

STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN EDUCATION IN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at structural reforms in Cameroon's education system, from a historical stand point. An attempt is made to situate the ideological underpinnings that have motivated reforms in the country for each of the historical epochs considered. In this paper ruralisation, bilingualism and harmonisation have been identified as crucial axes around which various types of reform endeavours in the content, pedagogy and management of education in Cameroon have been undertaken. Yet in all of these and similar reforms in other sectors of national life, outside influences have misdirected the trend of events putting forward objectives whose effects on the lives of the common man have been highly questionable. In significant ways outside prescriptions have disrupted progress of the system for development and even change. Until the government assumes its responsibility and demonstrates appropriate political will to see reforms in the context of Cameroon realities, both reactionary internal and unrealistic external factors will get on the way of progress in education.

INTRODUCTION

Structural reforms in any system strive to accommodate social, political and technological changes as a function of historical development. Such changes necessitate the re-adaptation of social services and their institutions so as to enable people meet with the demands of the changing times. The concept of structural reforms in this paper reflects administrative and pedagogical adjustments in education during each political epoch. In Africa and more precisely in Cameroon, reforms in education seem to lose sight of their historical base just as colonial education policies ignored and downgraded African cultural knowledge, pedagogical practices, including indigenous psychology that influenced

traditional education. There existed forms of education in traditional context with their own structure, whose main objective was to train and integrate the Cameroonian people into working population. The transformation processes of these traditional forms of educational functioning, during the colonial era almost totally lost their social, professional and pedagogical values .

The problems related to structural reforms in education in Cameroon could be traced back to the advent of evangelization for which schools existed to serve. Both the structures and content of the schools responded to the evangelization mission, without reflections on the needs and interests of the people or any considerations for what had existed. In the same manner in the colonial era, education served colonial interests, fostering colonial culture, politically, economically and socially. In post colonial era there emerged a people in Africa and Cameroon in particular, who are more critical and politically conscious. They had become aware of the potential of education as an extension of a political purpose, preserving not only the status quo but promoting change. In effect, education was seen as a political agent with colonial legacy.

Cameroon's educational system, like those of many colonised countries, has its origin in a consciously elitist colonial purpose. As observed ,economic colonialism was the central factor for the world order .It functioned well, based on the technological and psychological dependence of the third world, whose post colonial societies recognised and rejected dependence(Garforth, 1962). Education seems to have provided this liberating force, as these societies could reformulate their own purposes, organise their own means to ensure growth and development. Even with this effect, colonial educational structure was divorced from African settings. In a way this alienated African knowledge and systems of organisation and management, including their social support system from their educational practices. Structural reforms as well as responding to changing times is an awareness of the repercussion of colonial corollaries and assumption in the African education system. Nation- building required that the African culture be embedded in the process through education. But the colonial laws and practices subdued and usurped African cultural values even their languages. In the conduct of structural reforms Africans are struggling to re-institute the past they were obliged to abandon.

However, the political agenda of Cameroon shows a discernible progression, starting from some traditional African monarchical rule to missionary, colonial then dictatorship, subsequently democratic rule. At each point in time there has been a demand for a change in institutional arrangements to ensure the development of the African personality.

As far as the educational problems of the African continent as a whole and Cameroon in particular are concerned, they are the result of the choices made, which have always been seen in the context of their colonial setting. This setting is characterised by geographical and linguistic divisions and structures, content, direction and ideas. Evolution of education in the continent as a whole responded to an unremitting growth of demand in society for education to ensure equity. However, inherent in the post-colonial communities are inequalities in many aspects. This point is linked to the attitude of a world that seems to accept these inequalities and an educational system that perpetuates such attitudes. The focus on equity is a political counter force towards a meaningful change.

Investing in education is ensuring human resource development particularly in a society which has moved from pre-colonial, colonial, and post colonial eras as it shares in global educational philosophy in a multi cultural heritage, (Cameroonian, German, English and French). Cameroon like the rest of the developing nations strives to ensure that her citizens become productive contributors to a global community. To achieve this, there has been various attempts to reform the education system. In this light the former president of Cameroon (Ahmadou Ahidjo) contended that education reform with its dual objectives of seeking a content befitting national realities and pedagogical practices remained one of the main concerns of Cameroon (Nfor Gwei, 1975). To support the vital role of education and the need for reforms, Plato (1982) illustrated in many of his dialogues such as, *The Republic*, *The Symposium* and *The Gorgias* that education is growth. Yet as instrument for development, Cameroon schools and Universities continue to respond more and more to colonialism rather than to a growth in context. This continuous response of school to imperialism questions the very basis of educational structures to address national needs.

It is clear that education in absolute terms is considered the driving force in social and economic progress. Such progress cannot be achieved except Cameroon's education and training institutions at all levels place the highest emphasis on quality education and training to ensure effective human resource development.

The revolution in communication and information technologies plays its part in forcing the educational system of Cameroon to shift from traditional ways of educating and training, to more effective and modern methods and practices. Reforms set out to upgrade the quality of education in order to expand their activities, provide for continuing education and life long learning.

For education to serve as key to human development its process must develop linkages with activities in cultural, social, economic, as

well as political domains. The policy nexus to which education and training systems are based are critical. Structural changes in the market economy accompanied by concurrent changes in social and demographic structures, developments in agriculture, health, and industrial sectors demand a bold and dynamic policy for human resource development.

The union between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon necessitated the policy of Bilingualism to be instituted. Bilingualism generated a new kind of curriculum organisation, representing a new approach to education that should reflect a complex process of social change to which it contributes in turn. The preservation of bilingualism became vital for the natural survival, unity and integration of the country. Special bilingual schools were opened. But the critique today contends that these institutions do not serve the function for which they were created. They operate as two institutions in one campus. Section 11 of the law of April 1998 firmly states that the state shall institute bilingualism in all levels of education as a factor of national unity and integration.

It is clear that structural reforms have always responded to needs other than that of the people, they set out to serve. The rest of the paper describes the evolution of Cameroon educational system and looks at aspects of reforms at each stages in the political life of the Nation and finally attempts to draw tentative conclusions.

BACKGROUND

Geographically, Cameroon's borders extend from lake Chad to the extreme end of the Gulf of Guinea, between latitudes two degree north and longitudes nine degrees east and sixteen degrees east of the Greenwich Meridian (UNESCO, 1995, DHS, 1991). She is described as Africa in miniature. The land surface is calculated at about 475.000 square kilometres, is covered by diverse landscapes, fauna and flora (UNESCO, 1995). The population has grown tremendously. It was estimated in 1991 to be 12.600.000 (DHS, 1991). By 1993 and 1997, it was estimated at 13 million and 14,100,000 million respectively (UNDP, Development and Human Report 1998) of which 56% are below 20 years of age (UNESCO 1995). Further composition shows that 52% of the population are female and 48% male. The annual growth rate is 3%. The Francophones constitute 71% while the Anglophones make up the remaining 21%. Much of the population is rural (54.7%), while 45.3% is urban.

It's economic potential ranks her among the intermediate states in Africa, with a per capita gross domestic product of 820 US dollars in

1992 . As noted by UNESCO (1995), economic growth had been proceeding normally since the 1960's .The growth was reflected in all aspects of life in the country, particularly the educational sector until the economic crisis in the 1980's ushered in a significant slow- down. Cameroon's major economic activity is agriculture. Her main exports are cocoa, coffee, rubber, cotton banana, petrol timber and aluminium.

Cameroon , a former German colony annexed in 1884, became two mandated territories governed by France and Great Britain, under the supervision of the League of Nations and later became trusteeships under the United Nations. After Independence in 1960 for French Cameroon and 1961 for British Cameroon, both sectors were reunified under a Federal system of government. Later through a referendum in 1972 a unitary government was formed under the United Republic and the Republic instituted in 1985 after the Bamenda Congress of the ruling Cameroon's People Democratic Movement(CPDM) held in the same year.

From the foregoing account, Cameroon appears to be a unique country on the African continent given her colonial experiences and inherent nature. Such singularity derives from her diversities which are religious, geographical, cultural, linguistic and specifically, her bilingualism in English and French. Official bilingualism in Cameroon presents problems with regards to the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Furthermore ,English and French which do not have linguistic potentials to transmit cultural values and ethics are the communicative instruments used in all schools, except Koranic ones. The country has a peculiar linguistic diversity (more than 230 languages).

Evidently, her colonial and contemporary socio- political and linguistic experiences are nowhere replicated on the continent. These diversities impinge on aspects of education. Cameroon is divided into ten administrative provinces, within certain geographical groups. In spite of internal differences in each of these geographical groups, there exist major similarities in technology, economy and politics.

The rapid expansion of the educational system to match the growing youth population and the demand for education, seems to have eroded quality at all levels. In rapidly changing social and economic conditions in Cameroon, there has always been a need to revisit the educational offerings at all levels. Evidently, the changing political situation in Cameroon brought about structural changes. For a fuller understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of structural adjustment in the educational system of Cameroon to accommodate changing political and socio-cultural circumstances, three fairly distinct periods are

identified to serve as a frame work for the ensuing discourse. These are: (a) pre-colonial, (b) colonial and © post colonial

(A). PRE-COLONIAL : THE MISSIONARIES (1844-1884)

Early Europeans in Cameroon had two main objectives: Trading and Evangelization. The second of these objectives used education as the main instrument to spread the gospel. Formal education was therefore introduced in Cameroon by missionaries in 1844, with the first primary school opened in Bimbia(Jackson, 1967). The attendance was voluntary. The natives were taught new skills and the acquisition of knowledge aimed at changing attitudes. Amin (1997) in his study on the demand for primary education, argued that these mission schools in Cameroon were predominantly British oriented and became influential in the society. By the time of the German annexion of Cameroon in 1884, there were fifteen primary schools, with an enrolment of 368 pupils The schools were run by London Baptist Missionary Society(Aloangamo, 1978).

(B). COLONIAL ERA, 1884-1960

In this section we shall examine structural reforms in the context of each colonial culture (German, French and British) within all the levels of education.

German Rule 1884-1916

Initially, the German administration was not enthusiastic about expanding education. The effort was more in the hands of private merchants. Schools were opened in Douala(1887, 1890), Victoria(1897, 1897), Garoua (1906) and Yaounde (1908). In 1910 an agricultural school was opened in Limbe. During these early years the curriculum was limited to the teaching of the 3Rs including religious knowledge and the German language. The education Law of April 1910 (Ngoh,1988)addressed many issues. This paper refers to four: (1) German to be the only medium of instruction in schools. The law further indicated where the Douala language may be used thus restricting the use of mother tongue in schools. (2) The programme for primary schools stipulated minimum knowledge to be acquired and the duration of period, which was five years. (3) At the elementary level, education was compulsory. (4) Subventions were given to mission schools, with the condition that, they expand the German language and culture. In addition to all these, to promote the German colonial policy in Cameroon, Cameroonians were sent for further studies in Germany. Amin (1997) citing Aloangamo(1978), states that, at the dawn of the first world war in 1914, there were 531 primary schools with an enrolment figure, of 34,117 pupils. The few middle schools that existed could be attributed the status of secondary education.

French Rule : 1914-1960

French colonial education policy for Africa had one major focus: assimilation. The aim of the policy was to replace the African culture with French culture, language and civilisation. The policy of assimilation favoured a highly centralised system of administration. Schools set up in Africa were centrally controlled from France. This implies that the structure of the programmes in terms of content, didactic practices, examination and certification were patterned along what holds in France.

In 1924 French language was the only language of instruction while local languages were prohibited. However education was mainly in hands of missionaries.

Primary Level

Education at this level served two functions: to prepare children for secondary education and to provide basic education for the masses. These functions led to the provision of two types of curriculum: A metropolitan curriculum and a curriculum adapted to the Cameroonian context. From 1916 primary education expanded. By 1945 the duration of primary education was six years. Children were not allowed to repeat more than twice during the primary school years. The curriculum overall focus on France's contribution to civilisation. The primary schools were categorised in levels, where the first level was offered at the village schools and no certificate awarded. Entry age was six years but in 1952 the directors of education in black Africa agreed to reduce the school age to three or four years. Cameroon rejected this decision because of the effect on quality. The expansion and institution of free primary education to increase enrolment was a major consideration of the second fourth year development plan launch in 1953. Setting up the Ministry of National Education 1957 was to improve on the quality of education, to increase opportunities especially for girls and the Northern Cameroon.

At the dawn of independence as presented in table 1 French Cameroon had registered about 151635 pupils in 977 government primary schools.

Table 1. Enrolment in French Primary Schools 1916-1960

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1947	137	18600
1951	203	28594
1956	583	79363
1961	977	151635

Secondary Level.

Table 1.1 presents secondary school enrolment during the colonial era in French Cameroon.

Table 1.1 Enrolment in Secondary schools

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1947	3	704
1951	3	908
1956	5	1479
1961	20	4742

Few secondary schools existed during this period as shown on the table. The programmes and structure were modelled along patterns used in France. The curriculum was broad and is some how what still obtains today. The Baccalaureate was marked in France. We observe from the statistics presented above that at independence the increase in secondary school enrolment ties with earlier argument that Africans had become aware of the liberating effect of education. This necessitates more effort to reform the system.

British Rule 1916-1961

British colonial policy was paternalistic. To an extent this policy prepared Cameroonians in a limited way to share in national development. Education policy aimed at training temporary civil servants for colonial exploitation at various circumstances (Ngho, 1988). The Native Administration saw education as serving traditional people and preserving the culture. The British administration was more decentralised and education was dictated by British policy for Nigeria.

Primary Level

In spite of the British colonial educational orientations, Ngho (1988) points out that education was not vigorously pursued by the British colonial administration in the British Cameroon. There existed partnership in the provision of primary education (the British, Missionaries and Native Administration). Before 1932 primary education was nine years but this was changed to eight years. The curriculum and school structure reflected more the British system. Vernacular was prohibited only in government schools because children come from different linguistic backgrounds. Education was free at the infant level. Primary schools prepared for the Standard Six Certificate marking the end of the primary school. There is marked difference between enrolment in French and British Cameroon. This depicts the differences in their colonial policies relating to development. Table 2 presents statistics for the level.

Table 2 Enrolment in Primary schools.

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1947	229	25.200
1951	266	28.960
1956	385	46.754
1961	499	86.257

The independent year showed a marked increase in enrolment and number of schools. Table 2.1 reflects this same situation.

Secondary Level

Table 2.1 Enrolment in secondary schools

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1947	1	130
1951	2	322
1956	3	468
1961	6	903

Up to 1939 there was no secondary school in British Cameroon. Most students went Nigeria for secondary education. The demand for secondary education increased in 1938. All the secondary schools were opened by missionaries. The schools followed the Cambridge School Certificate and West African School Certificate syllabi. The course was for five years but in some cases six years. The programmes were very classic.

C). POST COLONIAL ERA 1961-1999

Federal Government 1960-1972 Period

The years of Federation (1960- 1972) marked a period for the growth of a national system of education including advances in higher education. There was the growing awareness about the importance of quality education not only for individual development but for the development and progress of the national economy. Reform endeavours in Cameroon assumed different strategies. The essence of these various reforms was to restructure primary ,secondary and tertiary education, in order to redefine educational policies so as to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing world. Issues that necessitated reform focus on the concerns of supply and demand that touch on the subject of employment and social development .In effect, it addressed the professionalisation of educational offerings . For this reason much emphasis was placed on ruralisation of education in Cameroon. Tables 3 and 3.1 illustrate the growing number of children entering primary and

secondary education in the two States during the first decade after independence.

Table 3 Enrolment in Primary schools

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1970	1889	411537
1971	2178	485482
1972	2242	511789

Table 3.1 Enrolment in secondary schools

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1970		19139
1971	48	23088
1972	54	26604

During the early independence years, the country had a federal government whereby each system of education maintained its own colonial culture. The French more than the Germans had a highly centralised administration. But the British allowed some degree of autonomy. The centralised (French) and the decentralised (British) administrative procedures clearly illustrate a great difference between the British and French systems of education. Harmonisation of two such systems presents structural and organisational problems. The Federal law No 63/13 of June 1963 organising secondary education stipulated the first three years for general education and last two for academic specification. This law did not apply to Francophone schools. The Rural Artisan and Home Economic Centres status is not quite clear. The attachment to Primary and Secondary Education by law No 63/13 of 19 June 1963 and No 63/MC/ of 3 July 1963 organising primary education, as well as General and Technical Education did not clearly define the status of the course (FORUM, 1995).

Higher Education

The Federal university of Cameroon was created by decree No 62-DF-289 of 26th July in 1962.

Table, 3.2 Enrolment at the University of Yaounde.

ERA	YEAR	UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE	UNIVERSITY CENTRES
Federal	1962	600	-----
	1970	7000	-----

The Federal era was the starting point of critical union between many different cultures. It is evident that, the diversities in Cameroon's

colonial and cultural inheritance extends to its school systems. Two systems of education exist within two different sets of structures, programme, and examination practices. In terms of structure, the Anglophone system could be described as one based on a 7-5-2 system (i.e. seven years of primary school, five years of first cycle secondary school and two years of high school). The Francophone system on the other hand, has a 6-4-3 system (i.e. six years of primary school, four years of first cycle secondary and three years of second cycle secondary school). In both systems, the duration of study in technical colleges is the same and is based on a 4-3 progression (i.e. four years of first cycle and three years second cycle).

The entrants are primary school graduates who, in addition, are expected to sit and pass a competitive common entrance examination. Apart from the conventional secondary and technical schools, there is a third category of post primary institutions in the two systems known as rural artisan and home economic centres, (section artisanale rurale et section menagere, abbreviated SAR/SM in French). This school is professionally oriented. The change to the United Republic reinforced the need for reforms that looks at issues critical for national unity.

Evaluation and certification at the end of each level of education for the two systems require children to write the certificate examination specific to their system of examination. At the primary level the Anglophone write the First School Leaving Certificate examination while the Francophones write the equivalent known in French as Certificat Etude Primaires Elementaires (CEPE). For the first cycle and second cycles of secondary education, the Anglophones write the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (GCE «O» levels) and General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE «A» levels). The Francophones for the first cycle write the Brevet d' Etudes Premier Cycle (BEPC) and for the second cycle they write the Baccalaureate (BAC). For technical education both Anglophones and Francophones write the same certificate examination known as the Certificate of Professional Aptitude (CAP). The BAC or Brevet de Technicien is written at the end of the second cycle in technical education. Anglophone can also write the London G.C.E «O» and «A» levels including Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Chamber of Commerce and City and Guilds Certificate examinations offered in London. Added to the differences of structure and therefore of their basic qualifications, is a closely associated status difference which is of singular significance in its effect on perceptions of pupils, teachers and the public at large. The problem here is that of cultural conflict in which the dominant group interprets majority to mean quality. The system of education in Cameroon is highly examination oriented. This greatly influences teaching and learning and is the basis for making value statements about educational outcomes.

Ruralisation of Education A Major Reform Issue for the Era.

Given that 98% of the geographical space of Cameroon is used for Agriculture, it is clear from education provisions that the curriculum content and methods do not reflect the realities of Cameroon. Relevance of education was crucial for this policy and the need for reform had become both political and social, because of high rates of rural exodus .

The high unemployment emerging was also blamed on the ill-adapted curriculum that, deviates from developmental priorities, that do not address self -reliant skills. Even subjects such as arts, craft and agricultural activities are not emphasised. In most cases they are not found on the timetable. Giving education a rural dimension in policy issue led initially to the creation of a rurally oriented primary teacher training institute (abbreviated in French as ENIR) in 1967. This structure later known as rurally oriented applied education or curriculum development (abbreviated IPAR in French)centre was created in Yaounde in 1969 and in Buea in 1974. Experimental schools were set up, where an integrated and participatory approaches to the curriculum and teaching were adopted through agricultural activities. For reasons not clear this dimension for restructuring education has been slow in applying its results or achieving its goals.

UNITED REPUBLIC 1972- 1984

The reinforcement of national cohesion and the examination of issues related to the relevance of educational offerings, marked the United Republic era(1972-1984) and its focus on critical educational concerns such as ruralisation, bilingualism and harmonisation. The impact of the political option of National Unity, given the fragmentation of the nation, political cohesion became the pre-modial objective of bilingualism. Tables 4 and 4.1 throws light on the enrolment situation in the school system at he period.

Table 4 Enrolment in Primary schools

YEAR	No of Schools	Enrolment
1974	2383	594914
1976	2676	662519
1978	3078	798680
1980	3366	878686
1984	4102	1077340

Table 4.1 Enrolment in Secondary General

Year	No of Schools	Enrolment
1974	61	37 609

1976		56 992
1978	122	77 265
1980	133	88 964
1984	182	125 950

Higher Education

Table 4.2 Enrolment in Higher Education Institution

ERA	YEAR	UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE	UNIVERSITY CENTRES
United Republic	1980 -1984	18000	7340

In its early beginnings ,Higher education comprised only the University of Yaounde ,subsequently with four university centres The functions of the University centres were limited to professional education, consequently restricting the intake in each case.

Around the 80's the student population increased by an annual growth rate of 12.5%(June, 1997). The steady increase in the student enrolment at the university faculties was not related to the recruitment of teachers. The lecturer factor in terms of number and quality created further problems. Increasingly the problem of infrastructure became acute even with investment made on the construction of a computer centre , a second restaurant and an extension of the library.

By the end of the 1980's only 1300 students qualified with a degree of some sort. Such poor results reflect the inadequacy of Education provision including students assumption of responsibility in their education. Even at this early stage, the problem of higher education can be seen in the following dimension.

The poor link between university and industry, poor quality teaching, rapid increase in student population, inadequate infrastructure and teaching, considerable financial expenditure on scholarships and welfare service and above all inadequate university management . The non payment of fees by university students indicating free university education made most students not to be serious. The wastage rate was enormous even the evaluation system and certification procedure necessitated a revisit because of the absence of a well defined systematic process.

THE REPUBLIC 1984- 1999

The era of the Republic attempted to ensure efficiency and relevance through de-concentration, good management of pedagogic

issues, democratisation, partnership and to an extent, decentralisation. Tables 5 and 5.1 show the enrolment situation of the school system for the Republic decade.

Table 5 Enrolment in Primary Schools

YEAR	Nursery	Primary
1990	92,966	1,939,908
1993	92,683	1,920,985
1995	70,202	1,840,995
1997	87,318	1,931,129

Table 5.1 Enrolment in Secondary Levels

YEAR	Sec. Technical	Sec. General
1990	89,702	36,7426
1993	102,134	446,987
1995	96,397	450, 799
1997	108,020	500 222

From the aforementioned, evidently the external and internal efficiency of the Cameroon Education system is weak. At both primary and secondary levels only, a small proportion of children actually complete with a certificate of some sort at each level. At the primary level by age ten to eleven years, over 40% (MINEDUC) of the children have either deserted school or are attending irregularly. The repetition rate is also high. At the secondary level the failure rate in examinations has been estimated at 70% (MINEDUC, 1989) for general education and 68% (MINEDUC, 1989) for technical and vocational education. The pass rate in the school system were 30% and 32% respectively for the different levels. In effect, system whereby standards and quality are judged by percentage pass in examination, requires rethinking of its educational goals. On this account we raise questions on the following: a pedagogy that encourages didactic teaching which focuses more on reproduction than production: a system that is characterised by high drop out rates, irregular attendance of many of its pupils, high repetition and failure rates (World bank studies 1983/84) and poor quality teaching and irrelevant curriculum content material (Tchombe 1997: p 46). School programmes do not relate to geo and socio-historical circumstances of life at all levels and as such, pupils and graduates are not well prepared to begin life.

As observed therefore reunification brought two cultures which were driven apart by language, legal practices, systems of education in all its forms and practices. For this reason from 1962 to 1999 issues troubling Cameroon's education system included harmonisation, bilingualism, and

ruralisation . Resolving these issues was at the heart of the political concerns of national unity and integration.

The Critical Issue : Harmonisation

Harmonisation is a strategy whose controlling purpose was essentially conceived to blend the educational practices of Francophones and Anglophones, without necessarily creating a monolithic system. In this strategy certain aspects of the curriculum or syllabuses at the primary and secondary school levels were to have the same content but taught in conformity in the method and procedures that define each of the two existing systems. The pedagogical assumption here is that content no matter the medium of instruction used is universal and consequently subject to standardisation. A number of imponderables, however, have militated against the realisation of the harmonisation objectives of the school system. Differences in the examination systems at secondary level in particular constitute a major obstacle while the Francophones have a group certificate system, the Anglophones have a single subject certificate. Different examination schemes are used by the two systems. Differences also exist in the sequencing of subjects for instructions in the number of years in each cycle of schooling and an inherent attitudes towards education as a process in human development. The two education systems have consequently continued to co-exist not in a symbiotic sense but in an unabated pedagogical atmosphere of mutual suspicion. At the university level, harmonisation has never been a critical issue as each university is modelled on a specific system, even though they are expected to ensure that the programmes reflect the Cameroon context.

The issue of harmonisation is crucial for this era and difficult to resolve. Two major strategies were therefore used to ensure a relevant and meaningful co-existence: The Education Forum of 1995 and the Law of 1998. Law No.98/004/ of 14th April 1998 in its first chapter organised the educational system of Cameroon .In section 14, it states that the organisation and control of Education at all levels shall be the duty of the state .In section 15 it postulates that:

- 1) The educational system shall be organised into two sub -systems :The English speaking sub- system and the French speaking sub- system, thereby reaffirming our national option for biculturalism.
- 2) The above mentioned educational sub- systems shall co-exist, each preserving its specific method of evaluation and award of certificates.

Harmonisation of the two systems is limited to structural aspects in terms of the duration of the courses. Both systems start with nursery education that lasts for two years ,where children enter at the age of 4 years and graduate at the age of 6 years .Primary Education for

both systems extends for six years indicating a reduction of one year from the Anglophone system, that used to be seven years.

Secondary education remains seven years but with a structure common to both systems. The first cycle has an observation sub-cycle of two years with common core syllabus and an orientation sub-cycle of three years of general or technical education. This responds to an extent to the 1963 law. The second cycle is two years for general and technical education, while the probatoire is not focused.

The organisation of the first cycle offers opportunities for an education that prepares children for living. More especially the law emphasised the professionalisation of courses as argued in Section 16.3 and 17.3 respectively, that practical training shall be provided to students in vocational colleges and high schools, on the basis of the courses they choose. In addition to the above offerings post primary education maintained two years, while teacher training for primary schools is two and three years respectively. Training primary teachers in research is a new dimension in the programmes.

As pointed out by the FORUM for education (1995), the organisation of the academic year is not calculated in terms of number of hours and lessons taught. This presupposes (giving the focus on examination) that, the curricula is never covered, and even if it is, there is always a rush consequently, poor teaching and poor results. There is the held view that, even the holiday schedule still reflects the colonial system. Section 22(1) of the new law on education states that the school year shall comprise at least 36 weeks of effective classes (2) The educational regime shall comprise study periods and holiday periods. Section 21 contends that, among other concerns the national school calendar shall be laid down by statutory instruments.

Other than promotion examinations that are carried out in schools, most of the end of course and common entrance examinations are centrally organised by the Ministry of National education. However recently two examination boards were created General Certificate of Education (GCE) board for the English examinations and the Baccalaureate board for the French examinations. The critical concern at this point is the need for harmonisation of criteria for making decisions and the boards being furnished with adequate material, human and financial resources to render them more effective.

The problem of harmonising the two systems of education is real. However Government's stand to allow each system operate independently can only be effective, if both systems are accorded the same value and status.

Access and Participation

The Addis- Ababa conference of African Ministers of National Education of 1961 instituted a hallmark in the initiation of a policy for universal primary education in post-colonial era. In addition to these ventures the issue of the democratisation of Education, to ensure equity of access was addressed critically by government's effort in opening many nursery, primary, secondary and teacher training colleges in the country. Roughly 11.9% of the national budget was allocated each year to education and much of this was spent on primary education.

The economic crisis of 1987 had a great effect on the Education sector .Enrolment dropped by 2.3% between 1990 and 1994, and the training of teachers slowed down (UNESCO, 1995).

However the FORUM (1995) recommended that government dedicate 20% of its budget to education and 20% of this should in turn be allocated to basic education as previewed at the Copenhagen summit on social development in 1995. In addition to this view the creation of a National Education Fund was suggested, whose sources would come from fees, education tax and others .This argument at one time a practice in former West Cameroon system, was not accepted as the existing Credit Foncier tax is not accounted for.

Besides, the FORUM (1995) advocated that the local communities and councils invest in education. School boards were created to help with the management of Parent Teacher Association(PTA) resources. The creation of a board by government to manage parents voluntary contributions to their children's education was not appreciated. The need for transparency in financial management necessitated this new strategy. Besides the Law of 1998 introduced the new concept of the educational community discussed in section 32 and 33 of the law. In section 32;(1) the law previewed that the educational community shall comprise all individuals and corporate bodies that contribute towards the functioning, development and prestige of the school.

Higher Education

University enrolment increased also during the era of the Republic as presented in table 6.

Table 6 Enrolment at University of Yaounde 1990-1995

ERA	YEAR	UNIVERSITY	
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		OF YAOUNDE	
The Republic	1990	20718	
	1991	23321	
	1992	25169	
	1993	16455	
	1994	17553	
	1995	17524	

Prior to 1993, the university was solely responsible for financing higher education with no real politics for teaching and training of the youths. The state also offers scholarships to all students attending the university but lacked the structure for the checks and balances on students input. Some if not most students before 1993 found it more comfortable to take five to six years doing a degree, because their scholarships were assured. The return value was poor as evident in absenteeism, repetition and high failure rate, since government focused so much on social services of the university. This was detrimental to the mission of the university which was teaching, training and research. Such situation necessitates a redefinition of the profiles of both lecturers and students including the mission and goals of the university.

Resolving the problems of higher education necessitate a focus on structural reforms on de-concentration of the teaching at the faculties. It was also necessary to professionalise courses by the integration of higher education into the economic sphere, offering of intermediate and senior- intermediate courses, instituting structures for the orientation of students and appropriate administrative and evaluation procedures.

Decree no 93/026 of 19th January 1993 set out to reform the university of Cameroon addressing both internal and external efficiency. Six universities were created by the transformation of five university centres into full fledged universities. Among the issues that were addressed were encouragement of: (a) participation of the different partners in the management and financing of the institution, (b) more autonomy in academic and administrative issues, (c) the professionalisation of university education, (d) de-concentration and decentralisation and (e) more inter university and international co-operation. An examination of table 6 shows a reducing trend in enrolment after the reforms at the university in 1993.

The creation of many universities responded to the critical concern of the de-congestion of the University of Yaounde. The argument for the reform was that with the six universities both academic

and pedagogic affairs will be spread to the different campuses. The spread to other universities necessitated more infrastructure and teachers. In actual fact de-concentration was within the area, also of administrative management. The reform advocated for more efficient management of the new structures. The most difficult issue is that some lecturers are leaving their posts for better positions outside the country and others are being appointed to high posts in administration. In a way, it also has an adverse effect in the number of efficient teachers around.

The introduction of fees (50, 000 francs cfa per year) improved the financial situation of the universities although the centralisation of the administration restricts the use of the funds for the different institutions.

Addressing internal and external efficiency of the university system raised concerns about the evaluation procedure. Unfortunately the new system of evaluation was instituted without any orientations of the teaching staff. Only the university of Buea created along the Anglo Saxon model use the credit system which is well mastered. The problem facing the other five universities is that attempts to deliberate examinations on module system is unacceptable as teaching has, in some cases, not been conducted based on the model. More studies are under way to institute teaching based on a module system of evaluation.

Lessons To Be Learned For Future Orientations

In a historical sense the changing needs of Cameroon at each political period have been addressed through education. In recent times education is seen as a chemical crucible for blending all the ingredients that will forge a united, consolidated Cameroon. Implicit in all the process of adaptation at each point in time has been an ideological base that has influenced all structural reforms particularly during the era of the United Republic. The main ideologies were ruralisation, bilingualism, and harmonisation.

Ruralisation of education, though favoured by UNESCO and United Nations development programmes, did not meet with the approval of Cameroonians, especially parents. While Western values of education is seen as synonymous with social mobility, rural values did not convey to parents the notion of elitism and affluence. They suggest social reproduction and continuity of their kind. However, the objective of ruralisation would have met the approval of Cameroonians and perhaps succeeded, if it had replaced the objectives of colonial curricula with a more nationalist curricula. The ruralisation ideology conveyed a retrogressive view particularly when it was perceived that ruralisation was almost synonymous with the adaptation of education to the actual conditions of Cameroon which is essentially agricultural and consequently oriented at the perpetuation of poverty and misery. While we do appreciate the concern for functionality and relevance, it is

also necessary that new structures in reform bring about real institutional growth and advancement . If the conception of ruralisation was accompanied by other inputs intended to improve the quality of rural life (e.g. potable water supply, good access roads, etc) this would have been considered positive for national development.

Bilingualism, was an essential ideology whose potential was to serve national unity and integration. Yet we observed in its early stages the absence of equity in focus. The preparation of teachers to teach English to Francophones is well organised even though in the field they meet with resistance, this is not the case for the teaching of French to Anglophones who are very willing to learn French in order to survive. The emphasis on the teaching of French connotes assimilation than unity and integration. The instrument to put bilingualism in place need not discriminate between the two languages for it is in the interest of Cameroon that she be truly bilingual with an educational system as the main instrument to foster its growth .

Harmonisation was not uniformisation. Anglophones , the minority group saw this attempt as a process of assimilation . For the two Camerouns to function as one there is need for adaptation. The harmonisation process has not succeeded because Cameroon relies much on outside interventions. It is about time we assume responsibility in directing our educational system. Experience with World Bank structural adjustment programmes as implemented in education sector has clearly demonstrated that in Cameroon, there is quite often a mismatch between outside prescriptions and the logic of the actual context of operation. With the advent of structural adjustment, the World Bank prescribed the closing down of teacher education. It is almost a truism that no reforms in education can succeed without teachers as they are at heart of all education endeavours. The negative effect of that policy has been a drastic shortage of teachers in the school system principally at the primary level. This shortage is further accentuated by the fact that retired teachers or those dead are not being replaced. In the same light a recent World Bank study on Teacher Education (Tambo Leke & Tchombe, 1998) made case for initial training. The World bank was more of the opinion that this was too expensive and that school -based teacher education would be more cost - effective. From a purely economic point of view the argument may hold. But the argument here is that pedagogical and personal values in initial training and education of teachers can in no way be provided at School-Based training programmes. The quality and quantity of content, research and didactics skills offered are enormous.

The World Declaration in Jomtiem Thailand in March 1990 raised the issues of Education for All and partnership in education. Countries vary in how the views are exploited. To attain the goal of Education for

All teachers are need. Furthermore it is far more better to provide free basic education than free University education particularly when there are no job opportunities, but if a country can afford both why not.

The new law for education cited in this work is clear in its letter whereby the identity of each system is maintained. Yet to maintain unity the spirit of the law should ensure a mutual reciprocal relationship whereby each system can learn from the other gradually enriching the Cameroon system of education.

CONCLUSION

To ensure that education in Cameroon attains its function to mould, direct and consequently change society ,certain factors have been addressed in time and space. From 1962 to 1995 several attempts were made to reform issues troubling Cameroon's education systems.

Ruralisation has been the concern of primary education. The essence has been to ensure relevance, instituting reliance skills and reduction of rural-urban exodus. Democratisation clearly means equity and access. Increase in school enrolment was facilitated as schools were brought closer to the pupils. In a way the issue of de-concentration enhanced pedagogical and administrative management in the schools and universities by the creation of more schools and universities. A move that set out to reduce large class sizes of most of our schools and universities. We further observed the call for decentralisation as opposed to the heavily centralised system of administration and management of the school system at all levels. Since the central administration directs most of the everyday activities of the school system, there exist many bottle necks, that obstruct the initiatives, autonomy ,innovation and smooth running of the various institutions. This slows down the decision making process and action. To an extent it blocks the process of accountability. We observed that because of the heavy centralisation further use of skills like discernment ,discrimination, and insights necessary for good management and direction of activities are absent. In a way ,when management and administration do not allow for flexibility in partnership and collaborative endeavours, there is the absence of trust and the ability to ensure sustainable action. The silent conflicting issues creating a block are the two inherited colonial systems of administration, that are competing without taking cognisance of the specificity of the nature and potentials of the Cameroon context .

Cameroon is ethnically diverse and high in her political agenda is nation building in order to ensure national unity ,integration and above all forge a truly national identity. The process of nation building is ongoing. Cameroon requires its own identity. It is for this reason that most of the newly created universities attempt to adopt a bilingual system most especially at the University of Yaounde 1. The university

of Buea is strictly an Anglo Saxon model, while the one in Ngaoundere is Francophone. Though each university is independent they are all centrally administered by the Ministry of higher education and are accountable to the Minister of higher education. With academic freedom at the universities there is more relatedness with the situation in the country as a whole. The co-existence of both Anglophone and Francophone systems have arrived at a conclusive destination, whereby both have accepted that there cannot be total harmonisation.

Maintaining the official French and English bilingualism ,with a gradual introduction of national languages conforms with the option of ensuring national unity and linking education with the culture. The reforms in education have been addressed at all levels but there is still the need to adopt a strategy for the mobilisation of resources which are economically viable and politically feasible to sustain the reforms. At the centre of the issues are concerns related to political commitment, sharing of responsibilities and the diversification of resources.

The prime objective of educational reform in Cameroon is to enhance uniformity of purpose in a diverse cultural context .Furthermore, it looks at student's achievement by improving educational quality and school effectiveness, increasing the relevance of education to current needs and future challenges, facing the country and the global context .In this regard reforms address structures as well as content . Educational environment needs to be transformed into a dynamic creative environment that provides for constructive interpersonal communication ,problem solving and consensual decision making. Consensus that addresses governance, civic society and dialogue. These should encourage the development of critical thinking tempered by humanitarian values as well as scientific and artistic creativity, social responsibility and effective communication skills. Educational reform aims generally at enhancing critical thinking and other higher cognitive capabilities including emotions necessary for changing society.

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