

# **Government Regulatory Framework and University Management**

*The case of the University of Buea*

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### **Abstract**

Community demands with respect to higher education have continued to grow inversely to governmental support (financial, legal and political). This is induced by local and global reform changes with regards to the expectations of higher education institutions. University management is thus in a state of flux. It has to operate within the confines of the state's regulatory framework, and at the same time meet the expectations of other stakeholders (students, industries, companies etc). This study scrutinizes the dynamics in the relationship between the state and public higher education institutions, and between higher education and its environment (other stakeholders). It attempts an assessment of the consequences of these relationships on the management of higher education in Cameroon.

A qualitative approach has been used in the study. Data was collected using two principal methods. Open ended Semi-structured interviews were conducted with some personnel of the HE ministry and the University of Buea. Some students of the university and other stakeholders were also interviewed. For working personnel, we targeted those directly involved in institutional and administrative matters while the selection of students was randomly done. HE policy documents and other secondary sources (published and unpublished) were used. The documents and texts were reviewed and analysed in line with interview responses. We used the analytic induction framework, to analyse and interpret our data.

The study reveals that an effective, mutual and positive relationship between the management of higher education in Cameroon and its stakeholders (government and others) would make an interesting contribution towards socio-cultural, economic and political progress of the country. Its findings demonstrate that insufficient university funding is one of the main reasons why university management can not meet the expectations of its stakeholders. This has imposed some sort of convergent (common) model of management behaviour on the higher education system in Cameroon in spite of the imposing and diverse global trends in the management of HEIs. The study therefore suggests that government should put in place more flexible educational and political reforms that should attract much needed donor funding.

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**DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated respectively to my sons and de facto wife: Afumbom Kafaeyn Yong Yuh, Kasina Mimbemsi Yuh and Geraldine Nchung Kebei. Words can never be enough to express my love for you three. I would sure not be what I am today without you three.

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**ACCRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BMP</b>	Bachelor-Master-PhD
<b>CFA</b>	Cooperation Financiere en Afrique Central
<b>EEC</b>	European Economic Community
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>DVC</b>	Deputy Vice Chancellor
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>HEI(S)</b>	Higher Education Institution(s)
<b>MINEP</b>	Ministere De L'Environnement Et De La Protection De La Nature
<b>MINESUP</b>	Ministere De L'Enseignement Superieur
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollars
<b>UBDEF</b>	University of Buea Development Fund
<b>UNIBU</b>	University of Buea
<b>VC</b>	Vice Chancellor
<b>VR</b>	Vice Rector

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Government subventions to state universities in Cameroon have in recent times been at very low ebbs. They have dwindled significantly since the 1986/87 academic year. Between the 1992/93 and 1996/97 academic years, for example, the University of Buea received between 19% and 30% of the allocated subvention (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999). As a matter of comprehensible debate, universities in Cameroon for many other reasons (limited infrastructure, didactic materials, qualified teachers, etc.) are being held back from delivering to society the different benefits they could rightfully provide. For these reasons, the reactions of the students and public toward the state universities have increased in diverse ways. Students have embarked on strike actions induced by a series of disappointments on the lack of student bursaries, nature of courses and degree programmes and inadequate capacity for enrolment in the face of increasing demand for HE studies. Other stakeholders are also yet to be satisfied with respect to their interactions and benefits from the university.

Many have blamed these recurrent circumstances on the socio-political and economic hardship of the country. Most of these problems appear to be inherent in the assumptions underlying the traditional role of the university against the expectations of its students, the state and other stakeholders within the framework of their respective subcultures (scientific and humanistic) and social structure (Clark, 1984). That notwithstanding, global trends and institutional changes towards the knowledge society/economy could be other reasons.

This project seeks to investigate the nature of state regulatory frameworks with respect to universities in Cameroon and how they influence public university management. It however does not treat this issue in isolation. It attempts to study how the response of public universities to the state regulatory framework on higher education is influencing the results of their relationship with other stakeholders. Thus it will examine how organisational forms and democratic procedures of universities in Cameroon are striving through in their relationship with students, the state and other stakeholders.

We will begin with some historical presentation of the interaction between HEIs and its stakeholders. This is intended to give a sort of clear and distinguishing overall picture of the nature of the relationship between higher education institutions and the society before contemporary pressures set in. However, higher education in Cameroon did not begin until 1961 after the Cameroons gained independence from both the French (1960) and British (1961) respectively. That notwithstanding, the history of interaction of the university and society in Cameroon did not, in essence, differ from what happened in most of the world. Presenting a historical background of such an interaction is necessary in some way, to help us to come to a better understanding of the dynamics surrounding higher education management today.

## **1.2 A reflection on the Developments in the Interactions between HEIs and the Society**

Since the creation of the first universities, there has been an evolutionary trend in the relationship between HEIs and society. This relationship/interaction is one of the main determinants of the existent, continuity and success of HEIs. For the most part, HEIs have become so inextricably linked to society to the extent that their activities are influenced by the interaction between them and the society in which they operate.

Traditionally, higher education institutions (HEIs) dating as far back as the twelfth century did not set themselves the goal of providing their communities with specialised experts (Ruegg, 1992). This somewhat explains that universities at this time did not have any meaningful interactions with the society. They only formed part of a special stratum in society. With time, these same institutions developed the thought that knowledge could be considered an essential part of the civil society. Students and researchers then studied with the intention to advance scientific investigation and attend to societal demands. Today, universities have grown to be structured within the framework of the knowledge society/economy, a phenomenon which emphasises some sort of inseparable relationship between HEIs and the surrounding environments. This set-up legitimizes the public character of HEIs that formed the basis for the long standing traditional pact between HE and the Society (Olsen 2005). This pact in its nature was neither a contract nor an agreement.

It was basically a long-term and enduring relationship that for many years was built on some general principles beyond any calculations of self-interest (Olsen, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

Today however, “*higher education is in a state of institutional transformation and flux. The legitimacy of higher education’s mission, organisation, functioning, moral foundation, ways of thought and resources are being doubted and challenged*” (Maassen, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. As a direct consequence of this, the traditional pact between HEIs and the society is deemed not to be valid anymore (Olsen, 2005). This explains in a deeper way the current rift between these institutions and the society.

There is however a claim that there exists an inalienable and complementary relationship between schools and HEIs and the society. This claim is based on the position that these institutions are founded to train persons “*needed to maintain the ruling class domination*” (Ruegg, 1992:10). There is thus little knowledge or agreement of the existence and growth of the university as a mere consequence of scholarly and scientific interest - the *amor sciendi* (ibid). The time of the founding and growth of the university since the middle Ages (between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) coincided with a period of growth, specialisation, and increasing technical requirements in public offices (Le Goff, 1980). Le Goff stresses that the faculties of medicine at the time were just an instance of a response to increased efforts of the authorities in the field of public health and sanitation following the growth and expansion of the cities. This to a great extent would explain why the growth and sustainability of the state/public university in contemporary time is linked to the existing relationship with society on the one hand and its respect to state and/or governmental regulatory framework on the other.

The interaction between the university and society seems to be more established since the evaluation era (Henkel, 1998) developed in the USA (1950s and 1960s). This era has been termed the period of optimism and expansion. It was associated with modernisation, the rationalisation of society, the policy process and the growth and improvement of the public sector (Henkel, 1998). This dynamism in the HE sector constituted a manifestation of a

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<sup>1</sup> Maassen, Peter (2006). “Relationship between Higher Education and Society”- Introductory semester, lecture 2: HEEM/*Hedda* Masters Programme in Higher Education

<sup>2</sup> Maassen Peter (2008). “Distinctions blur, steering differentiations”. A presentation to the CHET seminar-The Norwegian Commission on Higher Education: Beyond University/College, academic/professional, and urban/rural distinctions

growing confidence and desire in the potential of new knowledge in making remarkable contributions to policy making and socio-cultural and economic reforms (ibid). Gibbons et al (1994) have presented an analysis on *The New Production of Knowledge* based on the “transdisciplinarity” of problem solving for the production of new knowledge. They claim to explain the heterogeneity and organisational diversity in the production of knowledge in terms of the skills and experience brought into it. It involves an increase in the number of potential sites where knowledge can be created. It cuts across the university to including other stakeholders (non-university institutes, research centres, government agencies, industrial laboratories, think-thanks, consultancies etc) in their interaction.

The contention here is a propagation of the view that knowledge production has increasingly moved from the traditional disciplinary activity (of cognitive and social norms to be followed in the production, legitimisation and diffusion of knowledge limited within the confines of academics) to involve other stakeholders. Growing public concerns about issues to do with the environment, health, social wellbeing of citizens, poverty, corruption, governance and communications among others, have had the effects of stimulating knowledge production in a trans-disciplinary order. Modern universities are a direct representation of such an ideology. Interaction between the university and other stakeholders is gaining immeasurable grounds. Burton Clark stretches this kind of interaction to mean “integration” (1983). He ascertains the view that there is an increase in the extent to which higher education is seen as an issue worth intervening in by the regular channels of politics and government. By this he means: ministers, parliaments, interested organisations, the mass media, and public opinion. Among the causes for this are the prevailing increase in cost for higher education, widespread popular interest in access to higher education, student discontent and rebellion, and governments’ interest in scientific productivity and ‘manpower training’. With this growing strength of integration, the management of the university is in a constant state of change. Our interest therefore is in identifying how these interactions affect the management of the university.

### **1.3 Motivation and Rationale of the Study**

The motivation underlying this study is driven by that growing awareness in me, of contemporary changes in higher education institutions as a result of increasing interaction with society (different stakeholders). For some reasons (massification, funding, capacity,

teacher/student ratios), higher education institutions (HEIs) have gradually taken on diverse perspectives towards adjusting to changing socio-political, economic and cultural circumstances. We believe that these circumstances have put at stake the purpose of the university, its work processes, its organization, its system of governance and financial basis, as well as its role in the political system, the economy and society at large (Olsen, 2005). Adaptations to these situations have constantly swayed HEIs into daunting administrative and management experiences.

Interaction between HEIs, the State and other stakeholders in Cameroon has always been inconsistent and timid. The results for the most part have not been quite encouraging. This is partly marked by the inability of the universities to acquire needed funds and exercise adequate autonomy in the management of their activities. It is also evident by the numerous strike actions that have rocked especially the University of Buea in recent years (1995-Buea, April 2005-Buea and Yaoundé, April 2006-Douala, November 2006-Buea). For the most part, we believe that these interactions are gradually affecting the legitimacy of the university in Cameroon. The university in Cameroon seems to be gradually losing sight of its identity and constitutive logic; its distinctive features are fading away, its functions and achievements as an academic institution is uncertain.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement and Questions**

The core problem statement which is addressed in this study is:

How does the state regulatory framework affect the leadership and management practices of universities in Cameroon; and how does university management relate to the demands and expectations of other stakeholders?

This problem statement stems from the assumption that contemporary local and global pressures present enormous challenges of change for higher education institutions in Cameroon. Both the government and other stakeholders expect university management to satisfy their desires/expectations. The government would, for example, expect universities to fulfil the agenda it sets for them. Other stakeholders would expect universities to provide the needed support for their economic, cultural, social and/or political growth. It is for some of these reasons and owing to enormous pressures on the only university in the 1980s that the government of Cameroon in 1993 undertook a series of reform measures aiming at averting

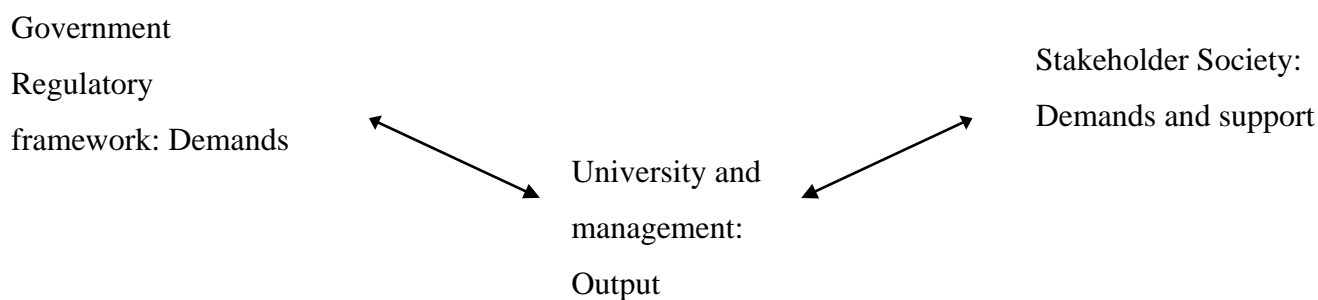
an escalation of serious crisis. It is therefore assumed that change processes in university management are related to its interactions or relationship with stakeholders.

The general problem statement leads to the following research questions:

- 1) What kinds of reform measures with respect to higher education were taken by the government of Cameroon in the 1990s and how are these reforms affecting the management practices of its public universities?
- 2) Who are the main stakeholders of public universities in Cameroon, and what are their main expectations with respect to functioning of public universities in Cameroon?
- 3) What has changed with respect to the 1993 university reforms? Why and with what consequences for university management and wellbeing?

### 1.5 Objectives of the study

It is important for a university to build a long-term and sustainable relationship with its stakeholders (internal and external). As viable partners, it will be easier for both parties to bring about meaningful and sustainable development to the community. It can be argued that interaction between the university and the society (including businesses and local industries) on an appropriate basis and on common grounds will be a sustainable and productive venture. For example, the promotion and development of clearly defined functions between the university and private enterprises could be a requirement that may sustain in-service and retraining activities that will promote efficiency and better results for a community. The interaction between the universities and society in Cameroon can be represented graphically in the following figure:



Adopted from: *Institutional Dynamics* (2007) a presentation at the NetReed Conference by Terence Yong Yuh.

This study is going to examine the response and adaptability of higher education institutions to their stakeholders. That is, look at how stakeholders' demands and expectations are affecting the management thinking and practices in the state universities of Cameroon. The study will therefore:

- a) Investigate state university reforms of the 1990s-the nature of these reforms and how they affect the management of the university.
- b) Investigate how the expectations of other stakeholders relate to the management practice of the university managers. We consider university students to be a part of the stakeholders.

In summary, it will be looking at the consequences of government's regulatory framework on the university management and how these consequences relate to its interaction with some of its other stakeholders.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to the extent that the relationships being studied are important to all stakeholders. Findings should therefore plough back to create and nurture positive interactions in terms of realization of the objectives of the HE system in Cameroon.

The study is also expected to add to the resource material of management issues of the HE system in Cameroon, and more specifically the University of Buea. Through the assessment of the university's relationship with government and society, this study is particularly expected to contribute knowledge towards a better understanding of some issues affecting the growth of universities in Cameroon.

The recommendations and suggestions at the end of the study may raise the awareness of the government that will enable it to take more suitable measures towards increasing effectiveness in university management. The recommendations and suggestions may also induce other stakeholders to take on more befitting responsibilities on universities. Furthermore, this study may in a broader perspective instigate further research based on the relationship of the university and its stakeholders.



### 1.7 Definition of Key Concepts

The formulation/definition of key concepts and terms is meant to indicate their meanings as used in this study. This is also meant to induce a better overall understanding of the core issues of the study. It will help to avoid concepts and/or terminologies from being wrongfully perceived or understood by the reader.

**Stakeholders:** With this term, we are referring to groups of persons with an interest in HEIs. They are directly and/or indirectly involved in HEIs. They can be affected by an endeavour and can as well influence one. They are intended beneficiaries and intermediaries, winners and losers and either involved in decision making or not (DFID, March 2003). Our study refers to two main categories of stakeholders. The first category includes the government, referring to its regulatory framework. The second includes industries/organisations, students, parents/guardians and faculty members. These are the two categories of stakeholders we have considered in the study; and whose influences are impacting on the university in Cameroon.

The government and its regulatory framework refers specifically to the Higher Education Ministry and its policy documents that are set to regulate the management of HE in Cameroon. By faculty members we are referring specifically to the academic staff of the universities in Cameroon. Students and parents/guardians refer to those who contribute to cost sharing (by paying required fees) and benefit from the university.

Industries/organisations refer to those independent bodies that directly or indirectly may support and/or benefit from the activities of the university. They most often are those who benefit from university output-research findings and graduates who end up working for them.

**Management:** This means the act, manner or practice of planning, organising, directing, controlling and using resources. In our study, we use it particularly to refer to the practice of handling issues that have to do with the sustenance, respect and promotion of the constitutive logic of the university. We refer to the interaction between the university, the state, students/guardian/parents, and industries/organisations.

**Interaction:** By this, we are referring to the cooperation, actions and reactions emanating from such cooperation between the university and its stakeholders. It is used to depict the

interdependence between the university and its stakeholders. We further use this in the study to mean the way university management relates to regulatory framework of the government and the way it relates with other stakeholders.

**Higher Education Institutions:** In our study, we are referring to the six public universities, five of which were created by presidential degree in 1993. They include the universities of Buea, Yaoundé I, Yaoundé II, Douala, Dschang and Ngoundere. These are the universities that were created to cater for continuous rise in the demand for higher education in Cameroon.

**Subventions:** These are funds guaranteed by government to public universities. In the case of Cameroon, subventions are drafted in a yearly budget of the higher education ministry that is responsible for universities. This subvention is part of tax payers' money.

**State University Reforms:** We refer here to a set of university reforms that were initiated and implemented by the government of Cameroon in 1993. Fundamental was the creation of five new state universities as a measure to decongesting the lone University of Yaoundé at the time. The intention amongst others was to provide equal opportunities of higher education to all. The reforms include a set of rules, regulations and laws making up the regulatory framework of government on its universities.

## **1.8 Ethical Issues**

It would not have been possible to complete this work without paying due attention to the ethical issues involved. This is basically due to the political undertone involved. It is mainly because the study is based on the University of Buea (case study) which is the only Anglo-Saxon Public University out of the six in the bilingual Republic of Cameroon.

A formal letter of confirmation of student status was obtained from the Institute for Educational Research-University of Oslo. This served as an instrument of access to the HE authorities in Cameroon. We also obtained a document (*Autorisation d'effectuer des recherches*) from the HE ministry, signed by the minister Jacques Fame Ndongo. This gave us access to some personnel of the HE ministry, the university, students and companies.

In addition, appointments were scheduled with all respondents and interviews conducted at their convenience. We also reached verbal agreements on the informed consent of the

respondents. They were informed that all information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality. In other words, nothing they said was going to come back to hunt them in any shape or form. Thus they were guaranteed from any impunities or harassments based on the information they gave to us. This was also intended to increase the cooperation of subjects and hopefully the quality of information provided.

### **1.9 Outline of the Thesis**

This work is composed of six chapters. It begins with chapter one that gives an introduction and background of the study. This chapter stretches to include a historical presentation of the nature of interaction between HEIs and their surrounding environments. It explains the motivation and rationale behind this study, presents the problem statement and questions, outlines the objectives of the study, gives reasons for the significance of the study and provides definition of key terminologies as used in the study. The chapter closes up with an explanation of ethical issues encountered in the study.

Chapter two presents the analytical framework and literature review. This means that it treats particular perspectives from which our study will draw particular inferences and deal with some contextual analysis and issues that are related to the study. The three pillars of institutions by Scott (2001) are discussed to show their relevance to the study. The review of management practices in Cameroon's universities is viewed from the perspectives of Scott's three pillars of institutions. The concept of management in HE is also looked at in this chapter. Besides, approaches to institutional governance arrangements are discussed in three categories: traditional governance approach, new governance model and the decline of the traditional model.

Chapter three deals with the research methodology and approaches used to accomplish the study. It opens with a study design that expresses its focus on the University of Buea as case study for the entire research concern. The qualitative method is used and the approaches that made up the method include interviews and documentary reviews.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Analyses are done at two main levels: the state's systems level and the institutional level. This is to demonstrate how interaction between the university and its environment impacts on the management functions of the

university. These analyses will respectively be in relation to the state regulatory framework on the one hand, and community interference on the other.

In chapter five, we discuss the main findings that are presented in chapter four. The discussions are in two parts. The first part will discuss the impact, relevance and applicability of the state regulatory framework on the HEIs and the other part will focus on the response of university management to other stakeholder interference.

The last chapter gives a summary of the study, a conclusion on overall findings, recommendations on the study and suggestions towards further research on universities in Cameroon.

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## Chapter 2

### Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

#### Introduction

The university in Cameroon is widely thought to be in a state of jeopardy. This is partly because of the continuous and wide ranging external demands and expectations with respect to the activities the university should undertake. The major worry in this is how university management could accommodate these pressures from its stakeholders amidst the wish to attain its goals. This chapter examines different institutional practices within which the main aim of this study will be examined or related to. It also looks at the relevant literature that is related to this study. The first part looks at the conceptions of Scott (2001) and Peters (2000) on institutions and how their structures or constitutive logic could make for successful management vis-à-vis the rational choice theory. Linked to both conceptions are some views of the Department of International Development (March 2003). Following are the four stylised models of institutions based on their interaction with society as viewed by Olson (2005). The rest of the chapter deals with issues of management and governance models that are of relevance to the study.

#### 2.1 Institutional Theory

Contemporary institutional theory provides an insight into understanding how institutions operate towards maximising the essence of their objectives. Scott (2001) defines institutions to consist of cognitive, normative and regulative structures including activities that would provide stability and meaning to social behaviour (Scott 2001: 33). He conceptualises institutions as multifaceted systems with symbolic pillars (cognitive, normative and regulative structures). They are sustained by different cultures, structures and routines which he prefers to term *carriers*. These carriers within this complex setup would operate within multiple levels of jurisdiction in consonance with the respective pillars.

However, it is imperative to note that the cognitive, regulative and normative systems are all vital elements of institutions with varying degree of importance. Scott (2001) holds the view that each of these pillars could be viewed as contributing in interdependent and mutually reinforcing ways to constructing a powerful social framework that would showcase the worth and resilience of these institutions. D'Andrade (1984) as quoted by Scott (2001: 34)

observes that in such an integration of mutually dependent pillars in institutional operations, institutions are viewed as over-determined systems. His justifications are based on the premise that social sanctions, pressures for conformity, intrinsic direct rewards, values which are all products of the three intervening pillars of institutions, would act together to give to any system, its particular meaning (ibid).

In spite of this very plausible and convincing approach to institutional theory, Scott warns that there are some disadvantages neatly woven in it. The three commended pillars put forth divergent conceptions with different underlying assumptions, mechanisms and indicators that would need to be evaluated separately and with intimacy. His assertions, however, do not represent all facets of viewpoints. Peters (2000)<sup>3</sup> from a political standpoint, posits that the most important impediment to a more central position for institutional theory is that the term denotes multiple meanings to different scholars and even stretches to contradictions. He asserts that different versions of institutional approaches will provide different empirical evidence and make different predictions about behaviour. We believe this to be pretty much evident owing to the different societal orientations with respect to the socio-cultural, economic and political paradigms that are peculiar to different societies.

Arguably, the perception of a people in a society such as Cameroon, grounded in a colonial background and influenced by a neo-colonial political discourse will completely differ from that of a people with a completely western orientation. This will be so, irrespective of what kind of institutional approach that is used. And Gupta, Dirsmith and Fogarty (1994) make mention of the contingency theory which suggests that some technical task force in an institution would impose demands that will give birth to a plan of actions to coordinate and control internal strategies of an institution. These demands will certainly differ from institution to institution and thus the possibility of a rationalised, formal and standard version of an institutional culture. Peters' central concern, however, has to do with how much impediment these internal differences will make and if anything could be done to generate a more unified approach of institutional theory.

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<sup>3</sup> Peters, B Guy. (2000). "Institutional Theory: Problems and Prospects".

Since the perceptions of different people will build up to differences and contradictions on a central stand point of institutional theory, it would be necessary to take into account the socio-cultural, economic and political ideologies of a people into institutional management. This will serve as a drive for an institution to gain stability and meaning towards meeting its goals. It will further mean that creating a more general approach to institutional theory remains a difficult task.

The following table presents Scott's perspective of the three pillars of institution.

Table 1 presents of the varying emphases of the three pillars of institutions

**Table 1: Three pillars of institutions**

	<i>Regulative</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Cognitive</i>
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social Obligation	Taken for granted
Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules, laws, sanctions	Certification, accreditation	Prevalence, isomorphism
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Culturally supported, conceptually correct

Source: Scott, W. R. (1995): *Institutions and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage

Our case study is an Anglo-Saxon university in a bicultural (English and French) educational system. Upon its creation, the University of Buea (UNIBU) was expected to operate in an Anglo-Saxon educational system. But along side five other public universities with an educational system grounded on French principles, UNIBU has to abide by the same standard rules and regulations like the others. The regulatory framework of government therefore presents a set of challenges that are peculiar to the University of Buea, and a different set of challenges to the five others with a French inclined system.

We realise that even though the cognitive, normative and regulative pillars of the management structure of the Anglo-Saxon university will function in an interdependent and mutually reinforcing way, it will be difficult to maintain its worth owing to the cultural gap that exists between it and the regulatory framework of government that is overwhelmingly

structured on the basis of the French system. Besides, it will be difficult to maintain a more central position on university management in Cameroon owing to the diversity in values and practices in both the English and French systems of education. Thus the practices and values of the University of Buea will conflict frequently with the intentions of the regulations set by government. Based on this assessment, our analysis will rely on a contingency theory. This means that we will consider the leadership style of management to be dependent on the situation in which management is bound to operate. This implies that the management of UNIBU for instance will take into consideration the culture and practices of the Anglo-Saxon system vis-à-vis the constraints presented by government's regulatory framework, to determine a plan of actions that should coordinate and control its internal strategies. The actions of management should however coincide with the different cultures, structures and routines that should sustain the different pillars (cognitive, normative and regulative structures) of its institution.

### **2.1.1: The Institutional and Rational Choice Theory**

Peters (2000) discusses in unison the normative approach as advocated by March and Olsen (1984; 1989; 1996) as one major approach to institutional analysis. They contrast the normative logic which they term "logic of appropriateness" with the "logic of consequentiality" which is central to rational choice theories. They contend that institutions are the major repositories of values and that "the logic of appropriateness" is the best way to comprehend political behaviour (both individual and collective) that individuals acquire through their involvement with one or more institutions. The conclusion, they assert, is that people functioning within institutions behave the way they do because of normative standards and not due to their desire to maximise individual utilities (Peters, 2000).

We understand that individual utilities may have an overspill effect to the objectives of the institution. But a study by the Department of International Development (March 2003)- "*Promoting Institutional and Organisational Development*" asserts that contemporary understanding of the wider institutional framework expresses the need to focus on outcomes. This means that the open systems model that maintains its state and exhibits characteristics of openness does not concert fully with the three pillars of Scott's *Institutional Theory*. Though changing the rules can be inherently difficult, if the organisation (rules of the game) in an institution can be changed in order to engage in innovative commitments with the



society, desired outcomes could be achieved. This explains therefore that sustained capacity building requires to be built on consistent and complementary interventions at all levels (individual, organisational and institutional). This goes further to explain that the rational choice theory could be a commendable and complementary option to institutional theory, for maximising desirable output effects for institutions.

In his contention, Peters (2000) believes in very strong terms that the rational choice version of institutional theory demonstrates a good degree of importance to the growth of the institution. From his conceptualisation, institutions are arrangements of rules and incentives and the members of the institution will behave in line with those basic components of institutional structures. Members of these structures do not need to have their preferences modified by mere membership in the institution. They have their own well ordered sets of preferences that remain largely unchanged by any institutional involvement they may have (ibid). Based on this claim, it would mean that in the execution of policies and the political will of the state or in the exercise of authority, institutional leaders are faced with the task of choosing from preferences and constraints facing them. In such a circumstance, they would not be solely guided by the basic components of their institution. Their actions in some ways are modified or influenced by some basic personal tenets. This principle expresses an important belief that is inherent in any administrative system and translates into the assumption that most social situations or collective behaviours are the results of individual actions.

This approach to institutional analysis is clear, simple and understanding and should apply in a bicultural educational system like Cameroon. The regulatory framework for universities in Cameroon as already seen in the previous section does not take into consideration both cultural foundations of the education of its people. This means that a standard system for the operation of its institutions would definitely not lead to expected outputs. It implies therefore that institutions should have some degree of autonomy from standardised principles such as the normative and regulative structures. The cognitive pillar of the institution should be given greater attention. This means that the English system that is less considered in terms of relative regulation from government should basically have the latitude of openness that should focus on the rationality of the chosen options and outcomes. This will encourage university management to engage in innovative commitments with the society, a condition that could lead to desired outcomes. On the contrary, if management of the University of

Buea has to remain steadfast within the framework of regulations set by government and the three pillars of institutional theory, the result definitely as has been the case, will be one of continuous conflict with government and other stakeholders.

**2.2 The University and its External Environment**

This section focuses on the competitive interests between the state, the university and other stakeholders. Olsen (2005) deals eloquently with some perspectives on the relationship between higher education and the external environment. He affirms that current trends would portray the debate to centre on a number of visions which would include:

- the university as a community of scholars,
- the university as an instrument for national purposes,
- the university as a representative democracy, and
- the university as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets.

These are four stylized models that are respectively based on some set of “*constitutive rules, command and hierarchy, bargaining and majority votes, and market prices and competitive selection*” (Olsen, 2007: 29). It is based on this thinking that some form of model in shifts or changes in governance arrangements is designed. Johan P. Olsen vividly and professionally examines visions on the governance and organisation of the university in these different spheres of specifics. He sets an appropriate ground for us to be able to assess the relationship between the university in Cameroon and its environment. The following table is an explanation of the four stylised models.

**Table 2: Four stylised Models of Institutions**

Autonomy	University operations and dynamics are governed by internal factors	University operations and dynamics are governed by environmental factors
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<p>Conflict:</p> <p>Actors have <i>shared</i> norms and objectives</p>	<p><b><i>The University is a self-governing community of scholars</i></b></p> <p><u>Constitutive logic:</u> Free inquiry, truth finding, rationality and expertise.</p> <p><u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Scientific quality.</p> <p><u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Constitutive principle of the University as an institution: authority to the best qualified.</p> <p><u>Change:</u> Driven by the internal dynamics of science. Slow reinterpretation of institutional identity. Rapid and radical change only with performance crises.</p>	<p><b><i>The University is an instrument for national political agendas</i></b></p> <p><u>Constitutive logic:</u> Administrative: Implementing predetermined political objectives.</p> <p><u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Effective and efficient achievement of national purposes.</p> <p><u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Delegated and based on relative efficiency.</p> <p><u>Change:</u> Political decisions, priorities, designs as a function of elections, coalition formation and breakdowns and changing political leadership</p>
<p>Actors have <i>conflicting</i> norms and objectives</p>	<p><b><i>The University is a representative Democracy</i></b></p> <p><u>Constitutive logic:</u> Interest representation, elections, bargaining and majority decisions.</p> <p><u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Who gets what: Accommodating internal interests.</p> <p><u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Mixed (work-place democracy, functional competence, <i>realpolitik</i>).</p> <p><u>Change:</u> Depends on bargaining and conflict resolution and changes in power, interest and alliances.</p>	<p><b><i>The University is a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets</i></b></p> <p><u>Constitutive logic:</u> Community service. Part of a system of market exchange and price systems.</p> <p><u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Meeting community demands. Economy, efficiency, flexibility, survival.</p> <p><u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Responsiveness to “stakeholders” and external exigencies, survival.</p> <p><u>Change:</u> Competitive selection or rational learning. Entrepreneurship and adapting to changing circumstances and sovereign customers.</p>

Source: *The Institutional Dynamics of the (European) University* (Olsen, 2007: 30).

Olsen prods our understanding of the conviction that universities are institutions of learning. Like any institution, he contends that they operate within a framework of constitutive “rules

*and organised practices embedded in structures of meaning and resources...resilient to idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstance*". He also claims that "*Structures of resources create capabilities for acting. They empower and constrain actors differently and make them more or less capable of acting according to prescriptive rules*" (March and Olsen 1989, 1995, 2006: as quoted in Olsen, 2005: 5).

The preceding assertion legitimises, to some extent, the autonomy right of the university in the face of external pressures and influence. This would be an ideal situation in some advanced democracies where the university in itself is respected as a custodian of democratic principles and practices. But in a constitutional democracy like Cameroon, where the university, though with autonomous rights, is functionally dependent on other state institutions for survival and particularly dependent on state machinery for its regulative and organisational form, it is practically difficult to achieve a character and form that will be resilient to external expectations, preferences and circumstances. And although Olsen further asserts that a collision between institutions is an important source of change and that transformation of one institution is usually linked to changes in others, we find this a far reaching conclusion in a Cameroonian setting where state regulations inadvertently dissect the inner core of public university organisations. This situation rather matches well with Olsen's conclusion that the idea to achieve ideological hegemony and control over other institutional spheres may destroy the legitimacy and what is distinct about other institutions. On the other hand, an institution in interaction with others may be induced to re-examine its pact with the community, its rational, identity and foundations, its ethos, codes of behaviour and primary allegiance and loyalties. In this case, there is a need and possibility to be able to evaluate and assess the effects of such interactions.

### **2.3 Management in HE**

Management in higher education can be discussed from various angles. It would basically depend on the type of management structure erected in any institution of higher learning. Maassen (2003)<sup>4</sup> emphasises that governments are responsible at different levels for the

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<sup>4</sup> Maassen, P. (2003): "Shifts in Governance Arrangements. An Interpretation of the Introduction of New Management Structures in Higher Education", in *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution*, Dordrecht/Boston/London.

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regulatory framework within which HEIs are expected to perform and within which to manage their activities. This indicates the point that government's regulatory framework is a valid determinant of institutional management. He asserts further that changes in institutional management structures in higher education cannot therefore be discussed without going through a due process of interpretation of the frameworks and the way they affect the management task of these universities. Imperative is the view point he expresses on institutional management vis-à-vis institutional leadership, governance and administration. In all, he asserts that these are relational concepts that will hardly be distinguished.

However, he quotes Reed, Meek and Jones (2002) as suggesting that in higher education, institutional leadership refers mainly to strategic direction giving and setting; management to outcomes achievement and the monitoring of institutional effectiveness and efficiency in the distribution of resources; and administration to the implementation of procedures (Maassen, 2003:32). He sums up the interpretations to be in line with the view that governance is about the framework in which universities manage themselves and about the processes and structures used to meet intended objectives. Governance in his conceptualisation is thus a state apparatus to influence institutional management. Our focus is an incorporation of leadership, management and administration in the growth and continuity of the university in Cameroon in the face of instability in its relationship with the concerned stakeholders. Preferably, we will be using management in this project to reflect this theory.

A key issue in the discussion of management in higher education would be to identify the general feeling that academic life is no longer what it used to be (Maassen, 2003). The complexity of current day higher education has made it difficult for one to decipher who actually is in charge and what management structure to put in place to cater for its growth. This complexity is orchestrated by the recent market driven phenomenon that is preoccupying the minds of current university managers as opposed to the nostalgic and idealised "collegial model" of self-steering of the old good days when HEIs were not in any form "managed as a shoe factory" (ibid). The converse situation is predominantly due to the assertion that external interests have become the driving force for the reforms in the management of universities (ibid). It is this situation that induces Clark in 1998 to reverse his 1983 ideology of the separation of academic and administrative cultures and roles, to the importance of a merger of managerial and academic values in what he refers to as the

“strengthened steering core” of the entrepreneurial university (Maassen, 2003:46). This propagation is in complete support of the role of academics in the management of universities.

However, the demand-response imbalance has continued to pose major challenges to university management. According to Maassen (2003), the demand-response imbalance stems mainly from the rigidity in the maintenance of the traditional governance structures from the side of the university and the government that is said to be responsible for the regulatory framework on which HE institutions operate. From a profound perspective, Clark is advocating for flexibility from the side of academics and the state governance structures. He does not make allusion to factories, industries, businesses etc, which should account for a considerable level of cooperation with universities in modern times. This measure is one that would lead to a cooperative governance approach that should subsequently make way for a better balance in the demand-response mechanism.

Basing on these arguments, our analysis will take into consideration the interaction between universities, state governance structures and other stakeholders to build on the results of the outcome of the management of universities in Cameroon. Considering that the framework within which higher education institutions are expected to perform and manage their activities is set by government, we will equally make sure that our analysis of the management situation of universities in Cameroon is clearly linked with the regulatory framework of government on university. The interaction between universities and other stakeholders will be looked at from the angle of the expectations of stakeholders from the universities, whose existence is reliant on theirs. This method will enable us come up with objective perspectives in relation to the outcome of university management in Cameroon.

#### **2.4 Governance Model/Approaches with respect to HE**

Owing to the surging interaction between universities, government and the society, we have chosen to present varying perspectives of governance approaches in relation to higher education. We will begin with a background study of the traditional governance approach prior to the creation and implementation of new paradigm shifts. Contemporary literature on this subject deals mostly with the period directly prior to “*The Management Revolution in Higher Education*” in the United States of America in the 1960s and recent developments. But shifts in governance since then has been a relative phenomenon with respect to different

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countries, states and regions. This will help us draw inspiration from the recurrent trend to better analyse the situation as we see it in the context of Cameroon.

#### **2.4.1 Traditional Governance Approach**

The period preceding the advent of massification (movement from elite to universal higher education) was principally one marked with a governance approach where higher education as a social institution was allowed to govern its basic teaching and research activities through some form of ‘collegial self-steering’ (Maassen, 2003: 33). In continental Europe, this implied that institutional leaders (rectors/presidents) were selected or elected from among the highest professorial ranks and seen as support structures for academic activities, teaching and research (ibid: 33). Gradually this ‘collegial self-steering’ structure has been replaced by some form of externally oriented management structure that influences the behaviours of higher education leaders through institutional designs. Various reasons account for shifts in governance. However, the underlying reason for a shift in governance approach is to correct identified flaws of the traditional governance approach towards cost-effectiveness and efficiency in the dispensation of scarce resources.

The United States of America is an example of a country where a new steering mechanism for higher education was put in place before the late 1970s. In the 1960s reference was made to “*The Management Revolution in Higher Education*” (Rourke and Brooks 1966; see also Keller 1983) as quoted by Maassen (2003: 33). It was composed of formal, internally and externally driven approaches to strengthen the management position in public universities and colleges (Maassen 2003). In the 1980s this became preponderant with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and then most of the rest of the world (ibid). Whatever the changes in practice, there is still a common and widely held belief that the more government withdraws from steering higher education, the better this sector will perform (Goedegebuure *et al.*, 1994; Meek 2002) as quoted by Maassen (2003:33).

#### **2.4.2 The New Governance Model (New Paradigm)**

The most predominant governance model for HEIs is based on current trends that are directed towards the purpose of the university and the dynamics of its relationship with government and the society (other stakeholders). This perspective is a package embedded in the new public management (NPM) phenomenon that engulfed the entire world in the 1980s.

It is a philosophy intended to modernise the public sector, HEIs included. The idea is to initiate new reforms towards orientating the public sector into market ideals that will lead to greater cost-efficiency, high quality services and better performance for governments with very little or no negative side effects on other objectives and considerations (Jansen, 2006; Borins, 2000)<sup>5</sup>. It is on this backdrop that new governance shifts in higher education have been applicable. There is therefore no doubt that change in the university is linked to change in the role of democratic government in public-private relations, and in the relationship between the local, national, and international level (Olsen, 2005).

In recent years some contemporary higher education scholars have talked about the benefits of a shift from centralized state autonomous control, to a decentralized and flexible authority involving all stakeholders. Governance shifts have therefore been seen to often take two dimensions. On the one hand, it has been implemented with the consideration of the contemporary university as an institution. The university in this case is considered to be an organisational instrument for achieving pre-determined preferences and interests. This is based on the fiduciary nature of the university; that is, its constitutive purposes, principles and processes (Olsen, 2005:5). On the other hand, governance shifts have taken place with the consideration of the university as an instrument of the government. The reason is to organise and govern the university with the intention to achieve tasks and objectives in a cost-efficient way. In this perspective, the university is involved in a set of contracts that are determinants of the kind of support, economic or otherwise to be attributed to it, especially by the state machinery. When it comes to funding, it is all about shifting responsibility and commitment of the funding of higher education from the government to other sources (McGuinness 2005).

In recent years, some scholars hold the opinion that governmental direct investment in some areas of HE has been augmented with new public policies that facilitate partnerships or cooperation between universities and corporate entities (Mohrman *et al.*, 2008). The term 'triple helix' refers to this new dimension of relationship among higher education, industry, and government (*ibid*). This concept describes countries with *laissez-faire* capitalist systems

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<sup>5</sup>Sanford Borins is professor of Public Management in the University of Toronto. About the mid 1990s he was Rapporteur at the conference of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM), an organization for public administration practitioners and academics in the 54 countries of the British Commonwealth



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using government encouragement for some universities to collaborate with businesses to develop the civilian economy. In socialist countries, governments are said to have withdrawn from total control of science and technology policy. This measure is making room for new flexibility for universities to work with local or global industrial entities. In an overall perspective, the state has become less of a sponsor and more of a facilitator for partnerships between universities and businesses, encouraging universities to seek funds from the private sector. But one of the underlying motives behind these constant shifts in governance approaches is centred on the question: What is the best governance approach with respect to higher education?

Recent reforms have nevertheless emphasized four major themes in the shift processes. They include coordination, accountability, re-regulation and performance management (McGuinness 2005). In order to hold universities accountable despite limited governmental budgets, many nations have adopted performance-based university funding strategies; in some cases for targeted programs. In this way, government agencies bring universities to work on nationally important social and economic issues (Mohrman *et al.*, 2008). Mohrman *et al.* have quoted Finland as an encouraging example of this model. They assert that in the international economic recession of 1991–1992, Finland suffered more than most European countries because of the simultaneous collapse of the Soviet Union, a major trading partner. The country's national recovery strategy placed priority on high technology applications. This resulted in larger admissions quotas in engineering and other related fields in the sciences and technology as well as close collaboration between universities and leading telecommunications companies such as Nokia. Overall, Research and Development expenditure in Finland was 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2003 compared with 1.9% for the European Union as a whole and 2.6% in the United States. Intensified research in Finland's universities has been seen as a major factor to its economic success although its universities have not yet reached the top level described by the Emerging Global Model (Mohrman *et al.*, 2008).

It is imperative to note however that these governance reforms no matter how important they are do not result in new sets of permanent and stable arrangements (Maassen, 2003). The first wave of shifts that were ideological was in the 1980s. Since the mid 1980s there has been a continuous trend of reforming the governance relationship between the state and

higher education in most countries. It is of relevance to understand why there has been a change from the traditional to current trends of governance arrangements.

### **2.4.3 Decline of the Traditional Model**

Several reasons have been advanced for the decline in the traditional model of HE governance. Peters (2001) points to the increasing and widening gap between social and political homogeneity among individuals and groups in the society (Maassen, 2003). He explains and justifies this with the notion of the growing “lack of common ground” with respect to many issues that would possibly have to do with the effective growth of university governance. He further explains that this has led to a problematic endeavour in the traditional pattern of government-led negotiations between various interest groups. In addition, reaching social and political compromises has become more difficult. These are developments that can be observed worldwide with smaller and larger variations at national level (ibid). The multiplicity of interest groups leads to a characterisation of diverse attitudes, ideologies and interests. Induced by the growing importance of knowledge and information in the polity, economy and society there is the need for the growing importance of the power of experts and the growing interdependence of the public and private organisations. Decentralisation of administrative and management authorities seem to be the better option for the regulation of these issues.

There is a general agreement that most nation states are going through a transformation process that is strongly affected by global trends and pressures. These phenomena which have transformed world trade, communications and economic relations upon the emergence of neo-liberal free market economy are affecting higher education in a similar way. Together with the knowledge economy phenomenon, they have given place to a new sense of policy frameworks affecting the fundamental principles of a comprehensive higher education system. In addition, they form an important basis for national public sector reforms with respect to higher education (Maassen and Cloete, 2002). In this light, higher education institutions have become a part of the national development policies in countries all over the world (ibid). Trevor Coombe (1991) as quoted by Maassen and Cloete (2002:8) has maintained that:

*“Universities remain a great national storehouse of trained, informed, inquiring and critical intellects, and the indispensable means of replenishing national talent. They*

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*have considerable reserves of leadership and commitment on which to draw. Impoverished, frustrated, dilapidated and overcrowded as they may be, they have no substitutes”.*

There are thus little options for governments of nation states to avoid shifting governance arrangements from national to sub national levels to benefit from the expertise of these institutions.

## **2.5 Analytical Framework**

Considering the diversity in the study of institutions in relation to their theoretical and methodological perspectives, we have chosen to use a combination of approaches of important elements of the models discussed in sections 2.1, 2.1.1 and 2.2 as the analytical framework for this study. This means that the analysis of our findings will be done within the context of the theories and methods discussed by Scott (2001) and the ideologies embedded in the rational choice theory.

Starting with Scott’s (2001) institutional theory, it is assumed that the concepts of the three pillars (regulative, normative and cognitive) of institutions are characteristic of a set of rules and laws that are legislatively designed to govern social obligations and norms within required levels of understanding. These pillars are seen as independent vital elements of institutions that are sustained by different cultures, structures and routines peculiar to each institution and able to contribute to the worth and success of institutions in mutually reinforcing ways. This means that institutional leaders will not only rely on the constitutive logic of institutional but also on accepted practices considered to be culturally and contextually correct. But considering that the three pillars of institutions will put forth different conceptions and underlying assumptions, mechanisms and indicators that will complicate the functioning of institutions, the rational choice theory (section 2.1.1) attempts to make sense of the complex theory of institutions. The rational choice theory points to initiatives, rules and incentives. This is upon the understanding that leaders or individuals will react or act rationally and in line with circumstances facing them in the event where they have to make a decision. Their actions are also influenced by some personal tenets and not just by some normative standards imposed within the framework of the institution.

By integrating the rational choice theory to Scott's institutional theory, a new setup is established for the analytical framework. This setup is an integrated, open and flexible system whose constitution is a combination of a number of inputs (regulative, normative, cognitive pillars, the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequentiality) that will open up institutions to a variety of options towards meeting their objectives. These inputs are an interrelated set of elements that would affect each other in the management function of an institution. This means that in the event of an interaction with different stakeholders, university leadership should be open to a lot of options with respect to the circumstances (demands, support and expectations) and environment within which it operates. Thus decision making should be an activity geared towards the fulfilment of the collective goals of the institution/university and expectations of its stakeholders. The contentions of Olsen (2005) on the interaction between institutions and their environment is utilised to further explain the different characteristics of a university and illustrate how these characteristics will impede the construction of a central position for institutional theory. By engaging attributes of institutional interaction with society as analytical tools, it provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to assessing leadership problems in universities with respect to their interaction with society (government and other stakeholders).

We shall nonetheless make allusion to issues of institutional practices, of governance models and paradigm shifts in governance as obtained in the western world in an attempt to justify our explanations and assessments of the situation in Cameroon. This will be in relation to the discussions raised by Maassen (2003).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Methods and Approaches**

This chapter presents the methodology for this study that provides the framework for the collection and analysis of data. It discusses the different research methods and techniques that were used for collecting and analysing the required data.

### **3.1 Study Design**

In order to accomplish a detailed exploration of our problem statement and research questions and avoid the challenges that come with insufficient resources and cultural barriers within very limited research time, we found it imperative to limit our investigation to the University of Buea. The University of Buea is an example of a public university created after a huge re-structure in state policies towards higher education in Cameroon. It is an outcome of the famous 1993 degree that created six public universities and enacted new regulatory frameworks to cater for rising HE demand and crisis in Cameroon. In all, these universities experience similar crisis that form the basis for interaction with other stakeholders.

Our focus on the University of Buea therefore provides a good chance to understand the relationship between universities and state steering mechanisms since its creation in 1993 on the one hand, and with other stakeholders on the other. The choice is based on its Anglo-Saxon nature which matches the background of the researcher. This makes it possible to better apprehend the contents of policies and related documents of the university since they are mostly written in English. It also gives a better opportunity for conducting interviews and probing in English which is the language we understand the better.

Besides, we assumed that the interaction between the University of Buea and the state and other stakeholders, is a reflection of the general interactions between all state universities and the stakeholders. This is especially so because the nation state has remained the fundamental funder of public HE in the Republic of Cameroon since it redesigned its strategy towards HE.

### **3.2 The Empirical Study/Study setting**

The collection of data was predominantly done in the Republic of Cameroon. The starting point was at the nation's capital Yaoundé, where the Ministry for HE is located. The

Ministry for HE is the epicenter for HE in Cameroon. In collaboration with other state institutions, it is at the Ministry that policy documents and fundamental state decisions on HE are drafted and finalised. It is at the Ministry that we got a research permit for the study. This gave us access to prestigious texts (The Statistical Year Book) and some policy documents on University Reforms.

The rest of the collection was done in Buea, at the University and its environs. Buea is the provincial capital of the South West province; which is one of only two Anglophone provinces, out of the ten in the republic. Besides the university, Buea is chiefly an administrative district with mainly companies and organisations categorised in the sector of service industry. A few of its neighbouring districts are blessed with a few industries and research centres. The University of Buea is the only university in the province with a population of about 1.4 million people, of whom 256,600 are 40 years or older (Oye and Kuper, 2007: 11). The University of Buea is also meant to serve the Anglophone population of the North West province. In recent times, the number of francophone students enrolling at the university is increasing. It is also apparent that the capacity of the university is too small to host students from both Anglophone provinces. It is worth noting that Cameroon has one Ministry for HE which designs and coordinates systems policies for the HE in Cameroon.

### **3.3 Methods of Data Collection**

Considering the scope and nature of the study as presented in the preceding paragraphs, we have decided to use a qualitative methodology in collecting and analysing the data. We considered this methodology because we found it relevant to generate desirable and worthy data. We gave it further consideration because it involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making. Hence it elaborates the need for smaller but focused samples instead of large random samples (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The method enabled us to focus on our case study in order to get an in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation. Interviews were conducted and contents systematically analysed. HE policy documents, related documents on global HE trends and similar literature were consulted, studied and analysed in line with our research concerns.

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In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel of the Ministry of HE, the University of Buea and its environs (other stakeholders). At the HE ministry, the sampling method we used was in line with guidelines indicated for convenience or purposive sampling (non-probability sampling). We opened up very close, intimate and open ended discussions with the Secretary General of the HE ministry (Professor Mvogo Dominique) and the Director of Student Counselling (Mrs Emma Lafon). These are resourceful persons we managed to gain access to at the Ministry. The Secretary General directs and coordinates major activities of HE at the Ministry. He is versed with the relationship that exists between the state and its public universities. He gave us vital information on such issues relating to state intervention on the administrative and governance policies of its universities. At the University of Buea, we were able to have discussions with the Dean of the Faculty of Education and the head of Department for Educational Foundations and Administration. They both made known to us some difficulties at the Faculty and Departmental levels with regards to autonomous execution of administrative powers vested on them by virtue of their positions and rights. The same was the case with the Director of ASTI (Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation). Administrators at the central administrative office who are directly responsible to the Ministry of HE and other state institutions expressed the same concerns, the inability to freely dispense their administrative powers. It was not possible to meet the minister for HE and the Vice chancellor of the University of Buea due to their very tight schedules; and so the number of interviewees we planned to interview dropped from our original plan. In all, 10 administrators were interviewed- 3 from the HE ministry, 3 from the faculties of the university of Buea and 4 from the central administration at the University. Their selection was based on their administrative positions and functions. 13 students were also randomly interviewed in semi-structured and open conversations. The reason was simply to get view points of their perceptions on the university management.

The interviews were open-ended and thus allowed the interviewees the ability to respond from within unlimited scopes. This gave room for access to valuable interpretations and meanings associative with individuals in varying circumstances. Due to the dynamism and flexibility on issues discussed, we were able to decipher and react appropriately to changing circumstances. Due to ethical reasons, it was not possible to record these interviews. But notes were taken with an interview report on critical and important points after every session. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour and were either held in their offices or at other convenient places out of work periphery. The interviews were followed by

preliminary assessments based on comparisons between documented opinions/empirical findings and stated views of the interviewees.

Primary and secondary sources of materials (documents) served us a great deal. We were able to lay hands on much of the original documents created at the time the restructuring of HE was going on in Cameroon. We have exploited newspaper articles, speeches and interviews, Presidential and Ministerial Decrees and Service Notes at the institutional level. A review of these documents along with previous interpretations revealed to us the controversies surrounding policies making, their interpretations and implementations. These documents have been employed to complement other information sources with the view to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

### **3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

We had respondents from the government institution in charge of higher education institutes. We also had respondents from the University of Buea and other stakeholders. In addition to the data collected from within these categories, we reviewed the different perspectives presented and attempted conclusions based on inferences emanating from policy documents on governance/administrative arrangements vis-à-vis institutional standpoints and what the stakeholders felt about them. We aimed at this target by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of policies on governance issues in accordance with the perspectives of Ole R. Holsti (1969) on content analysis. This approach had a strong affiliation to policy documents and service notes. It also provided a solid platform for auditing contents against standardized apprehension. The reviewed documents were authentic, credible, representative and meaningful. We also took into consideration the notion that not all documents are useful for a research purpose since some are written with certain biases.

In addition to inferences from policy documents, we used the analytic induction framework, to analyse and interpret our data. Bryman (2004: 400) explains this to mean, an approach to data analysis in which the researcher exploits or seeks global-view explanations of phenomena through the collection of data to a point where no inconsistency of a hypothetical explanation (deviant or negative) of a phenomenon are found. This was done in consonance with theoretical sampling and open coding as embedded in grounded theory. Bryman (2004: 401) defines grounded theory to mean, a “theory that was derived from data, systematically



gathered and analysed through the research process”. By this measure, we were progressively able to jointly collect, code and analyse our data; and to decide what data and where to collect next.

### **3.5 Limitation of the Study**

Some of the limitations of this study could be surrounded by the generalising nature of the study. This relates to the ability to neatly weave the case study into the entire construct of higher education management issues in Cameroon. The study has actually focused on a very extensive and major phenomenon. This demonstrates and presents a daunting task for research irrespective of the case study approach adopted for the study. This approach naturally comes with shortcomings in as much as generalisation of the study results is concerned. In this regard, the effects on university management based on its relationship with the stakeholder community remain limited in a pilot context in the spheres of institutional dynamics in Cameroon. Alternatively, acquiring an in- depth comprehension of the dynamics in this particular case study enriches our perception of a more general phenomena.

For many reasons ranging from financial through time constraints and to other many complexities, it was not possible for us to collect data from within a wide ranging scope. We were only able to conduct interviews with a couple of participants involved in our area of field study. Besides, limitations in time might have generated constrains in gathering appropriate and objective data. However, we were able to access a good number of secondary data that helped in the accomplishment of the work.

## **Chapter 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

## **Introduction**

In this chapter the findings are presented and analysed. It is systematically done in recognition of the goals of the study. It will demonstrate how new governance arrangements in Cameroon relate to the management of HE in Cameroon. It will also demonstrate how university management relates to the expectations of other stakeholders in Cameroon. Considering that government through its HE ministry provides the regulatory framework within which HE operates in Cameroon, this chapter will analyse in the first instance how the regulatory framework of government impacts on the management of the university in Cameroon. At this level, analysis will focus on the provisions of the state to universities, and how they relate to the management practices of the universities managers. At the institutional level, the analysis will focus on the relationship between the universities and its stakeholders.

### **4.1 Systems Level**

#### **4.1.1 Government Regulatory Framework on Universities**

The new Universities established as part of the 1993 reform (Buea, Dschang, Ngaoundere, Douala, Yaoundé I and Yaoundé II) were created as measure towards a profound transformation of the higher education landscape in Cameroon. The reforms came to address the challenge of access into higher education and to solve the problem of congestion that was ravaging the lone University of Yaoundé until 1993. According to the *University of Buea Strategic Plan (2007: 1)* the reforms were aimed at achieving, amongst other things, the following objectives:

- Increase the participation of different stakeholders in financing higher education.
- Provide universities with more academic and management autonomy.
- Provide all Cameroonians equal opportunity to university education.
- Expand and increase higher education opportunities and make university programmes more professional and responsive to market forces.
- Make rational and optimal use of existing infrastructure, facilities and services.

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The reform initiative gained momentum from the *National Council on Higher Education and Scientific Research*. This is an advisory body that is structured to represent a broad range of interests. Membership to this board includes:

- Government officials
- University staff
- Students.
- Representatives of the private sector and civil society

The *National Council on Higher Education and Scientific Research* is chaired by the president of the republic.

On the design and formulation of new reforms and policies, five out of seven respondents at the institutional (university) level claimed that, contrary to state stipulated concerns, the details of any reforms or state policies on HE are formulated by a selected committee of ministry officials (mainly from the Higher Education and Finance sectors) who closely collaborate with HE leaders and the Presidency of the Republic. This is what one administrator had to say:

*I want you to understand that representation in the National Council on Higher Education and Scientific Research concerning HE issues is not real. This means representative views or proposals towards the new university reforms were not real. It does not happen; not even these days. Concerns from university staff and students I would say, are not considered in this endeavour. The private sector is never involved in any such meetings. The state does not have the culture and practice to include a wide range of actors into such decision making processes. Those principles outlined in the policy documents are a mere representation of what could be a better approach to reaching concrete decisions and not what is really happening in our context (Interview-UNIBU administrator, February 2008).*

This indicates that representation of other stakeholders in this advisory body is a farce. The state probably considers them to have no contributions to make. Their position and/or contribution is limited to accepting the resolutions of the board that are considered to be the best solution to the worsening situation of higher education in Cameroon.

In a conversation with personnel at the higher education ministry, all three expressed the view that state policies are always for the good of its citizens. This is what one of them said:

*The good interest of its citizens is the rationale for the existence of any government and its ministries. MINESUP would not act in defiance of state policies at the expense of its citizens. If you look at our policy documents, the facts are clear. Our intentions and procedures are well spelled out. It is important to set out goals for the creation of state universities to cater for the growing demand of higher education. Equal opportunity for all is fundamental in this decision. That is why a decision was taken for the non-payment of tuition fee so that every Cameroonian should be able to afford university education. Whether other stakeholders are involved in decision taking meetings is not the issue. The point is whether many more students can afford for university education (Interview-MINESUP official, January, 2008).*

Though not represented in the deliberations leading to the transformation of higher education, the concerns of other stakeholders (public and especially students) were assumed to have been given proper consideration (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999:8). This is essentially one of the issues that would be considered to influencing the type of governance or management affecting HE in Cameroon. The assumption that the enactment of state policies on higher education without stakeholders' opinion is on the good interest of all, seems to be a key representative perception surrounding decision and policy making on higher education issues in Cameroon. This kind of attitude from government places evidence on the general understanding that the challenges that accounted for the 1993 HE reforms in Cameroon are still recurrent phenomena in the HE system of this country.

#### **4.1.2 The State and University Management**

As opposed to the pre 1993 reform era where the leader of the university also served as Minister for National Education with administrative, human resource and financial responsibilities of the university, the current management structure of HE is designed with the objective to have it decentralised. State provisions to the management of HE are much more inclined to granting more academic and management autonomy to state universities. Controversially, it is the same government that proposes an elaborate organisational chart and that provides university with a management team which it claims will ensure the

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efficient running of the university in conformity with the autonomy granted them (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 14).

This means that state intervention and control on matters of administration in its universities remains paramount. Management autonomy with profound political interventions is bizarre. This orientation has further lead to the assertion that public higher education still remains fundamentally centralised in opposition to the 1993 foundations on which it was built. The Rectors and Vice chancellor (in the case of the University of Buea) and other senior officials of the university (VR/DVC, Deans and Directors) are appointed by presidential decrees.

Four out of five university staff deplored the trend adding that it is vividly in opposition to the provisions of *Article 26:a of Decree No 93/034 of January 19, 1993* organising the University of Buea that required the appointment of VC with recommendation of senate and council (*La Reforme Universitaire Au Cameroun Ex Ses Textes Complementaires*, 2006: 205). The lecturers claim that appointments of VCs have always come as a surprise without any prior council and/or senate meeting. The following is a reaction from one of the lecturers:

*We shall never be satisfied with the fact that government is responsible for who should be at the helm of our university administration. This has gone a long way to polarise the university on political grounds. There is the tendency for every university staff to be a sympathiser of the ruling party based on the fear of victimization. You seem not to belong if you militate in the opposition. Professorial appointments are widely believed to be grounded on one's political adherence. I make reference to cases where lecturers would want to seek hierarchical political interference to be rightfully or wrongfully promoted. These are some of the issues that are pushing our administrative procedures into a stalemate* (Interview-UNIBU lecturer, February 2008).

The revelations above are not an encouraging sign for a healthy university administration. In such circumstances, some scholars have described university autonomy as statutory. They claim that since appointments by decrees are discretionary, the beneficiaries tend to be

lackeys of the president, motivated to maintain their posts and thus easily corruptible. The likely result is that competence is forgone (Jua and Nyamnjoh, 2002: 5)<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, the academic staff remains under government payrolls as civil servants under the ministry of Economy and Finance. Remuneration of the academic staff can also be easily subjected to political manoeuvres. This is a condition that impedes critical scholarship, collaboration and professional advancement. This sort of practice is in opposition to the provisions of *Article 14: a of No 93/034 of January 19, 1993* which states that senate should be responsible for the recruitment, promotion and discipline of staff (*La Reforme Universitaire Au Cameroun Ex Ses Textes Complementaires*, 2006: 202). A recent declaration by two former University of Buea lecturers expounds on the practices in the university.

Jua and Nyamnjoh (2002) have further analysed the situation of the University of Buea as one riddled with fierce domination where politically suspect instructors are harassed and barriers put in the way of their political and academic career advancements. They assert that for most faculty members, energy in the university space is more focused on survival than on the pursuit of professionalism and the production and advancement of knowledge. Most individuals are more concerned with promoting their upward mobility, a tendency that is seen to perpetually stall their ability to contribute to the pluralisation of public space (Jua and Nyamnjoh, 2002: 1). This is engineered by a system that considers critical scholarship to be a demonstration of sympathy for political opposition parties.

That the first VC of the University of Buea, Dorothy Njeuma, was a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling party, the CPDM (*Cameroon People's Democratic Movement*) only fuelled the thoughts that prominent among her roles was the policing of the production of critical scholarship. This thought was magnified by *Article 3 of Decree No 93/034* that guaranteed academic freedom only within the context of some "*laws and regulations and*

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<sup>6</sup> Dr Ben Nantang Jua was lecturer at the University of Buea between 1993 and 1999.

Professor Francis B Nyamnjoh was lecturer at the University of Buea between 1993 and 1999.

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*subject to the obligations of discretion binding on all public servants*” (ibid: 5). It is on this backdrop that Nyamnjoh (2002) describes the university system as:

*One with little regards for meritocracy which proves to have more room for loyal mediocrity than critical excellence.... A second or third-rate academic, for example, who provides the regime with the conceptual rhetoric it needs to justify its excesses and high-handedness, is more likely to be promoted to professor (with or without publications) and made dean, VC or even minister, and to accumulate portfolios, than his more productive but critical counterpart who is denied promotion and recognition for being a genuine intellectual (ibid: 6).*

In a wider perspective, the powers, initiatives and influence of the management team are heavily constrained by the allegiance they owe to established government/state political institutions such as the council for the coordination of universities. This Council is a state controlled and political unit. It is synonymous to the Board of Directors. It deliberates and fixes policies to be executed by the Rectors or Vice Chancellor on a day-to-day basis. It is chaired by the Minister for Higher Education with the followings as board members:

- University Rectors and Vice Chancellor
- A representative from the Prime Minister’s office
- A representative from the Public Affairs Ministry
- A representative from the Finance Ministry
- A representative from the Economy, Planning and Regional Development Ministry
- A representative from the National Education Ministry
- Inspector general from the Higher Education Ministry
- A representative from the Scientific Research Ministry
- The Director of Training and Orientation of Higher Education<sup>7</sup>

This board (council of Coordination) is scheduled to meet twice a year. In exceptional cases other meetings may be convened depending on the arising need. Within this board are

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<sup>7</sup> This decision is Article 7 of Decree No 93/026 of 19 January 1993 on the Creation of Universities.

permanent members comprising of university Rectors and Vice Chancellor. Their get-together is dependent on a need that may necessitate a call by the chairperson of the board.

This strong state control of HE politicises the university system. This procedure gives weight to the assertion that university issues such as appointments, policies and achievements are politicised. It is therefore apparent that an ex-officio meeting of university rectors and vice chancellor is out of context and may lead to no achievable ends. The organisation of the university, its academics and their basic philosophy of research and teaching are therefore polarised chiefly along political lines. Loyalty to the basic principles of the university is thus discarded. Since they are appointed, university administrators would always want to prove their loyalty to the political regime that put them in control. This ignites a situation of inconsistency in the discharge of duties as disfavours will be meted out to those who decide to abide by opposition politics.

Besides other things, the council has as principal function the right to coordinate and harmonise activities of universities (Ibid: 24).<sup>8</sup> It is amongst their responsibility to see that universities:

- adhere to the recommendations of the Council of Higher Education and Scientific and Technical Research,
- harmonise the pedagogic, scientific, technical and cultural activities of state universities,
- harmonise statutory measures with regards to the recruitment of university teachers, their promotion as well as the criteria for selection and admission of students with particular considerations to the situation of each university.

It is clear evidence that the harmonisation of the activities of state universities poses a threat to the advancement of the University of Buea. The lone Anglo-Saxon university of Buea is an embodiment of the English cultural educational system in a domineering French inclined system. Its administration is tailored to suit the inclinations of the Francophone-French system that for several decades was the only operating system in Cameroon. It is quite a challenging endeavour to harmonise both cultures as the likely result will be to tilt the

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<sup>8</sup> The council of coordination and harmonisation of university activities was created by Decree No 77/108 of 28 April 1977. It was reorganised by Decree No 88/1487 of 7 October 1988.



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Anglophone University towards the dominating French lineage. Its operating environment is an Anglophone one whose cultural values in every sphere are in direct opposition to the other (Francophone). These state provisions are a further indication that state control remains fundamental, irrespective of the declarations of decentralisation in the 1993 reforms agenda.

#### 4.1.3 Finance

Before 1993, government was the sole funder of higher education in Cameroon. It was government that had direct control even on the income that was self-generated by the higher institutions of learning. But the 1993 reforms set in new provisions aimed at increasing the involvement of other stakeholders in the funding of universities. Universities were thus encouraged to broaden their funding base with some greater degree of financial autonomy. They are allowed to generate income from their own activities. This freedom is however constrained by state measures that are aimed at moderating access. To make access easy to students from poor economic background, the reforms introduced a registration fee of 50,000CFA (about \$100) per annum. It is important to note that this fee has been binding irrespective of the kind of programme or degree pursued; from liberal Arts and Sciences through to Medicine. This fee remains lower than what is paid by students in other, private higher institutions of learning.

When we asked to know how the state expects universities to make up for desired budgets when they do not have the right to demand tuition fee, this is what an official of the Ministry said; and it is in line with what the two other Ministry respondents said.

*Gentleman, Cameroon has attracted and is still attracting foreign direct investments. Besides, we have lots of our local companies and parastatals that have contributed towards research initiatives in our universities. We understand that there are still many out there who will give their support to our universities. We want our universities to take up most of the initiatives and attract funding, even from far and wide. We think they are responding well to this. I think what the state gives to our universities is practically enough for them to be able to operate. What they will get from donors will make up for the tuition you are talking about. Very few students will be able to afford tuition if government decides to institute that. How then will*

*government account for its equal opportunity claim on HE (Interview-MINESUP official, January 2008)?*

On the contrary, all seven interviewed university officials are not satisfied with the imposition of only a 50,000CFA (about 100 Dollars) registration fee. One administrator had the following to say about that:

*We understand clearly that government can not sufficiently support all its universities. It is a good thing that government wants us to exploit other funding sources. But what government has probably failed to understand is that a relatively good percentage of university funding in a system and situation like ours should come from tuition. It is relatively very difficult for our university to raise funds from other sources than tuition fees looking at the continuous rise in student numbers. We have tried and still striving for funds from our local industries and companies. We are also struggling with support from foreign donors, but this has never been enough. We have failed even to get some small support from the parents of student. We are still a very young university that needs more than expected support. That has not been the case. How do we survive (Interview-UNIBU administrator, February 2008)?*

We believe that the imposition of only a registration fee on universities has exacerbated administrative instability in most state universities. Universities are unable to design and execute their own internal policies. They are in most cases unable to raise finances to meet up with most of their research goals. In 2007, registration fee paid by students and other self generated income by the University of Buea contributed round about 35% of the university's budget of 5,151,188,000CFA (about 12,178,338USD) and the rest was expected from tax payers' money (Strategic Plan.p.2. 2007/15). Registration fee and self generated income (though very limited and insufficient) has therefore become a valuable source of income to universities owing to inconsistent government financial support. This has partly been attributed to the autonomy item on the reform agenda of higher education in Cameroon.

According to an assessment by Njeuma *et al.* (1999), it is observed that while student numbers surged from 90 in 1992/93 to 4060 in 1995/96 academic year, state subsidies to the

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University of Buea only doubled from about 350, 000,000CFA (about 827,863 USD) to 700,000,000CFA (about 1,655,798USD). This basically means that the amount of money spent per student dropped by 37% within this given period and amounting to only 183,000CFA (about 366USD at the time) in 1995/96. This is estimated to be far below the standard \$1000 per university student per academic year as recommended by the World Bank (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 15). Enrolment has continued to rise steadily since then. It rose from 5380 in 1998/99 academic year to 7283 in 2002/03 and to 10,295 in 2006/07. The sources of self generated income are nonetheless also increasing. The academic staff of the university received research grants for 2006/07 worth 200, 000,000CFA (about 472, 744USD). This amount represented only 4% of the university's budget for 2007.

It is unclear how much income was paid into the University's coffers as subvention for 2007. On the average, available data suggests that the University of Buea received only 19% of requested subvention in its initial year 1992/93 academic year. In 1996/97 academic year, it received 30% (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 15). The trend has been rather not encouraging as per previous arrangements.

A university that presents a budget of 5,151,188,000CFA (about 12,178,338USD) and ends up with far less than estimated income will only have to sail through unexpected financial and administrative difficulties. There is thus very little for research, books, teaching materials and infrastructure. The effect is unsatisfactory results for administration. Unnecessary bottlenecks creep in. The consequence is that the functionality (actions and capabilities) of faculty members are reduced beyond the confines of the normative status of an institution. In this case, individual preferences are given priority over the legitimate goals of the university. The situation is further worsened because the degree and constancy of state subventions remain based on undefined premises; as the university competes for scarce and limited funds with other sectors financed by the state.

## **4.2 Institutional Level**

### **4.2.1 Access and Organisation at the University of Buea**

The Buea University Centre that was built to accommodate 2,000 students hosted just 60 students in 1991 (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 5). When transformed to full fledged university in 1993, student enrolment surged from 768 in 1992/93 academic year to 4,704 in 1999/98

though enrolment was controlled by the use of objective-type quotas for each discipline related to the general competitive high school examination performance. In 2006/07 academic year, this university with its very modest infrastructure was hosting 10,295 students. All six state universities together have capacity for only 62,595 students but the number of enrolled students for 2007 stood at 115, 710 students (Le Jour Cotidien 07.10.2008). We see that capacity and access is still an issue like was the case before the creation of six states universities just a decade and a half ago. This constitutes a huge problem to the management of the university.

The university is currently made up of five Faculties and a single school. These faculties each harbour departments that offer diverse academic programmes that are taught in a total of 35 lecture halls with a sitting capacity ranging from 50-650 at a time. These halls are used by 10,295 students from 25 departments in 32 Programmes. The total number of courses they take is 350. There is a tendency that large class sizes require splitting of classes and duplication of lectures. The work load becomes surmountable and even pushing lectures to take place into the nights. All three lecturers who are also administrators deplored their working conditions. This is how one of them responded:

*I would tell you that my job, and I thin, that of my other colleagues is tedious. I do not find it easy. I do the best I can to make it easy for the students. I mean the very many students taking a course at a time. With the BMP in view, I think our work load will further increase. I mean with respect to teaching hours. Right now we teach late into the nights. We do not even have enough lecturers. Worse is that our teaching conditions have not changed-no projectors for instance. What we use is the chalk on boards. University funds are used strictly for administrative, bureaucratic and political issues. Research is almost a farce in this university (Interview- UNIBU Lecturer, February 2008).*

On the other hand, all thirteen students as well expressed disappointment about their satisfaction. They claimed that lots of things are wrong at the university. Herewith an excerpt from one of them:

*...sometimes you have to be on campus three times in a day. There is even no encouraging place to stay at school while you wait for the next course. Imagine that*

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*you have three periods in one day spaced out within eight hours...The library is just there, no computers etc. I do not even live close to campus and have to trek very long distance to school. This is annoying. We need a bigger university, more structures and better equipment (Interview-UNIBU Student, February 2008).*

In such circumstances we see that the research Mandate and Mission of the university are at very high risk. When a majority of lecturers, some administrators and students are dissatisfied with the status quo, it is difficult to function properly.

Decree No.93/034 of January 1993 spells out the research mandate of the University of Buea as follows:

- Encourage, promote and conduct research in all fields of learning and human endeavour.
- Contribute to national development and promote social and cultural values.

The internal policy draft of the University itself spells out its research mission as directed towards sustainable development and the enhancement of the quality of life of Cameroonians. This goal stretches to include both fundamental and applied research towards addressing issues of local, national and global concerns as well as those relevant to industry (Strategic Plan 2007-2015: 4). The financial and overall infrastructural situations of the university are issues that should basically advance the accomplishment of these goals. Unfortunately, the University of Buea is one that can not guarantee or pride itself of such assets. When we talked about the nature of programmes offered at the university, nine out of thirteen students sounded disillusioned. One of them expressed his thoughts as follows:

*My brother, we are studying probably because we just want to get a degree. Of course we know fully well that the majority of us will roam the streets like our brothers out there if we do not manage to travel abroad. I personally do not have a godfather who can help me get a job after my degree. I am reading geography, like many I know it is difficult to get a place at the master level. What can I do when I*

*finish my programme? Roam the streets. There is no hope for true “grand” (big brother)<sup>9</sup>. (Interview-UNIBU Student, February 2008).*

In the same vein, another student sounded so pessimistic about the programme she is enrolled on at the university. This is how she put it:

*I did not choose to read law. This was forced on me. Because I had no choice, I had to accept to read law so that I can be a student in this university. What will I do in Dschang University or Yaoundé University when French is a problem? In short I do not know what I go do with this law self (I am confused what to do with a law degree). My first choice was Journalism and Mass Communications. But what can we do (what choice do we have?) Interview- UNIBU Student, February 2008.*

These interviews show that there is a great limitation on programme choice. They further highlight the problem of access into a master level degree. We get the impression that students can not really afford to study what they would really like to due to the nature of programmes offered, the capacity of available places for each programme and limited choice of university itself. For these reasons, there is discontent that amounts usually to student activism. Another consequence for these is that many students (those who can manage to afford) decide to obtain postgraduate degrees in foreign universities (the west) due to diversity in the nature of the programmes most of them offer. Brain drain at this level becomes inevitable. The university at this point is considered unable to satisfactorily contribute towards deterring brain drain.

The following table is an illustration of the number of Faculties/Department and programmes at the university of Buea during the 2006/2007 academic year.

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<sup>9</sup> “Grand” is a common reference of an elder brother. It has become common parlance among English speaking youths in Cameroon

**Table 3: Faculties/Departments and Programmes at the University of Buea  
(2006/2007)**

Faculty	Department	Programmes	Level
Advanced School of Translation and interpretation	Division I	Translation	MA
	Division II	Interpretation	MA
Faculty of Arts	English	English	BA, MA, PhD
	French	English and French	Ba, MA
	History	History	BA, MA, PhD
	Linguistics	Linguistics	BA, MA, PhD
Faculty of Education	Curriculum Studies	Curriculum Studies	B.Ed, PGD, ME.d, PhD
	Education Foundation and Administration	Educational Administration	B.Ed, M.Ed
	Educational Psychology	Educational Pssychology	B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD
Faculty of Health Sciences	Medicine	Medicine	
	Medical Laboratory Science	Medical Laboratory Science	BMLS, MSc
	Nursing	Nursing	BNS
Faculty of Science	Biochemistry and Microbiology	Biochemistry, Microbiology	BSc, MSc, PhD
	Chemistry	Chemistry	B.Sc, M.Sc, PhD
	Computer Science	Minor in Computer Science	BSc, MSc, PhD
	Geology and Environmental Science	Environmental Science, Geology	BSc, MSc, PhD
	Mathematics	Mathematics	BSc, MSc, PhD
	Physics	Physics	BSc, MSc,

			PhD
	Plant and Animal Sciences	Botany, Zoology	BSc, MSc, PhD
Faculty of Social and Management Sciences	Economics and Management	Accountancy, Banking and Finance, Economics, Management	BSc, MSc
	Geography	Geography	Bsc, Msc, PhD
	Journalism and Mass Communication	Journalism and Mass Communication	BSc
	Law	Law	LLB
	Political Science and Administration	Political Science	BSc
	Sociology and Anthropology	Sociology and Anthropology	BSc
	Women and Gender Studies	Women and Gender studies	BSc, PGD, MSc

Source: the University of Buea Strategic Plan (2005-2015)

We would realise that only 13 research degrees are offered at the PhD level from among 5 faculties and 25 departments. Of these 13 research degrees, 3 are of the Liberal Arts Departments, 2 from the Education Department, 7 from the Science departments and 1 from the Social and management Sciences. Fundamental and Applied research has produced major research findings on 14 research themes (ibid: 5). This realisation does not seem to match the vision of research and mandate set for this university 15 years ago. The dream to transform the university into a teaching, research and service university seems a far fetched realisation. There is need for a profound re-evaluation and restructuring of teaching, research and out-reach. The implementation and growth of research activities at the university have been greatly hampered by the lack of resources and infrastructure. The management has thus failed in its urge and ability to create research institutes or centres of excellence that would link academic research with the private sector and the society at large.



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We think stakeholder involvement in the affairs of the university is a vital option for its growth and success and thus should not be limited to enrolment. Access should stretch its limit to cover other areas of involvements that definitely should translate to cooperation between the university and the society at large.

#### 4.2.2 Co-operation and Outreach

The coordination of the affairs of the University of Buea has until recent times been marred by a stiff and centralised form of governance approach that is void of required stakeholders' involvement. The state has been the only and principal stakeholder of HE in Cameroon. The first Strategic Plan (1998-2003) of the University of Buea was developed by UNESCO experts from without the university community as directed by the Ministry of HE under state provisions and specifications (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 15). It was merely presented to the university for adoption. This rather engineered a situation of an uneasy and daunting task for the management to execute a plan whose development was arranged by outsiders. The development of a strategic plan within the university or in cooperation with the university would directly reflect and represent the interests and core objectives of that university which got some degree of vested autonomous power. It would be for this reason, coupled with insufficient finances that the 1998-2003 plan recorded only very limited success (Professor Vincent P.K. Titanji, October 2007)<sup>10</sup>. However, there has been the creation of the position of a Vice Chancellor in charge of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the business world.

In a detailed perspective, the position of the Vice Chancellor in charge of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the business world is meant to provide a channel for co-operation with other institutions and businesses. It co-ordinates scholarship offers and other material and financial donations from other stakeholders. Thanks to the cooperation, the University of Buea has over the past few years been able to benefit from donor assistance. They have been able to improve on some aspects of infrastructure, quality of teaching, assure staff development and encourage research activities. Grants have been received from the French Co-operation Mission. This has helped in the construction of some part of the

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<sup>10</sup> Professor P. K. Titanji is the current Vice chancellor of the University of Buea. The statement he made is published in The BUN-The Buea University News Letter Vol. 10 No 03 of December 2007

University Library. Research funds have been received from EEC, the Atomic Energy Agency and the Swedish International Programme in Chemical Sciences. The effort of co-operation and outreach has been principally directed towards foreign donor agencies. There is very little evidence of such co-operation between the university and its environment. But one of the lecturers confirmed that there is at least some cooperation with some stakeholders. He said the following:

*There has been some degree of engagement between our university and some surrounding industries. We have the UBDEf funds that are provided principally by some companies around. The company directors are all members of UBDEF. I think they are doing their best in supporting our university. I do not however see them having a say in the affairs of the university. Though they are by government provision supposed to be represented in the Council meeting, their representation is statutory. They can not by any way influence government decision and policies on our university since the representation of government through its ministries make up the majority in the university council. Impressive however is the fact that they make a good contribution in the finances of the university. (Interview-Lecturer, UNIBU, February 2008).*

From the above, we are prone to understand that the University of Buea is doing its best to involve other stakeholders in its activities. Whether its main objective is financial or not, that is far away from our main concerns. We are more interested in how the university management is responding to external pressures from its stakeholders.

Cooperation is a policy instrument that should be reflected in concepts like inclusion, engagement and partnership. This will enhance the university's trio objectives of teaching, research and outreach. Research has always been one of the university's principal missions but its implementation and growth have been stifled by very limited funds and other resources and infrastructure. The university management has nevertheless continued in its ability to set an agenda for research as an indispensable tool for teaching and outreach. It has developed and adopted a research policy document, and also identified principal themes, such as health, food security, the environment, gender and governance on which to focus its activities (The BUN, December 2007: 3). The plan further foresees the creation of research

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complexes that should link academic research and applications in industry and the society at large. In 14 years, the first ever crucial stakeholders' meeting was held on October 26, 2007. Amongst other developments are plans for the university to work in partnership with the private sector and communities by addressing their needs in its research projects. This means that stakeholders' involvement has been conspicuously absent in the affairs of the university until now. Such policy designs are instrumental and yet irrelevant if not implemented. This situation is one that further complicates the relationship between the supplier (university) and the consumer (other stakeholders).

Dialogue between the students and the administration has been quite inconsistent. No constructive and enabling platform has been developed to ease dialogue between the two. This has given room to a situation of persistent strikes that have always led to the death of students. It is a recurrent claim that Students' Unions created as a representative body of the students for negotiations with the administration are influenced by politicians. The intended reason is assumed to destabilise the university and to promote particular political agendas (Njeuma *et al.*, 1999: 16). Some politicians are thus purported by the university administration as a mechanism for a violent confrontation rather than dialogue. This suggests the neglect of student involvement. All thirteen students we talked too were not satisfied with the existing relationship between the students and the university administration. Thus the grievances of the students are enormous. One of the students said the following:

*You say you passed through this university and so you should know what is going on here. Students got no rights whatsoever. You know how many students that have been dismissed because they are thought to have orchestrated strike actions in this university. They can not even be admitted in other government universities because they joined in the fight for our rights. Me, I am afraid of participating in any strikes. I have seen many students killed during strikes. We just have to accept the status quo, manage with the situation we have and leave this place. It is even in the student guide that any student who is involved in a strike will be dismissed (Interview-student, UNIBU, February 2008).*

We would realise that the complete disregard of the views of student and their Unions, is contributing much more to destabilising the relationship between them and the University administration. Where the students union is absent, or when it is considered with bias, university management is considered as a structure that is more or less void of students' engagement; the same students who form the core reason for the existence of the university. In the case of the University of Buea, the welfare of the students seems to be singularly decided by the administrative organ of the school.

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## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings that are presented and analysed in the preceding chapter. While, the first part of the chapter will discuss the impact of government's regulatory framework on HE management, the latter part will discuss how HE management relates to the pressures of other stakeholders. This will be done within the framework of the analysis done in chapter 2.

#### 5.1 Government regulatory framework

As discussed in section 4.1, the underlying aims in the government's decision to reform HE in Cameroon were to increase financial participation of other stakeholders, to strengthen university autonomy, to give equal HE access opportunities to all and to make university programmes more professional and responsive to market forces. This new paradigm in public management is in line with the benefits linked to the shift from centralised state autonomous control to a decentralised and flexible authority involving other stakeholders as discussed in section 2.4.2.

Government had expected that if these reform aims were reached, it would give to universities the opportunity to attain their own specific goals. But like Maassen (2003) emphasises, governments are responsible at different levels for the way in which HEIs are expected to manage their activities. This means that involving more financial participation of other stakeholders, for instance, would not come as a result solely determined by the outcome of management at the university since the management process in itself is in some greater degree determined by government. And considering that in designing its regulatory framework for universities government is taking into account its political agenda makes it absolutely difficult for university management to meet its own objectives.

In the same vein, considering that universities are sustained by different cultures, structures and routines (*carriers*) working in consonance with the three pillars of institution-cognitive, normative and regulative (Scott 2001), we do not find it quite appropriate for government to maintain a particular set of governance procedure through its regulatory framework to all universities and expect the same or similar results. And since universities are influenced by

the regulatory framework of government, it makes it difficult for them to operate within the basis of their respective sub cultures, structures and routine. Added to that government has considered its universities as instruments for national political agendas for implementing predetermined political objectives, the situation for university leadership is becoming the more complicated. This leads to a situation of constant rifts between the university leadership and government. Our interviews at the University of Buea present the following situation.

### **5.1.1 Other Stakeholders' Involvement**

The representation of the private sector and civil society in the *National Council on Higher Education and Scientific Research* as a principle, is a laudable initiative. Their inclusion in this advisory body would be important to the extent that their interests can also be taken care of in deliberations leading to educational reforms which subsequently should lead to high quality services and better performance output from both universities and the private sector. If their mandate in this council is not statutory as explained by some respondents, then their representation would be considered fundamental to the extent that it may easily motivate financial contributions from them, both at the system and institutional level. Unfortunately we get from the interviews that the representation of students, the private sector and civil society at the systems level is not real. At the institutional level however, there is some degree of cooperation between the university and these other stakeholders.

We recognise the position that stakeholders can both influence and be influenced in the event of institutional changes. A participatory stakeholder approach will enable the diagnosis for a change or reform process to take into consideration the *existing local knowledge, understanding and situation* (DFID, 2003). These put together will induce transparency of key stakeholders and build in a sense of ownership of the reform process. This is what is needed in the build up to reforms and policy designs in the HE system of Cameroon. Politicians, public servants and other stakeholders must be confident of the benefits they should amass from HE. This can mostly come true if they are given the change to belong. There is equally an overall assessment to the stakeholder analysis that says, "*full stakeholder participation will help get the diagnosis right...and build local commitment*" (DFID, 2003: 5).

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The university of course does not exist in a vacuum. That means the university is not an island. It exists in a society, is there because of society and is part of society. It therefore should hold its existence to society (government and other actors of society). To meet its goals therefore, it has to interact with society. According to our research findings, the University of Buea is still at its infancy and struggling with meagre resources to survive. It has thus paid particular attention to developing research as a tool for teaching and outreach as the fundamental essence of its existence. Unfortunately, it has failed to include, engage and get into partnership with other stakeholders. The University was only able to hold its first ever crucial stakeholders' meeting after fourteen years of its existence, that is, in 2007. This explains why dialogue between students and administration has often failed with a claim from university management that student strikes are induced by some opposition political leaders to destabilise the university and promote particular selfish agendas. Stakeholders' participation therefore is timid and inconsistent.

### **5.1.2 University Management**

On the issue of university management, government decreed to provide universities with more academic and management autonomy. By this measure, government intended to give to academics and management the opportunity to excel in the mission of the university. Unfortunately this reform measure has not been fully implemented. That government proposes an elaborate organisational chart and appoints the management team for universities, makes its policy of autonomy on university management problematic. This kind of unconventional autonomy characterised by a very high degree of government intervention, impedes very strongly the constitutive logic that supports the cognitive, normative and regulative practices of institutions. Government's intention at this level is perceived as forcing its political agenda through. The management of university in this circumstance is struggling conscientiously between meeting its constitutive goals and fulfilling the political will of government. For the most part, management is dancing in favour of the political agenda.

It is understood that political rules constitute part of the formal threats of an institution (Gannon & Newman, 2001). But when political rules act adversely to constitutional and legal practices of an institution, they destroy that common sense of coercion among management and subordinates. If government indiscriminately appoints the VC and other

faculty members of the university, and also decides who gets promoted in the professorial ranks, it jeopardises that normative culture of democracy and university standards, destroys social obligation and moral ascendancy of academics and creates an atmosphere of insecurity among academics. This is what has led to situations where some personnel, as discussed in the previous chapter, have gained promotion based on certain political inclinations rather than on merit and compliance to stated rules. Besides, some administrators have been victimised and others relieved of their duties for simply acting in accordance with the cognitive and normative values of their institutions that were thought to contravene with the political agenda of government.

Though based on the assertions of Peters (2000), March and Olsen (1984; 1989; 1996) as discussed in *section 2.1*, that institutions are the major repositories of values with the logic of appropriateness being the best to comprehend political behaviour acquired through their involvement with other institutions, we find it fitting to conclude that universities in Cameroon would hardly meet their objectives if they remain bounded by the three pillars of Scott's institutional theory. Already they are limited in their operations by pressures from government regulations and will need to strive beyond their limits to meet their goals. An alternative measure of success will require them to act in a way that should lead them to choose the alternative with the best expected consequences for them and their stakeholders. This means that they will need to open up to the society and some times, focus on outcomes. The lack of cooperation with other stakeholders until 2007 is proof of their failure in negotiating crisis with striking students and rather linking them with political leaders.

### **5.1.3 Finance**

One of the problems expressed by some interviewees is the lack of adequate finances to effectively run the University of Buea. The *University of Buea Strategic Plan Document for 2007-2015* also states that one of its threats is the lack of a rational revenue allocation formula which is resulting in inappropriate budgets. In *section 4.1.3*, we found out that government was the sole funder of HE in Cameroon before 1993. But with the implementation of new reforms, universities were granted greater autonomy on finance. This led to the creation of UBDEF (the University of Buea Development Fund).



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UBDEF is a non profit-making non-governmental organisation founded in the month of April 1994 with headquarters in Buea. Membership included directors of industries and companies. Its fundamental purpose was to raise badly needed funds for the university's infrastructure. In a letter to parents/guardians appealing for contribution dated 22 August 1994 (four months after its creation), it stated that with under 2,000 students, classroom space was already very inadequate and admission of third batch of undergraduate students in October (barely two months from the appeal date) was to "*pose insurmountable problems for the university*". In another paragraph, the letter highlighted that with the paucity of government subsidies to the university, the university was looking up to parents to make-up for the gap.

However, autonomy on finance does not mean that the government relinquished financial support to HE. In a document (*Proposal for the Establishment of a University of Buea Endowment Fund-UBDEF*), it is stated that the University of Buea received nothing of its subvention from the Ministry of Finance in the 1992/93 academic year. This is an example of a situation that will lead to ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the distribution of resources that should result in the realisation of different goals at the university. To worsen the situation, though with the right to raise funds alternatively besides government subventions these public universities are not allowed to demand tuition and other fees. They are only allowed to accept a meagre registration fee imposed by government on all programmes offered at the university. The consequence is that most programmes especially in the sciences end up not being effectively taught due to the lack of didactic materials.

Maassen (2003) agrees with Reed, Meek and Jones (2002) that institutional leadership in HE also refers to the monitoring of institutional effectiveness and efficiency in the distribution of resources. In relation to the institution's financial position, there is an indispensable need for a comprehensive strategy towards appropriation. Leadership has to be able to clearly determine where money is to be invested. In the absence of required funds, it becomes rather difficult for leadership to strategise. In this case, individual utilities may easily crowd over the overall objectives of the institution. According to McGuinness (2005) it is the responsibility of government to make use of four major themes (coordination, accountability, re-regulation and performance management) in its shift process. We understand that these measures are not being given appropriate attention by the government of Cameroon while

they regulate the functioning of universities. Funding to public universities in Cameroon is not even on a performance-based principle. This is probably why there is even misappropriation of the limited finances available to universities in Cameroon.

In this vain, it would be worthwhile to conclude that performance management and accountability measures are lacking from part of government. The government of Cameroon seems not to care or bother if universities are getting required finances to meet their expectations. This has helped to impact very negatively on HEIs and management. If government were to be realistic, it would give additional considerations with regards to tuition depending on the nature of different programmes offered at the university. There are degree programmes that cost a lot more than 50.000CFA (100 USD) per student. Inconsistent and persistent reduction in state expenditure on HE is further making it difficult for the organisation of management at these universities. Though this has induced management in seeking other ways of raising finance, the situation is still far from satisfactory.

## **5.2 Access and Organisation**

We indicated that one of the arguments underlying the 1993 reforms was the lack of access to universities. Government thus decided to provide all Cameroonians with equal opportunities to access university education. The University of Buea is the only Anglo-Saxon university in Cameroon. This means that it operates within the standards of the Anglo-Saxon culture. In *section 4.2.1*, we note that the university is too small in capacity to successively enrol students from both Anglophone provinces with the Anglo-Saxon education background. We equally found out that the university was hosting 8,295 students above the agreed upon maximum capacity. Equal opportunity to university education in Cameroon would also mean acquiring knowledge in your national language of preference (English or French) or in the language you understand and master best. This means that the majority of Anglophone students will want to enrol in the lone Anglo-Saxon university with a view to achieving their best output. As a consequence the demand and expectation of management to make rational and optimal use of existing infrastructure, facilities and services, and to grant equal access to all Cameroonians have become a difficult requirement.

It would be relieving on the university and its management if government with support from other stakeholders takes appropriate measures in expanding its universities commensurately with the flux-continuous rise in student number. First, we understand that government has either failed or is unable to identify and recognise the existence of these problems. In the event of organising an institution, government is expected to engage in a thorough and participatory diagnosis to establish the underlying causes of the problems. We get the impression that the government of Cameroon did not thoroughly investigate the problems and causes that stifled the growth of its university before embarking on a chain of reforms. Otherwise, the creation of six new universities will not be struggling through very similar situations like the lone one that lasted until 1993.

The growth, success and continuity of universities depend on the values that are attributed to them by the nation state in relation to its socio-economic, political and cultural growth. It is based on these attributes that government is expected to strategise plans in order to improve on the imperatives of its HEIs. This among others will mean, making available enough resources to expand capacity in all respect. This will lead to improved service delivery that will involve *setting up performance-based agencies* in its universities and *holding them accountable for the achievements of outputs or outcomes* (DFID, March 2003).

### **5.3 Cooperation and Outreach**

Our interview result shows on the one hand that there is cooperation between the university and some local companies/industries in terms of generating finance for the university. On the other hand, it demonstrates inadequate cooperation between the university administration and the students or student unions. Controversial, however, is the point that the local companies/industries that contribute financially to the university cannot afford to equally contribute towards policy reforms and research objectives of the university. Their representation in university council meetings seems to remain forever statutory.

Besides others, the essence of cooperation and outreach is to attract and attach the external environment to the university. One of the reasons is to enable society to be witness to the enormous challenges threatening the expansion and growth of its university. It is in this light that the open systems model urges for participatory diagnosis. This means that cooperation and outreach have to be expected to go beyond immediate financial gains. Society expects

the university to establish with it such a cooperation that should encourage reciprocity. The following attributes are considered by the DFID (March, 2003: 5) as important for cooperation and reciprocal outcomes:

- It is incumbent on the institution to determine in what way its problems and constraints are perceived especially by the external environment and try to respond to that agenda. They can then use the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to open up and cooperate with the concerned.
- The institution can seek the views of “disadvantaged” stakeholders, that is, the poor and less powerful members of the community.
- It can look for opportunities to widen horizons and perceptions on what kind of cooperation and outreach is required. This can be done for instance through visits to other institutions excelling in the same domain.
- It can as well be driven by what is needed to get key stakeholders involved and not by a donor timetable.

These are attributes that if taken into consideration will enable the cooperation and outreach policy of the university to meet its desired goals (at least as claimed by DFID). One very outstanding attribute is that which is urging the university (institutions) to embark on good relations with the poor and less powerful of the society. Disadvantaged persons are those who will frequently rise against the status quo and ask for reforms that should give them a sense of belonging or equality. It is important to avoid crisis because they may lead to consequences beyond control. If a good and healthy relationship for example is established between management and the students’ union, it will breed appropriate grounds for problem solving. Such is the kind of cooperation that will contribute in leading management to effectively operate within the framework of its constitutive rules and organised practices as embedded in structures of meaning and resources (Olsen, 2005). In such circumstances, the institution is spared the embarrassment of falling prey to individual preferences and expectations. Also, it is in this situation that output and outcomes stand the chance of greater satisfaction, a situation that avoids discontent and strike actions.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendation of this research. The first part will present the summary of the study. The second will dwell on the conclusion while the third will make recommendations and suggestions for further research on the area.

#### **6.1 Summary of the study**

The study set out to examine the responses and adaptability of higher education institutions to their external environments. Its focus was to evaluate public university reforms and the consequences they have on the relationship between the university and its surrounding environment (stakeholders). The core problem statement of the research was:

How does state regulatory framework affect the leadership and management practices of universities in Cameroon; and how does the outcome of university management then relate to the demands and expectations of other stakeholders?

The methodology used was qualitative. Interviews were conducted and documents (secondary data) analysed qualitatively.

The sample of the study comprised four categories of respondents. They included three administrators of the HE Ministry, three faculty members of the university, four central administrative team members of the university and thirteen students of same university. The student number is highest because of their availability and readiness. The overall number of respondents is only twenty three partly because of the constraints as mentioned in *section 3.5*. Besides, a reasonable amount of secondary data was available to substantiate and corroborate collected data from interviews.

The revelations of the study can be summed up in three categories: the state (regulatory framework), university and other stakeholders (students, parents/guardians, industries/organisations/companies).

From the direction of the state, its regulatory framework seems to be much more structured to tilt the university away from its constitutive rules and organised practices as a community

of scholars than making it more responsive to the needs of the society, and as a representative democracy. This indicates that the administration of the university is pretty much influenced by state institutions. The university is thus confronted and compounded with the ideology of implementing predetermined political objectives. As indicated by Olsen (2005), viewing the university as an instrument for national political agendas would make it vulnerable to state manipulation. The success of public universities in Cameroon to some great extent is measured on how effective and efficient the national purposes and/or agenda of the state are achieved. In the event of a political change at the level of the state, the existing relationship with the university is bound to encounter a relative change. These changes affect the administration and goals of the university.

Government claims that part of its 1993 reforms on HE was to provide universities with more academic and management autonomy. It also claimed that its intention was to expand and increase higher education opportunities and make university programmes more professional and responsive to market forces. This claim is practically in contrast to its assertion. The University of Buea has since 1993 experienced a series of administrative changes effected by presidential degrees in stark contrast to the norm. The enrolment pattern of the university and the nature of programmes offered at the university have hardly changed. It was also found out that appointed personnel are most likely those militating and/or sympathising for the ruling party of the state. It is also likely that neutral persons appointed into the university administration turn to ally along same party lines with the ruling party. It is difficult to explain why. But the overall objective of this analysis is to show the dynamism this would have in the administration of the university.

In as much as the institutional level is concerned, the results show that university authorities are in huge financial problems. The infrastructure of the university is very limited and small in capacity compared to the surging number of present and prospective students. State subsidies are so insufficient and inconsistent that the university is faced with a number of problems as a consequence. This contrasts with government's intention to expand and increase HE opportunities. The institution of a fixed fee for all programmes adds to make it difficult for the university to decide on a number of programmes that reflect directly to market needs and the demands of its clients- the students and their parents/guardians. This situation has been made worse by the community's lack of interest to support the university

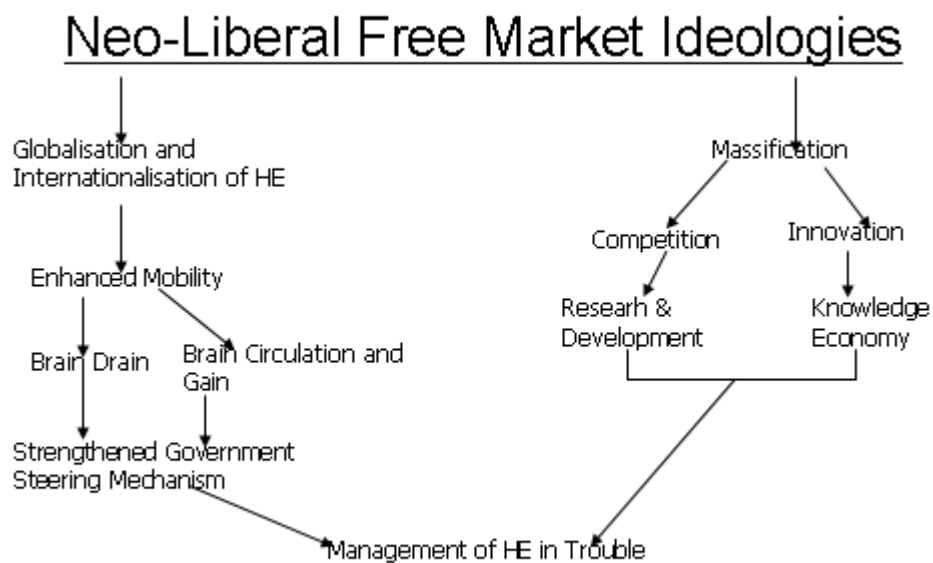
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financially. It is therefore absolutely difficult for the university to pursue a standard and financial plan towards success.

On the part of the stakeholder community, it is found out that UBDEF was created to raise funds and assist the university in its financial ambitions. This means that an external funding base is linked to the university. It denotes some form of financial influence in the administrative affairs of the university. In spite of its link with UBDEF, the university has not been able to create a strong and resilient financial relationship with its external environment. It has not been able to raise as much needed finances as demanded by its goals. One reason for this is the insufficient capacity of the university to enrol and charge additional fees. Another reason is the feeble relationship it entertains with industries/companies that should benefit from its output.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Maassen and Cloete (2006) have ascertained that increasing political hegemony of neo-liberal free market ideologies round about the end of the 1980s established a new world order of socio-economic and political change in the 1990s. This world order induced considerable reform pressures on all sectors of the society, HE included. It also helped to instil a new type of relationship between HE, the government and the rest of the stakeholders in Cameroon. This change in relationship is now seen as one that has weighed more on the university which is regulated by the state; and which at the same time is constantly demanding financial and other support from the government and other stakeholders. In the course of this relationship, the administration of the university has tended to be volatile/dynamic owing to its obligations and commitments to community/societal and/or global changes. Thus, the very existence of the university as a self-governing community of scholars and as a representative democracy is further threatened and diversified. The university now also fundamentally operates as an instrument for national political agendas and as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets. UNIBU is a good example of these situations given that it cannot determine its own tuition fee levels. The administration of the university is then encountered with a series of events necessitating constant change in its practices. The illustration below is a representation of the dynamism in HE management as induced by the economic wind of change in the late 1980s. That is by the neo-liberal free market ideologies:



Culled from, *Institutional Dynamics* (2007) a presentation at the NetReed Conference by Terence Yong Yuh.

### 6.3 Recommendation

Above all, this study suggests that the government of Cameroon should treat its universities as the credence of socio-economic, cultural and political growth of the country. Government should be able to respect its responsibilities with respect to its universities. For example, it should make available required subventions to its universities, and on time. In the same light, government should institute a study loan scheme that should enable university students to pay for the very expensive education programmes needed for the growth of society but that are under-funded. This however should not contrast with the regulatory role of government and the autonomy of its universities. Concrete and regulatory measures should be taken to ensure accountability and promote excellence. In this dispensation, public universities will be able to dispose of enough required income that would enable them meet up with valuable contributions to the growth and development of their communities. More projects will be conceived and researches carried out to deal with some local challenges. On these grounds the operation, functional and pedagogic essence of the universities will relatively be more stable.



On the other hand, public universities in Cameroon should considerably perceive their financial success as not only limited within the nation state. It is vital for them to map out strategies that should win them international recognition. Besides cooperating with local non-governmental organisations, it is necessary to participate with international non-governmental organisations and multi-governmental organisations in support of collaborative research within their means and competence. This is a good and quite valuable source of generating income for the university. Such collaborations could induce the construction and equipping of much needed laboratories and research facilities by foreign donors. The university in this case will be less dependent on the state for most of its funding. This situation will further guarantee its autonomous position and spare it from some of the unlikely managerial instabilities resulting from its interaction with both the state and some other stakeholders.

To avoid inconsistencies in its management and with some of its stakeholders (students and parents/guardian), it is most important for the university in Cameroon to structure its programmes and curriculum to match local and global economic needs. Its programme structure should reflect demands for the knowledge economy. It should strive towards a greater internal complexity that is directed towards research such as interdisciplinary research centers, integration of research elements in the training programmes of students and technological infrastructure for discovery (Mohrman et al, 2008). That notwithstanding, it is important still for the public university in Cameroon to make known the international dimension of its identity. This will encourage the emergence of an exchange programme with other universities. Students and faculty members will have to collaborate with peers and colleagues on an international base and on their campuses. This will help in the acquisition of new knowledge and practices that may help to stabilise the management of deserving universities.

In a country where 53,115 students are enrolled beyond the capacity of public universities, there is absolute need for government to create more public universities to match its demands. Besides, the continuous increase in demand for HE in state universities is an indication that the majority of the cohort can not afford HE in the private sector. With the surging number of Anglophone students deserving to study in their first official language and with francophone students also competing for a place at the university in Buea, there is need for government to react. Its reaction could be feasible with the creation of at least

another Anglo-Saxon university. This will help to ease the problems of congestion, poor teacher-student ratio, poor working conditions and drop-out rates. An improvement in these will help promote management efficiency.

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**Appendix A: Interview Guide-Officials of MINESUP**

1. The introduction: A resume of the objectives of the study.
2. I understand you are ... Your contribution to the growth of HE in this country is immeasurable. You guys are doing a great job.
3. What is your assessment of public HE in Cameroon today?
4. What is the role of the advisory board on HE in Cameroon?
5. What has been their achievement until now?
6. How does it operate?
7. What about state funding on its universities. Does it keep pace with the demand and enrolment growth?
8. Does state allot a constant percentage of support to its universities?
9. What about quality assessment and accreditation. Does the state really border about these?

**Appendix B: Interview Guide-Officials of UNIBU**

1. Introduction: Resume of study objectives.
2. I understand this university is the place to be. Do you think it is in all respect?
3. I understand your position is quite a challenging one; at the same time you are a lecturer. What is it like?
4. How is your relationship with the central administration like?
5. What is your appraisal of government and its regulatory framework?
6. How do government policies affect the functioning of UNIBU?
7. What was it like when you took over this function?
8. What about your programme structure?
9. What about your relationship with other stakeholders?
10. What do you think can help you out of these numerous challenges...what do you think can be done to better the situation?



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**Appendix C: Interview Guide-Students of UNIBU**

1. Introduction-Resume of study objectives.
2. UNIBU-the place to be. What do you think about this?
3. Do you like the administration?
4. Lots of strike actions in recent years; why?
5. What about your study programme. How is it going?
6. How do you like the programme?
7. What about your performance on the programme?
8. Where you influenced by any particular thing to choose this programme?
9. How do you intend to use the programme?

**Appendix D: Guide for Documentary Review**

1. Governance of HE in Cameroon.
2. State regulatory framework on HE in Cameroon.
3. Other stakeholders' involvement in HE in Cameroon.
4. The University of Buea.