation in decision making and effective school administration. The positive sign of the correlation value implies that continues parents' collaborative participation in decision making will contribute significantly to effective school administration and this is supported with an explanatory power of 77.9%. In line with the above results, many of the principals underscore the critical role of parental collaboration in school decision-making, with many principals affirming that involving parents enhances both legitimacy and trust within the school community. For example, (P10) shared, *"It was the parent-led PTA committee that presented the budget and rationale to the wider community. The decision was accepted because it came from their peers, not just an edict from my office."* This illustrates how transparency and collaborative engagement create a sense of shared ownership, positioning parents as advocates for school initiatives rather than passive recipients of decisions. Such inclusive practices align with Epstein's (2011) framework on family and community partnerships, which emphasizes that parental involvement fosters mutual trust and strengthens the social capital essential for effective school governance. When parents feel genuinely included, they are more likely to celebrate school successes as their own, reinforcing a reciprocal partnership that benefits both the school and families.

Yet data reveals a significant level of parental disengagement from school decision-making processes, with parents disagreeing that their collaborative participation influences effective school administration. Specifically, a large majority of parents feel that their opinions are not sought to improve student academic performance, they are not allowed to participate in decision-making, PTA meetings are not held regularly, and the principal does not support a culture of trust and collaboration. This widespread perception of exclusion can lead to a breakdown in communication and a lack of shared responsibility for student success. According to Cauad (2025), parental involvement in school decision-making correlates positively with students' academic achievement. Without active parental involvement, schools may miss out on valuable insights and support that could enhance the learning environment and improve student outcomes.

This lack of engagement can stem from various barriers, including logistical challenges such as time constraints and transportation issues, psychological barriers like a lack of confidence or negative past experiences, and systemic issues within the educational system. Jones (2001) notes that some parents feel unwelcome or intimidated in school settings, particularly if they had negative experiences themselves. Overcoming these barriers requires a collaborative effort between educators, administrators, and parents to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where parents feel valued and empowered to contribute. Principals play a critical role in fostering high levels of parent engagement by strengthening school culture, understanding the school-community context, and ensuring parent-friendly resources are available.

Moreover, principals highlighted that parental input enriches decision quality by bringing vital insights about social trends and community needs that shape relevant policies and practices. (P7) noted, *“Parents are the first to hear about emerging social trends affecting students. Their input helps us proactively shape our counseling and disciplinary policies to be relevant and effective,”* emphasizing parents’ frontline knowledge that can make school responses timelier and contextually appropriate. Additionally, parents contribute pragmatic perspectives, often posing critical logistical questions that ground decisions in reality, complementing teachers’ more idealistic proposals. This dynamic collaboration aligns with research by Hornby and Lafaele (2011), who argue that parental involvement enhances policy responsiveness and school effectiveness. The findings also reveal parents’ vital role in mobilizing resources and support for school initiatives, as (P2) stated, *“A decision made with parents is a decision they are willing to invest in.”* This shared ownership encourages parents to commit time, resources, and community connections, thereby expanding the school’s operational capacity and fostering a holistic support system that ultimately improves educational outcomes (Chen and Wang, 2019).

Based on the whys in which parents collaboratively participate in the decision-making process in schools, many of them said parents play a significant and structured role in school governance through formal advisory bodies and committees, which facilitates collaborative decision-making and strengthens school administration. (P7) noted, *“Elected parent representatives on the PTA executive work directly with the school administration to set agendas, approve budgets for parent-raised funds, and shape school policy,”* highlighting the institutionalized nature of parental participation. This aligns with Epstein’s (2011) model of overlapping spheres of influence, which emphasizes that formalized parent involvement in governance enhances legitimacy and accountability in school leadership. The inclusion of parents in strategic planning processes, such as the five-year digital literacy plan, underscores how parental insights contribute to long-term goal setting, supporting Garcia and Martinez (2016) assertion that inclusive leadership fosters better alignment between school goals and community needs. Moreover, the practice of encouraging parents to organize by class to ensure all voices are heard reflects democratic principles and counters domination by more vocal stakeholders, promoting equity in participation (Ahmed and Rehman, 2019).

Parental collaboration extends deeply into academic and curricular matters, where their input influences both curriculum relevance and co-curricular programming. For instance, one principal explained, *“Parent feedback was instrumental in our decision to strengthen*

our practical ICT lessons and introduce a Coding Club,” demonstrating how parental expertise and priorities can help schools adapt to evolving educational demands. This echoes research by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), who argue that active parental involvement in curriculum-related decisions enhances student engagement and achievement. Furthermore, parents’ role in advising on textbook choices and workload balance, as reflected in the introduction of a “*no homework on weekends*” policy, exemplifies how their practical concerns are integrated into pedagogical decisions to balance academic rigor with students’ well-being. Such collaboration is consistent with distributed leadership frameworks, where teachers, parents, and administrators share responsibility for instructional improvement (Phillips, Bhojedat, Phillips, Henry, and Stewart-Fox, 2024).

Parents are critical partners in operational and financial management as well as cultural and community engagement, significantly supporting school functionality and student welfare. Principals highlighted that “*parents have full oversight and decision-making power over funds they contribute,*” and collectively debate levies for school projects, ensuring transparency and democratic resource allocation. This echoes Leithwood and Sun’s (2012) emphasis on financial transparency as key to trust and sustainability. Additionally, parents’ active involvement in maintenance priorities, canteen management, and security policies demonstrates their integral role in shaping a safe and supportive school environment. Beyond operations, parents enrich school culture through organizing events, participating in disciplinary committees, and offering expertise for pastoral care initiatives, such as adolescent health workshops. These practices align with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, which situates parental engagement as vital for holistic student development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

These findings correspond with suggestions of the Draft Document of the Sector-Wide Approach to Education (Republic of Cameroon, 2005a). The findings constitute a challenge. If principals, as acknowledged by Law No. 98/004 of April, 1998 (Republic of Cameroon 1998), are going to be guarantors of quality education, they deserve better in terms of effective school administration. This is because ineffective school administration does not only hurt the students, teachers, administration but the school at large. The practice of parents’ participation in decision making is supposed to be built on norms of collaboration, trust, openness to mistakes and mutual respect, amongst others but many reasons from the literature suggest why parents’ participation in decision making may be so grossly ineffective. These include a poor conception of parents’ collaborative participation in decision making that equates it with evaluation (Argon & Kiyici, 2012; Rich, 1987).

The findings indicate a pronounced exclusion of parents from school governance and decision-making processes, with parents perceiving that the principal neither builds genuine rapport nor permits dissenting views, and reporting negligible delegation of leadership responsibilities to parents or teachers in community-related matters. This pattern reflects a closed, top-down administrative culture that contradicts the principles of distributed and community-oriented leadership widely advocated in contemporary educational scholarship (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004). In many low- and middle-income contexts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, such centralised control

is often rooted in historical bureaucratic legacies and high power-distance cultural norms that position the principal as the sole authority figure (Bush & Ng, 2019; Oplatka & Arar, 2016). Similar parental marginalization has been documented in Nigeria (Nakpodia, 2011), Ghana (Kusi & Badu, 2021), and Kenya (Wanjala & Rarieya, 2022), where school leaders frequently view parent involvement as a potential threat to professional autonomy rather than a resource, resulting in tokenistic rather than authentic engagement.

These high levels of perceived exclusion have serious theoretical and empirical implications for school effectiveness and student outcomes. Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that authentic parent-school partnerships and open communication channels are among the strongest predictors of student achievement (effect size $d = 0.30-0.51$), particularly in disadvantaged communities (Jeynes, 2012; Castro et al., 2015). When principals maintain “closed-gate” policies and rarely solicit direct parental input, as reported by 66% and 54% of respondents respectively, trust erodes and collective efficacy declines (Goddard et al., 2015; Addi-Racah & Ainhoren, 2020). Recent studies in comparable African settings confirm that low parental voice correlates significantly with reduced voluntary contributions, higher absenteeism of students, and diminished school legitimacy in the eyes of the community (Manase & Mwami, 2023; Osei & Dontwi, 2024). Consequently, the present data suggest that the prevailing autocratic stance not only violates international and national policy rhetoric on stakeholder participation but also jeopardises the social capital essential for sustainable school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2020; Mutch, 2022).

Regarding effective school administration, parents agreed that principals promote respect for cultural diversity, highlighting a commitment to inclusive school environments. This is in line with Banks’ (2015) multicultural education framework, which argues that schools should reflect and honor diverse cultural backgrounds to foster equitable learning environments. However, lower levels of agreement on effective communication, respectful relationships, and good exam performance suggest that while foundational efforts exist, challenges remain in fully achieving school harmony and academic excellence. The split opinions on productivity gains through collaboration with external communities, further reflect ambivalence about the effectiveness of outreach efforts, which corroborates findings by Kozleski, & Smith, (2009) that community partnerships require sustained effort and alignment to produce tangible results.

Conversely, the findings reveal critical areas of concern, particularly regarding recognition and motivation of parents, discipline, conflict management, safety, and availability of resources. A majority of parents disagreed that principals recognize and motivate their efforts, which contradicts the motivational aspects of transformational leadership known to enhance stakeholder commitment (Hoque KE, & Raya ZT. 2023).). Similarly, parents felt that discipline, conflict resolution, and security measures were inadequate, echoing research by Astor, Guerra, and Van Acker (2010), who emphasize that effective school leadership must prioritize safe and orderly environments to support learning. The lack of sufficient equipment and facilities, noted by parents, highlights resource constraints that can hinder instructional quality and overall school effectiveness (Earthman, 2004). These shortcomings suggest that despite positive engagement efforts;

principals face significant challenges in operational management and stakeholder satisfaction.

The findings align well with Reddin's Three-Dimensional Theory (1970), which posits that effective leadership requires balancing task orientation, relationship orientation, and effectiveness. This illustrates that principals who engage parents are effectively managing this balance. By involving parents, principals not only address the task dimension—ensuring decisions are relevant and responsive to community needs—but also foster positive relationships that build trust and legitimacy within the school community, reflecting the relational dimension of leadership. Parental collaboration substantially contributes to school effectiveness, supporting Reddin's assertion that leadership effectiveness is contingent on adapting style to the situational context and stakeholder dynamics. Principals' recognition of parental involvement as enhancing legitimacy underscores the importance of relational leadership in creating a supportive environment that facilitates shared responsibility and sustainable school governance, ultimately driving more effective administration outcomes.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research has contributed to knowledge in that it has highlighted the need for shared decision making. This shared decision-making transit broadly from teachers' collegial participation, parents' collaborative participation, students' consultative participation and communities' communicative participation in decision making for effective school administration. In addition, the study has successfully put forth a clear, detailed and current picture of shared decision making for effective school administration in Cameroon, using theoretical and empirical literature from multiple scholars and institutions; and also, practical examples and experiences from different countries around the world, and how they can be applied to the nation of Cameroon. The study has therefore validated and strengthened theoretical and empirical justifications on the need to enhanced Shared decision making for effective and efficient school administration and which by extension has implications on the attainment of school objectives. Recent literature provided from other scholars within Cameroon decrying the problem of insufficient participation of stakeholders in decision making without saying that the research was able to identify problem which supported recent literature conducted in different localities. The recommendations made in this study were based on experience and empirical data which increase relevance and ensure usability. Hence, the findings and as well as recommendations by objectives has been a major contribution to knowledge.

Furthermore, the study has contributed to knowledge in that it would serve as a springboard to policymakers to initiate, adopt and effectively implement relevant better proactive strategies that principals can implement, including adaptive communication, trust-building initiatives, and inclusive engagement practices. Emphasizing the need for formalized structures of governance and transparency, the findings advocate for a culture of mutual respect and continuous capacity building, leveraging both technology and community resources. This multifaceted approach aims to enhance shared decision-making among teachers, parents, students, and community members, ultimately leading to more effective school administration. Finally, the study has contributed to knowledge

in that it would serve as a secondary source of information to inform further research and to enable further researchers to make use of some of its information for broader research.

Recommendations

School administrators should create formal mechanisms to actively involve teachers in key decisions related to curriculum development, instructional strategies, school governance, policy formulation, and resource management. This empowerment will improve collaboration, accountability, and teacher morale, thereby fostering more effective school administration.

Principals and school leaders should be trained in inclusive leadership practices that promote shared decision-making. Continuous professional development programs focusing on participatory governance and collaborative problem-solving will enable schools to leverage teachers' expertise effectively for improved school outcomes.

Schools should establish and actively promote formal governance and advisory committees that include parents, ensuring their meaningful participation in academic, curricular, operational, and financial decision-making processes. This will foster shared ownership, legitimacy, and trust in school administration.

School leaders should develop regular communication channels and community engagement activities that encourage parents' involvement in school culture, events, and decision-making forums. This will improve the quality and relevance of decisions and mobilize additional resources and support for schools.

The ministry should organize training and sensitization programs to equip parents with knowledge and skills needed to contribute effectively to school governance and decision making. Empowered parents can better support student development and holistic school improvement, thereby enhancing overall school effectiveness.

Schools should actively seek to build partnerships with local organizations and community leaders to facilitate resource mobilization and support for school initiatives. This collaboration can enhance the impact of community participation in school governance.

Regularly schedule strategic planning sessions that involve community members in discussions about school goals and long-term vision. This will ensure that community insights are incorporated into administrative strategies, improving overall effectiveness.

Limitations of the Study

A research work of this nature definitely had constraints. There were limitations in the study which were methodological, with the socio-political unrest in the South-west and North West Regions of the country, the researcher found it so difficult to meet the teachers especially in schools. Thus, the researcher had to go to the school over and over to meet up with the sample for the insinuation. This delayed the process and cost more money, risk and time.

Suggestions for Further Research

This same study on shared decision making as a facet of effective secondary school administration should also be extended to other regions of the country.

Another study could also be carried out to investigate the specific effects of shared decision-making involving teachers, parents, students, and community members on various student outcomes, such as academic performance, attendance, and social-emotional development. This could provide deeper insights into the direct benefits of participatory governance.

Another study could also be carried out on what principals can do at their own level to improve on effective secondary school administration.

Furthermore, another study could be carried out to look at shared decision making as a facet of effective administration in higher education in Cameroon.

REFERENCES

- Abiona, I., Adekeye, N., & Bello, W. N. (2013). Grassroots participation in decision-making process and development programmes as correlate of sustainability of community development programmes in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(3), 47–57.
- Adeleke, I. O. (2000). *Administration of higher education*. Sunray Press.
- Adger, C. T. (2001). School–community-based organization partnerships for language minority students' school success. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 6, 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327671ESPR0601_2
- Algoush, K. S. (2010). *Assessment of the relationship between involvement in the decision-making process and teachers' job satisfaction*. Open University, Malaysia.
- Amin, M. E. (2005). *Social science research: Conception, methodology and analysis*. Makerere University Press.
- Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H. A., Bean, J., Flaspohler, P., Boone, B., & Kwiatkowski, A. (2008). Community collaboration to improve school: Introducing a new model from Ohio. *Children & Schools*, 30, 161–172. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/30.3.161>
- Astor, A., Guerra, N., & Van Acker, R. (2010). How can we improve school safety research? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 69–78. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X10363511>
- Bacharach, S. B., Bamberger, P., Conley, S. C., & Bauer, S. (1990). The dimensionality of decision participation in educational organizations: The value of a multi-domain evaluative approach. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 26, 126–167.

- Bachelor, R. (1980). Human relations or human resources. In R. S. Dwivedi (Ed.), *Manpower management: An integrated approach to personnel management and labour relations* (pp. 1–10). Prentice Hall.
- Bademo, Y., & Tefera, B. F. (2016). Assessing the desired and actual levels of teachers' participation in decision making in secondary schools of Ethiopia. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 11(13), 1236–1242. <https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2016.2750>
- Baker, D. P., & LeTendre, G. K. (2019). *National differences, global connections: Conceptual frameworks for comparative education*. Stanford University Press.
- Baker, D. P., & Soden, R. (1998). The role of parent involvement in students' academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 27(4), 9–17.
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (9th ed.). Wiley.
- Barth, R. S. (2001). Teacher leader. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(6), 443–449.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Sage Publications.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Psychology Press.
- Beach, D. M., & Reinhartz, J. (2000). *Supervisory leadership: Focus on instruction*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Ben-Peretz, M. (1994). Teachers as curriculum makers (2nd ed.). *The International Encyclopaedia of Education*, 10, 6089–6092.
- Bertalanffy, K. L. von. (1968). *General system theory: Foundations, development, applications*. George Braziller.
- Blanchard, K., Hybels, B., & Hodges, P. (1999). *Leadership by the book*. William Morrow.
- Blank, M., Jacobson, R., & Melaville, A. (2012). *Achieving results through community school partnerships: How district and community leaders are building effective, sustainable relationships*. Center for American Progress.
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2000). Principals' perspectives on shared governance leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, 10(1), 9–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460001000102>
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1994). Looking for leadership: Another search party's report. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(1), 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X9430001006>
- Boyan, N. J. (1988). Describing and explaining administrative behavior. In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (pp. 1–14). Longman.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. L. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.
- Burrello, L., Hoffman, L., & Murray, L. (2005). *School leaders building capacity from within*. Corwin Press.
- Bush, T. (2011). *Theories of educational leadership and management*. SAGE Publications.
- Bush, T., & Heystek, J. (2003). School governance in South Africa. *Compare*, 33(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920302550>
- Caldwell, B. (2008). *Hayek's challenge*. University of Chicago Press.
- Caldwell, B. J., & Spinks, J. M. (1992). *Leading the self-managing school*. The Falmer Press.
- Carl, A. (1995). The “voice of the teacher” in curriculum development: A voice crying in the wilderness? *South African Journal of Education*, 25(4), 223–228. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v25n4a557>
- Chavkin, N. F., & Williams, D. L. (2015). *Family engagement in the digital age: Tools to strengthen your family-school partnership*. Harvard Education Press.
- Chen, Y. F., & Tjosvold, D. (2006). Participative leadership by American and Chinese managers in China: The role of relationships. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(8), 1727–1752. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00643.x>
- Cheng, Y. C., & Cheung, W. M. (2003). Profiles of multi-level self-management in schools. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 17(3), 100–115. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540310468668>
- Chinelo, D. O. (2007). Students’ and teachers’ participation in decision making: Impact on attitude to school work in Warri South LGA of Delta State. *An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*, 5(2), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v5i2.55496>
- Conley, S. (1991). Review of research on teacher participation in school decision making. *Review of Research in Education*, 17(1), 225–266. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X017001225>
- Conley, S. C., Schmidle, T., & Shedd, J. B. (1988). Teacher participation in the management of school systems. *Teachers College Record*, 90, 259–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146818809000302>

- Conway, J. (1984). The myth, mystery, and mastery of participative decision making in education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 20, 11–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X8402001002>
- Cook-Sather, A. (2006). Sound, presence, and power: “Student voice” in educational research and reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36(4), 359–390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-3870.2006.00356.x>
- Crum, K. S., Sherman, W. H., & Myran, S. (2009). Best practices of successful elementary school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 48(1), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231011015412>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v8n1.2000>
- Davies, B., & Davies, B. (2006). Developing a model for strategic leadership in schools. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 34(1), 121–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143206059542>
- Dempsey, D. (2020). The role of parents in school policy development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 58(2), 123–145. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2019-0055>
- Doran, C. F. (1999). Why forecasts fail: The limits and potential of forecasting in international relations and economics. *International Studies Review*, 1(2), 11–41. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.00002>
- Dudouet, V., & Lundström, S. (2016). *Post-war political settlements: From participatory transition processes to inclusive state-building and governance*. Berghof Foundation. Available
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6–11.
- Duke, K. E. (2005). *Principals’ practices regarding teacher participation in school decision making*. University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.
- Dwivedi, R. S. (1988). *Dynamics of human behaviour at work*. Oxford Publishing Ltd.
- Earthman, G. I. (2004). *Prioritizing capital investment in schools*. American Educational Research Association.
- Elmore, R. F. (2000). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Albert Shanker Institute.
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Harvard Education Press.

- Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Fonkeng, E. G., & Tamajong, E. V. (2009). *Secondary school administration and principalship* (2nd ed.). Presses Universitaires d'Afrique.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2002a). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16–20.
- Fullan, M. (2002b). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change*. Routledge.
- Furco, A. (2013). Legitimizing community engagement with K–12 schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88(5), 622–636. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2013.835180>
- Gardian, A., & Rathore, H. C. (2010). Teacher participation in the decision-making process: Reality and repercussions in Indian higher education. *Kamacha, Varanasi, India*, 40(5), 657–671.
- Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (2013). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Christopher-Gordon.
- Glickman, C. D. (2002). *Leadership for learning: How to help teachers succeed*. Corwin Press.
- Glickman, C. D. (2015). *Leading dynamic schools: How to create change in your school*. Corwin Press.
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2007). Collective efficacy beliefs: The role of trust and respect. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(3), 331–344. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230710748413>
- Griffin, G. A. (1995). Influence of shared decision making on school and classroom activity: Conversations with five teachers. *Elementary School Journal*, 96, 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1086/461846>
- Hargreaves, A. (2001). The emotional geographies of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1056–1080.
- achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740–763. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015362>
- Hogan, R., Curphy, G. J., & Hogan, J. (1999). What we know about leadership: Effectiveness and personality. In L. Orozco (Ed.), *Educational leadership*. Bellevue, WA: CourseWise.

- Keung, C. C. (2008). *Management practices for promoting shared decision making*. The Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Kirby, M. M., & DiPoala, M. F. (2011). Academic optimism and community engagement in urban schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(5), 542–562. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111112536>
- Kozleski, E. B., & Smith, A. (2009). The complexities of systems change in creating equity for students with disabilities in urban schools. *Urban Education*, 44(4), 427–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085908329665>
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). What we know about successful school leadership. *National College for School Leadership*.
- Leithwood, K., Anderson, S., Mascall, B., & Straus, T. (2010). School leaders' influences on student learning: The four paths. In T. Bush, L. Bell, & D. Middlewood (Eds.), *The principles of educational leadership and management* (pp. 33–39). London: Sage.
- Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). *Successful school leadership: What it is and how it influences pupil learning*. DfES Publications.
- Mbua, F. N. (2003). *Educational administration: Theory and practice*. Presprint.
- Mosoge, M. J., & Van der Westhuizen, P. C. (1998). School-based management: Implications for the new roles of principals and teachers. *Koers*, 63(1), 73–87. <https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v63i1.537>
- Mualuko, N. J., Simiyu, A. M., & Achoka, S. K. J. (2009). Improving decision making in schools through teacher participation. *Educational Research and Review*, 4(8), 391–397. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/ERR/article-full-text-pdf/490E1124144>
- Phillips, D., Bhojedat, J., Phillips, S., Henry, C., & Stewart-Fox, T. (2024). Exploring the readiness of schools for distributed leadership: Perspectives of private school teachers in Guyana. *Creative Education*, 15, 249–277. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2024.152020>
- Pounder, D. G. (1997). Teacher teams: Promoting teacher involvement and leadership in secondary schools. *High School Journal*, 80, 117–124. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.1997.0008>
- Spillane, J. P. (2006). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 70(3), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720608995912>
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027032000106726>

- UNESCO. (2005). *Teacher involvement in educational change*. Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Visscher, A. J., & Moolenaar, N. (2015). Leadership and decision-making in education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(4), 546-580.
- Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, 7(2), 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508400722004>
- Williamson, R., & Blackburn, B. (2018). Collaborating through shared decision making. *MiddleWeb Smart Brief*. USA.
- Ylimaki, R., & Jacobson, S. (2013). School leadership practice and preparation. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 51(1), 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231311291404>