

# Geneses and Transitory Hallmarks of Education Boards in Southern/West Cameroon, 1954-1972

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## ABSTRACT

*The Southern Cameroons Education Board created in 1954 and transformed to the West Cameroon Education Board in 1961, was appropriated within a post-colonial context of divergent perspectives to educational management. Such diversity in perceptions though discordant, is depictive of the dichotomy in the colonial experiences of the regions presently conterminous with the French-speaking and English-speaking sections of contemporary Cameroon. This paper uses primary and secondary data to analyze the foundations and transient profile of the education board. The paper reveals that the foundation of Education Boards in Southern Cameroons and later West Cameroon imposed a new orientation to educational management reflective of the British/Nigerian experiences. However, Reunification introduced new exigencies in education policy making such as Indigenization, Harmonization, Bilingualism and Ruralisation. Attempts made by the West Cameroon Education Board to adapt to the changing times was rather perceived differently by the Federal Government. In its struggle for survival, sound traditions and practices of the inherited English subsystem of Education Boards gained roots in the mind of a majority of inhabitants in present day North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.*

*Keywords: Boards, decentralization, Education, hallmark, management, Southern Cameroons, West Cameroon, transitory*

## I. Introduction

Educational management is defined as a quest to put the formal education system under control, regulation or supervision, in order to carefully use scarce human and material resources via cooperative efforts in the establishment of institutions of learning, attracting best staff, conducting teaching in an effective and efficient manner.<sup>1</sup> With the twilight of the twentieth-century, most developing countries adopted reforms in educational management. Such reforms were inspired by the World Bank which also recommended decentralization as a suitable alternative in assuring quality education.<sup>2</sup> In parallel, Francois Calloids succinctly captures the need to decentralize educational management, arguing that:

Increasing efficiency in management and governance...in cases where state bureaucracy appears heavy and slow...to tackle issues of teacher deployment, teacher payment, purchase and distribution of equipment and material or maintenance of buildings, decentralization appears to be the solution.<sup>3</sup>

This argument highlights the expediency in the decentralization of educational management such as: faster identification of problems; search for more appropriate response; taking into account that people want to be consulted and involved in decision making that concerns them directly; clarifying lines of accountability; and

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph B. Besong, *Educational Management Perspectives for Students and Practitioners in Cameroon* (Limbe: Presprint plc, 2016), 3-5.

<sup>2</sup>World Bank Report, 1997 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 129.

<sup>3</sup>Francois Calloids, In preface; *Decentralization of education: why, when, what and how?* (eds) Noel McGinn and Thomas Welsh (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), 9.

assuming that scarce public funds will be used more carefully (*paraphrased*).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile Arendt postulates that education provides the basis for development and empowerment and plays a vital role in building character and transmitting one's culture, belief and values to other members in a particular society.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, studies by Tatto<sup>6</sup>, Hawkins<sup>7</sup>, Chikoko<sup>8</sup> and Ikoya<sup>9</sup> emphasize the need for either policy reforms or institutional restructuring in the responsiveness of educational management to quality education delivery in developing countries. The results of these studies can be used to tailor the debate towards addressing the stalemate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2003, Nigeria passed educational decentralization legislations devolving roles such as the appointment, deployment, emolument, discipline and promotion of teachers to local education boards and committees.<sup>10</sup> However, Cameroon preferred institutional restructuring as depicted by Decree No. 2004/320 of 8 December 2004. This Presidential Decree disintegrated the former Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) into four autonomous ministries, charged with the management of basic, secondary, higher and vocational education. Apparently, the remonstrance of Cameroon Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions from October 2016 was consequent to backlashes of over centralization in educational management. It is therefore primordial to find a possible tangent between the resilient attitude of the English Speaking regions and the more docile attitude of the other eight regions in Cameroon.

This study revisits the defunct Southern Cameroons and later West Cameroon Education Board because of earlier ambitions nursed to build and preserve a uniquely English styled education system adapted to the needs of the local population. However, due to disruptions imposed by post-colonial realities, these aspirations remained farfetched. The paper argues that Southern Cameroons Education Board created in 1954 and metamorphosed into West Cameroon Education Board in 1961, was appropriated within a post-colonial context of divergent perspectives to educational management. Diversity in perceptions though discordant, reflects dichotomy in the colonial experiences of the regions presently conterminous to French-speaking and English-speaking sections of Cameroon. As an analytical lead, excluding the historical background, the paper handles some crucial themes evolving from the origins and dynamics of the Southern Cameroons Education Board to the transitional features that accompanied the birth and life of the West Cameroon Education Board. But first, a concrete historical background is necessary in order to guide subsequent discussions on the geneses and transitory hallmarks of these education boards.

## II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Erstwhile, African indigenous perspective to educational management incorporated the parents of the child and the community as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Fanfunwa believes the goal of the indigenous system of education was skewed depending on the realities of indigenous communities since education was needs-based.<sup>12</sup> Supporting this position, Pai Obanya contends that education was informal and inseparable with the customs and traditions of the natives.<sup>13</sup> To Moumouni the curriculum was fully capable of supplying the necessary elements to maintain in all its essentials, the level attained by the society in the economic, social, technical

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 9.

<sup>5</sup>Hannah Arendt cited in V.B. Ngalim, *Critical Thinking in Education: An Introduction to Philosophy of Education in the African Context* (Yaoundé: EBARV PRINT CORPORATION, 2015), 115-118.

<sup>6</sup>Maria T. Tatto, "Education Reform and State Power in Mexico: The Paradoxes of Decentralization", *Comparative Education Review* 43, No.3 (1999):251-282.

<sup>7</sup>J.N. Hawkins, "Centralization, Decentralization, recentralization: Educational reform in China", *Journal of Educational Administration* 38, No.5 (2000):447.

<sup>8</sup>Vitalis Chikoko, "Educational decentralization in Zimbabwe and Malawi: A study of decisional location and process", *International Journal of Educational Decentralization* 29, No.3 (2009):208.

<sup>9</sup>Peter O. Ikoya, "Decentralization of educational development reforms in Nigeria: a comparative perspective", *Journal of Education* 45, No.2 (2007):199.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 199.

<sup>11</sup>M.B. Gwanfogebe, "Africa's triple education heritage: a historical comparison", In *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education curriculum* (eds.) Bame Nsamenang and Therese Tchombe (Bamenda: HDRC, 2011), 20-22; 42-45.

<sup>12</sup>Babatunde Fanfunwa, *A history of education in Nigeria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974).

<sup>13</sup>Pai Obanya, "Culture-in-education and education-in-culture", *A paper presented at the fifth Conference of African Ministers of Culture, Nairobi* (2005): 2.

and cultural domains.<sup>14</sup> The London Baptist Missionary Society (LBMS) is credited to have pioneered the management of formal education in Cameroon before 1884.<sup>15</sup> Under the auspices of the Home Board of the LBMS, schools opened by early English missionaries operated using a specified rationale. Accordingly, the number of schools as well as pupils' enrolment increased. This phase of educational management has been blamed for the inability of Western education to reasonably transform coastal indigenous societies in Cameroon. Gwanfogbe explains that instead of responding to the needs of the indigenous people, its scope was limited to the evangelization and "civilization" mission of the early missionaries.<sup>16</sup>

In the German colonial era, education was pitched on satisfying the needs of German traders and missionaries while consolidating the superiority of the German civilization in Cameroon.<sup>17</sup> The education conference that held at Douala in 1907 contemplated a unified approach to educational management. Issues addressed by the conference included the structure of the curriculum, language of instruction, educational financing, school attendance, school discipline, fixing school going age, duration of elementary course and vocational training. Although imposing the colonial government's control over educational matters, it reiterated government commitment to collaborate with other stakeholders in providing educational services to the indigenous people. The absence of indigenous representation is indicative of Western supremacist approach to educational management akin to this era.

The resolutions of the education conference culminated into the education ordinance of 25 April 1910. In parallel, the education ordinance empowered the Language Examining Board and Examination Board to regulate and supervise aspects regarding the implementation of government language policy and guarantee uniform examination standards across German Kamerun. These boards were set up at the level of districts, with a senior government official appointed as Chairman by the colonial Governor, alongside two non-official members nominated by the Christian Missions.<sup>18</sup> Fanso believes one of the greatest achievements of German rule in Cameroon was in the field of education.<sup>19</sup> However, a report published by the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions asserts a contrary view in that:

the type of education that was being provided in Africa, which (the American Board of Foreign Missions) felt that African societies were not deriving full benefits from whatever was being invested mainly because the system was not related to the economic and social needs of the people....The educational policies of the governments and missions have hitherto been inadequate and to a considerable extent unreal so far as the vital needs of the Africans are concerned...many of the missions have yet to realize the full significance of education in the development of the African people....<sup>20</sup>

This gloominess of Western education in Africa (as projected by the American Presbyterian Board of

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<sup>14</sup>A. Moumouni, *history of education in Africa* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1968).

<sup>15</sup>The LBMS was the first Western Christian missionary society to send missionaries to the Cameroons River in 1844. Its activities included the establishment of western type education along the coast of Cameroon. The Home Board of the LBMS framed regulations, ensured supervision and staffing, and authorized opening of new schools. Between 1860 and mid-1870s, English Baptist Mission schools in Victoria and Bimbia were managed by John Pinnock, with some new schools opened at John Akwa and Hickory towns in 1862 and 1864 respectively, see Jacob A. Ihims, *A Century of Western Education in Cameroon: A Study of its History and Administration, 1844-1961* (Bamenda: Unique Printers, 2003), 5.

<sup>16</sup>M.B. Gwanfogbe, *Changing Regimes and Educational Development in Cameroon* (Bamenda: Unique Printers, 2006), 41.

<sup>17</sup>Harry Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914: A case study in Modern Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1938), 353-357.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 47-51.

<sup>19</sup>V.G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for secondary schools and colleges vol 2: the colonial and post-colonial periods* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 43. This perspective seem to resonate with educational achievements during the era of German colonial rule, i.e. about 34, 117 pupils enrolled and 531 operational primary schools by the dawn of the first world war in Cameroon, see Martin Amin, "Report on the demand for primary education in Cameroon 1980-1995", *In World Bank Study* (1997):23; Victor E. Mukete, *My Odyssey: The story of Cameroon Reunification-With Authentic Letters of Key Players* (Yaoundé: Eagle Publishing, 2013), 27-28.

<sup>20</sup>Emmanuel A. Aka, *The British Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A study in colonialism and underdevelopment* (Platteville/Maddison: Nkemnji Global Tech, 2002), 56-57.

Foreign Missions) influenced Britain to earmark reforms in her colonial system of education by the end of World War I. In Cameroon, the war led to German capitulation to the West African Expeditionary Forces on 20 February 1916.<sup>21</sup> As an integrated part of the British colony of Nigeria, British colonial educational reforms were extended to Southern Cameroons. This heralded the era of a more cooperative approach to the management of education.<sup>22</sup> In this connection, the conception of the Southern Cameroons Education Board stemmed from British/Nigerian experiences during the period of the League of Nations' Mandate and United Nations' Trusteeship.

### III: ORIGINS AND DYNAMICS OF SOUTHERN CAMEROONS EDUCATION BOARD

The League of Nations' Mandate Agreement of 20 July 1922 in its Article 9, gave Britain full powers of administration and legislation within her own sphere of Cameroon. For administrative convenience, Britain decided to further partition it into Northern and Southern Cameroons and also administering them as appendages to her Nigerian colony. As a continuation of her colonial governance system in Africa, Britain adopted the Indirect Rule policy as well as the philosophy of adaptation in education. These two vectors can be considered precursors to inclusive management of education in Southern Cameroons.

Indirect Rule provided an institutional framework whereby indigenous rulers, otherwise referred to as district heads, were integrated into the colonial administration as Native Authorities.<sup>23</sup> More so, the British thrust to indigenous rulers the duty to provide educational facilities in areas under their jurisdiction.<sup>24</sup> To Ngoh, this was intended to educate the indigenous people towards managing their own affairs and enabling them to modify their own institutions to conform to "civilized" standards.<sup>25</sup> However, Indirect Rule took into account the supervisory role of the district administrators and department of education despite the steadfastness to an inclusive management of education in Southern Cameroons.

The philosophy of adaptation in education was necessitated because, prior to 1922, Western education imported from Europe, was never adapted to the needs and environment of the Africans—who were beneficiaries to whom that type of education was destined.<sup>26</sup> In order to better orientate British colonial educational policy in Tropical Africa, the Phelps-Stokes Commission was assigned to provide a detailed study. The findings of this commission summoned an advisory committee on education to advise the British Secretary of State in the Colonial Office responsible for native education matters in British colonies and protectorates in Tropical Africa.<sup>27</sup> The advisory committee made suggestions that informed the memorandum on British Educational Policy in Tropical Africa in March 1925, stating *inter alia*, that:

...education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible, all sound and healthy elements in the fabrics of their social life, adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas. Its aim should be to make the individual more efficient in his or condition of life, ensure the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The First World War broke out in Europe in early August 1914 and by late August of the same year, the war was extended to Cameroon by a contingent of Allied forces. By February 1916, German forces conceded defeat and were ousted from Cameroon, thus marking the end of German rule in Cameroon.

<sup>22</sup>The British sphere was acquired following the conclusion of the Anglo-French Partition of Cameroon on 10 July 1919 and consisting of an approximated total surface area of about 88000km<sup>2</sup> or a fraction of 1/5 of the former German Cameroon. Britain later renamed the territory Southern and Northern Cameroons, administering them as appendages to her Nigerian colony. See T. Eyongetah & R. Brain, *A History of the Cameroons* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1974).

<sup>23</sup>V.J. Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Constitutional History* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 2-3.

<sup>24</sup>Huge Vernon-Jackson, "Schools and school systems in Cameroon, 1884-1961" (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1968), 330.

<sup>25</sup>Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 7.

<sup>26</sup>Aka, *The British Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A study in colonialism and underdevelopment*, 61-63.

<sup>27</sup>HMSO, "Terms of reference for advisory committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa", In *Education policy in British Tropical Africa* (Great Britain, March 1925), 4.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid*, 3-4.



In summary, the philosophy affirmed an ideal approach to education that was adapted to grassroots needs, albeit considering ever-changing global situations. Extrapolating from Ndi's thought, the effectiveness of educational management in British Southern Cameroons was largely dependent on the cooperation of three key stakeholders, namely; government, voluntary agencies and Native Administration.<sup>29</sup> This was done to meet expectations projected in the philosophy of adaptation and produce better fruits for British colonial education in Africa. Therefore, the British Colonial Office used the March 1925 Memorandum to formulate the Nigerian education ordinance of 1926, going operational in the Southern Cameroons in September 1927.<sup>30</sup>

The Nigerian education ordinance of 1926 integrated education boards and committees in the management of education in Nigeria and the Cameroons. A central Education Board was established in Lagos to serve as the highest arbiter in matters relating to education. The role of the Education Board was clearly defined by legislations, with composition of members democratically and transparently conducted. This was so that outcomes of Education Board deliberation reflected a broad spectrum of the entire population. Seemingly, inadequate representation of the Southern Cameroons' provincial school committee left so much to be desired from the Board of Education for the Colony and Southern Provinces in Nigeria. In addressing the Board of Education for the Colony and Southern Provinces, Reverend Father Simon Staats<sup>31</sup> stated in his own words that:

[A majority of the people of Southern Cameroons] felt that they were at a disadvantage in comparison with those in Nigeria. It was hard to send boys to Nigeria for further training... *coupled with the fact that* the demand for secondary education was becoming more and more insistent...the people felt that all good jobs were given to Nigerians...education generally in the Cameroons was behind that of Nigeria...while things are at a standstill in the Cameroons....<sup>32</sup>

Nfon Mukete, an authentic eye-witness, shares his childhood experiences that corroborate Father Staats' position.<sup>33</sup> The need for inclusive management of education at grassroots level was emphasized further by the 1947 Memorandum on Education, highlighting that:

...increased educational facilities cannot be provided with advantage except with the cooperation of the communities concerned. The stage has been reached at which popular education will cease to be popular unless the communities concerned have a measure of control: and popular share in the control depends on the creation of some machinery of local government. It is recommended, therefore that education committees be established in each province.... It is already clear that these committees have been welcomed by the people and that they have come to stay.<sup>34</sup>

Even though the Provincial School Committee was upgraded to a Provincial Education Committee by 1949, educational facilities in Southern Cameroons were still in a very deplorable state. This was apparently because competencies of these committees varied considerably and accordingly.<sup>35</sup> In fact, out of the divisional or local education committees established in Southern Cameroons, the Victoria Divisional education committee was the most effective.<sup>36</sup> This therefore raised concerns about the extent to which education should expand to the remotest parts of Southern Cameroons. With main aim to ensure that a fully

<sup>29</sup>Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Vital Lessons for Cameroon* (Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 62-64.

<sup>30</sup>Nichodemus N. Yongho, *History and Philosophy of Education of the Cameroon System* (Bamenda: Graphics Printers, 2007), 116.

<sup>31</sup>Father Staats was supervisor of Roman Catholic Mission schools in Southern Cameroons and described as Bishop Rogan's minister of education by Robert O'Neil. He was the first nominated representative of the Southern Cameroons to the Education Board for the Colony and Southern Provinces of Nigeria in 1938, Robert J. O'Neil, *Mission to the British Cameroons* (London: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1991), 62-66.

<sup>32</sup>Minutes of the Eight Meeting of the Board of Education, Sb/a (1939), NAB, 266-267.

<sup>33</sup>V.E. Mukete, *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification*, 349-350.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria, Sb/a (1947) 17, NAB, 7.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ihims, *A Century of Western Education in Cameroon*, 47.

participatory approach towards education was achieved via the democratization of educational management. This led to the devolution of functions from the divisional or local education committees to officially recognized Boards of Governors. The first of such recognized Boards of Governors included Government Teacher Training College, Kumba; Basel Mission College Bali; Roman Catholic Mission Boys' College Sasse and Bambui Institute of Agriculture. Members of the Boards of Governors were expected to always think independently and avoid accepting blindly the suggestions of other members. In fact they were required to show "constructive interest in the affairs of the school, understand the education code, school reports, (...undertake) thorough investigation...and (give) prompt judgment".<sup>37</sup>

The Southern Cameroons exercised a persistent desire for greater involvement in her own affairs, independent of Nigerian control. This stirred consternations about the minority position of the territory in the Nigerian Eastern Regional Education Board<sup>38</sup> and necessitated the drafting of the Lyttelton Constitution in January 1954. The creation of the Quasi-Federal state in Southern Cameroons influenced the amendment of the Nigerian education ordinance. According to the 1954 report of the British Colonial Office, "the education ordinance was applied to the Southern Cameroons as if it was a region and references to a Regional Director were declared to mean...the chief education officer for Southern Cameroons".<sup>39</sup> In 1954, the Board of Education was created in Southern Cameroons as a statutory organ of government to properly guide the educational decisions of the Executive Council. This was primarily because the Southern Cameroons Education Board was born out of the desire to cultivate sound English traditions and practices in the training of young Southern Cameroonians.<sup>40</sup> More so, the commencement of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly on 26 October 1954 guaranteed the autonomy of the Education Board. On 21 March 1955, the first session of the Southern Cameroons Education Board was inaugurated at exactly 10 a.m. in Buea by the Commissioner of Southern Cameroons, E.J. Gibbons.<sup>41</sup>

The British/Nigerian experiences largely influenced the composition and functioning of the Southern Cameroons Education Board. This was partly due to the desire to keep up with educational changes in the Nigerian Federation, hence making the Education Board to be fashioned in the British/Nigerian model. Membership in the Southern Cameroons Education Board was clearly stipulated by the Adaptation Laws of 1954 that amended the Nigerian Education ordinance of 1952. By February 1955, the first Education Board was constituted with the tenure of its membership limited to three years.<sup>42</sup> The Commissioner of Southern Cameroons played the role of the Governor General of Nigeria in engaging members nominated to the Southern Cameroons Education Board.

Nomination of members was done by the main educational stakeholders—government, voluntary agencies and Native Administration (N.A.), whose interests were represented on the Education Board. The interest of government was represented by the department of education and other departments concerned with education matters. Voluntary agencies consisted of confessional organizations as well as parastatal and private proprietors involved in the educational sector. Representatives of confessional organizations were principally supervising teachers while public parastatals like the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) were represented by school managers. The N.A. representatives were nominated by N.A. councils upon consultation with Divisional or local education committees. The process of nominating N.A. representatives was democratized in order to ensure grassroots representation on the Education Board. The criterion was fixed by the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons while the process evolved transparently under the supervision of Native Council authorities. Those considered ineligible for nomination as N.A. representatives were mostly teachers. In addition, nominees were expected to be reputable for good character and moral uprightness in their communities of residence. Whenever more than one candidate were considered for nomination, secret ballot votes were cast to make sure that only unanimously accepted candidates became N.A. Council nominees.<sup>43</sup> Native Authority representatives were expected to acquaint themselves with

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<sup>37</sup>Board of Governors, Educational Institutions, Sb/a (1949) 1, NAB.

<sup>38</sup>Vernon-Jackson, "Schools and school systems in Cameroon, 460.

<sup>39</sup>Caleb A Gopte, "Education Boards in Southern-West Cameroon(s), 1954-1972: A quest for an educational identity (M.A. dissertation, University of Bamenda, 2020), 44.

<sup>40</sup>Address of the Hon. Minister of Social Services to the Board of Education meeting on 22 February 1960, NAB.

<sup>41</sup>Board of Education, Southern Cameroons, Sb/a (1955) 4, NAB.

<sup>42</sup>Nigerian Education Ordinance of 1952 amended by adaptation of laws 1954 (L.N. 131/1954).

<sup>43</sup>Board of Education, Southern Cameroons, Sb/a (1955) 4, NAB.

essential knowledge of the education ordinance and educational needs of the localities they represented.

In 1955, the Education Board was composed of the chief education officer; an adviser appointed by the chief federal adviser on education; the woman education officer for Southern Cameroons; Bambui rural education officer and principals of GTTC Kumba and Government trade center Ombe. Supervising teachers of the three main Christian mission primary schools and principals of Saint Joseph College Sasse and Basel Mission College Bali represented the interests of denominational organizations in Southern Cameroons. Non-officio members included Native Authority representatives from each of the Divisional education committees as well as representatives of CDC and proprietors of private schools. Two other members included a very prominent woman in the community appointed by the commissioner and a teacher representative nominated by the Nigerian union of teachers. Capriciously, modification of membership on the Education Board depended largely on exigencies of the changing times.

The Southern Cameroons' attainment of a full regional status in 1958 redefined the composition of the Education Board in 1959 as follows: Director of Education, Chief Federal Adviser on Education or his representative, one woman education officer nominated by the director of education, the principals of Bambui institute of Agriculture and Ombe trade center. Each of the denominational organizations was represented by one representative often a supervising teacher for primary schools. The Roman Catholic Mission appointed a representative to defend the interests of secondary schools while the protestant missions jointly appointed a representative to represent the interests of teacher training centers. The six divisional educational committees were represented by Native Council representatives while the Southern Cameroons Union of Teachers sent one representative. By associating representatives with diverse aspirations and expectation, Government was very keen on broader perspectives shared during deliberations on the Board.<sup>44</sup> Even though, government was inclined to bridge the gap between idealism and resources available for achieving maximum improvement and benefit to the Southern Cameroons as a whole.

With regards to its functioning, the Education Board exercised a considerable degree of autonomy. During deliberations and debates, democratic values typical of Anglo-Saxon traditions were internalized. Accordingly, representatives were required to passionately and freely express themselves on a wide range of issues concerning primary and post-primary education, and further studies. Specifically, review activities of the education department; reduce wastages in the school system; regulate government grants-in-aid and education rating schemes; expand educational facilities to remote areas; draw up the curriculum, syllabuses and timetables; retain malcontented teachers in the teaching profession; and foster cooperation between government and other educational stakeholders. Equally, the Education Board could propose strategies to improve the level of educational progress in the territory. In tackling educational concerns that affected Southern Cameroons, it also provided a platform for striking a balance between professionalism and broader aspects outside the field of education. The intention was to adapt educational changes to the expectation of those to whom educational facilities were destined. Furthermore, the Education Board gave the Executive Council a second opinion on all government actions concerning education matters.

The work of the Education Board was well-defined and time-bound. Board members gathered in Buea twice annually and often completed the task thrust to them in two or three days. In parallel, government took the responsibility of providing transportation and lodging reimbursements to representatives on their arrival to Buea. This was done in order to create a conducive environment for the representatives who had prioritized the business of government above their own individual affairs.<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, government frowned at representatives who were appointed but failed to attend the opening session of the Education Board meeting without any prior notification. Absentee members automatically lost their membership in the Board.<sup>46</sup> The main venues of the Education Board meeting in Buea included the hall of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly – where the first meeting took place, as well as facilities hosting the education office, Department of Education and the Library in the Prime Minister's office at Buea.<sup>47</sup>

In plenary sessions of the Education Board meeting, the Director of Education took the role of Chairman. He

<sup>44</sup>Address of the Hon. Minister of Social Services to the Board of Education.

<sup>45</sup>Board of Education, Southern Cameroons, Sb/a (1955) 4, NAB.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Annual Report of the Education Department, Sb (1959), NAB, 17 & 19.

was assisted by a secretary who was responsible for taking down minutes of the meeting. As was the tradition, the chairman opened the meeting with a welcome address and laid out the agenda of the meeting, emphasizing the importance of the task thrust to them. In case of a deceased Education Board member, the Chairman requested that all members observe a moment of silence before continuing with the business of the day. The Chairman asked the secretary to read aloud minutes of the last meeting of the Education Board. Once the reading of the previous minutes was done, members were tasked to either adopt or propose items in these minutes suitable for revision.<sup>48</sup> Afterwards, the secretary outlined the agenda of the current session while the chairman called on members to give their own views (based on personal observations and experiences) on the items discussed. Usually, deliberations were characterized by prolonged debates, but the Chairman provided clarification wherever necessary. Meantime, a period of about one hour was reserved for short break, to permit the Board members to be refreshed before continuing with the day's business.

The technical aspect of the Board's work was carried out by specialized Standing Committees and sub-committees.<sup>49</sup> Assuming these committees were already constituted, their reports were read at the plenary. If such committees were nonexistent, then the chairman appointed competent members based on expertise, competence and ability to co-opt other members. This bias was necessary due to the fact that the work of these committees was technical and needed expert interventions. Standing Committees worked in collaboration with the department of education. Therefore members were permanently disposed to participate in the drawing of the curriculum, syllabuses and timetables as well as approve textbooks and other publications. A good example of a Standing Committee was the Principals' Committee which had the responsibility to review the curriculum, syllabuses and timetables.

The work of the Standing Committees was complemented by sub-committees which functioned on ad hoc basis. These ad-hoc committees were necessitated whenever the work of the Education Board was uncompleted and wherever the need arose to follow up decisions taken by the Board. This involved groundwork investigation, verification and confirmation. In addition, sub committees were formed to ensure the co-optation of government officials, standardize setting and grading of examinations and also ascertain eligibility for the award of scholarships.<sup>50</sup>

Deliberations at the Board's plenary session generated prolonged debates which very often were resolved through secret ballot votes. It is worth mentioning that members of the Southern Cameroons Education Board were classified into officio and non-officio members. Officio members were mainly representatives of the department of education while non-officio members were representatives of N.A. Councils and voluntary agencies. This can be justified by the fact that N.A. Council representatives had been elected into the Education Board.<sup>51</sup> The appointment of officio members to the Education Board was unilaterally done by the Executive Council. Yet, the chairman of the Board reserved a deciding vote that was only used in situations of deadlock in the Board's proceedings. In essence, a total of fifteen members were eligible to vote, but only two-third of the total votes cast validated the resolution of the Board.<sup>52</sup> After thorough articulation, scrutiny and even secret ballot votes cast by members at plenary, the Education Board prepared a memorandum on educational policy to properly direct government actions in matters relating to educational reforms. The goal was to demonstrate unanimity and democratic principles which implicated members in government's approach to address educational concerns of communities across Southern Cameroons.

A remarkable achievement of the Southern Cameroons Education Board was the expansion of education to the remotest parts of the territory. This was accompanied by an exponential increase in enrolment, creation of new schools and development of post-primary education. The Education Board was determined to reduce to the barest minimum the number of Southern Cameroonian students going to Nigeria for further studies. Beyond increases in enrolment and new schools opened, government equally increased expenditure on education.

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<sup>48</sup>Southern Cameroons, Board of Education, Sb/a (1958) 2, NAB.

<sup>49</sup>Board of Education, Report of the Timetable sub-committee of the Southern Cameroons, Sb/a (1956) 6, 138.

<sup>50</sup>Annual Report of the Education Department, Sb (1959) 1, NAB.

<sup>51</sup>Southern Cameroons, Board of Education, Sb/a (1961) 2, NAB.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.



**Table 1: Impact of Southern Cameroons Education Board on the Expansion of Education**

Year	N° of primary schools	Enrolment	N° of sec. schools	Enrolment	Expenditure (£)
1953	159	34, 345	3	394	202, 000
1954	358	37, 307	3	426	244, 055
1955	-	44, 566	3	450	256, 000
1956	385	46, 754	4	468	274, 000
1957	-	50, 600	4	460	333, 000
1958	-	54, 900	4	513	338, 000
1959	-	64, 000	4	571	380, 000
1960	-	73, 400	4	660	418, 475
1961	499	86, 257	6	903	502, 170

**Source: Statistics compiled from Gwanfobge, *Changing Regimes and Educational Development & Tchombe, "Structural Reforms in Education in Cameroon"*.**

The statistics above depict efforts of the Southern Cameroons Education Board to prioritize the expansion of educational facilities, thereby triggering a steady increase in government expenditure on education from 1953 to 1961. These funds were provided through grants-in-aid and education rating schemes. Thus, marking exponential increases in number of primary schools opened as well as the number of pupils enrolled. In the domain of secondary education, the first all girls' secondary school was opened by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1956 at Okoyong, near Mamfe. The Basel Mission College Bali, created earlier in 1949 was transformed into Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali in 1958. The Government Trade Center Ombe created in 1952 was expanded by 1954 to accommodate more apprentices and trades, as well as provide opportunities in technical and commercial education. In addition, vocational training was developed in order to increase opportunities for those primary school leavers who sought careers from domestic science and handicraft.<sup>53</sup>

More so, the Southern Cameroons Education Board forged cooperation among different stakeholders in the educational sector. This paradigm trickled to Divisional or local education committees, Board of Governors and even Parents Teachers Associations (PTA). This was due to the fact that representatives of the Education Board were implicated as conveyors or agents of government's educational vision and actions. Hence, the grassroots population was properly edified on the outcome and resolutions of the Education Board. Educational concerns raised were constantly reviewed at grassroots level. With dialogue forged formally on platforms such as the Education Board, Divisional or local education committees, Board of Governors and PTA. Even when government did not have adequate means to address every concern raised, the population was thus abreast with challenges faced as well as the latest trends in educational reform. Collectively, the grassroots population was implicated in the quest to achieve a common educational destiny for the Southern Cameroons. This was the case with the education rating scheme and assumed local contributions intended to assist government in providing quality education at an affordable cost to the majority of those within the school going population.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, impediments to the Southern Cameroons Education Board included insufficient resources and overdependence on the Federal Education Board of Nigeria. Before independence was granted to Nigeria on 1 October 1960, the Southern Cameroons Education Board received a representative of the Chief Federal adviser on education. His mission was to ensure that policy making and approval of details for local application respected uniform standards compared to other regions in Nigeria.<sup>55</sup> This stifled decision making by the Southern Cameroons Education Board, especially as educational changes required the amendment of certain provisions in the Nigerian Federal constitution and education ordinance. This was however dependent on the pace of constitutional changes in Nigeria.

<sup>53</sup>Southern Cameroons, Education Matters, Sb/a (1958) 4, NAB.

<sup>54</sup>Annual Report of the Education Department, Sb (1959) 1, NAB.

<sup>55</sup>Southern Cameroons, Education Matters, Sb/a (1958) 4, NAB.

In addition, shortage of resources impaired the Education Board's ability to enforce very high standards on voluntary agencies. As a result, voluntary agencies repeatedly complained about the insufficiency of grants-in aid allocated to them for the provision of educational facilities. In fact, there was hardly a moment when representatives of the recognized union of teachers did not complain about the deplorable conditions of voluntary agency teachers. Albeit, Government was optimistic that reunification presented prospects for greater educational achievements, particularly in the development of practical fields in training younger generations of Southern Cameroonians. According to Gwanfogbe, Southern Cameroons had fought and gained the cherished decentralized education system by achieving regional status in the Nigerian Federation.<sup>56</sup> This experience couched the mindset of most Southern Cameroonians about federalism and the readiness of the Foncha Government to manage their own affairs. Though the Education Board survived after reunification in 1961, but with it came divergence in perceptions towards a suitable educational management approach in the reunified Cameroon. In order to prove this point, it will be expedient to look at the transitional features that accompanied the metamorphosis of the Southern Cameroons Education Board into the West Cameroon Education Board.

#### IV: TRANSITION TO WEST CAMEROON EDUCATION BOARD

The reunification of Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1961 introduced new dynamics in the management of education in the area conterminous with British Southern Cameroons. This change in name from Southern Cameroons Education Board to West Cameroon Education Board was reflective of the status gained as a result of Reunification – as spelt out in the Federal Constitution of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1961. The West Cameroon Education Board was therefore poised to preserve most of the inherited English values and traditions in education, while adhering to the changing times.<sup>57</sup> Determined to preserve the community centered approach in managing regional education, the West Cameroon Education Board was also concerned with national educational concerns such as Indigenization, Harmonization, Bilingualism and Ruralisation. This new paradigm shaped the composition and functioning of the West Cameroon Education Board during the decade old Cameroon Federation.

The development of educational management in West Cameroon was inclusive. That is, education policy making was to reflect the aspirations of the community as a whole. In the general considerations of the West Cameroon Education Ordinance of 1963, education was believed to be an investment in human material which could reap rich dividends. This necessitated a broad-based approach whereby the West Cameroon Government desired to bring everyone on board, either directly or indirectly. Hence, it was necessary to ensure the formation of responsible citizens who aspired to be useful to their own communities. To achieve this, the place of women was recognized on the West Cameroon Education Board. This is justified by the increased number of women appointed to the Education Board in 1963, notably; Mrs K.E. Idowu (education officer), Reverend Mother Mary Aquinas (QRC Okoyong), Miss L. Webber (WTTC Mankon) and Mrs. D.E. Atabong (secretary).<sup>58</sup> Apart from representation on the Education Board, the place of women was very significant in West Cameroon as a whole, as projected in the address of Honorable Ndamukong at the opening of the Bamenda Domestic Science Refresher Course on 22 April 1964. According to him, the building of healthy homes and preservation of key aspects in the African culture depended on the active role of West Cameroonian women.<sup>59</sup>

Inclusiveness was further demonstrated by community financing schemes introduced to assist the West Cameroon Government in providing educational facilities. Such schemes included the assumed local contribution and education rates payable by eligible adults in all communities in West Cameroon. The assumed local contribution was a stipulated sum required by the school to cover operating expenses such as teachers' salaries and didactic materials. This amount was not uniform because confessional schools charged higher compared to schools controlled by the government, private proprietors and Native Administration. Local communities opted and committed themselves to make monthly contributions in order to reduce the total cost incurred in providing educational facilities. An idea initiated by some communities in the Mamfe

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<sup>56</sup>Gwanfogbe, *Changing Regimes*, 147.

<sup>57</sup>T. Eyongetah and R. Brain, *A History of the Cameroons*, 159. See also, V.J. Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*, 155.

<sup>58</sup>West Cameroon, Board of Education, Sb/a (1963) 4: File No.P385/S.2 of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1963, NAB.

<sup>59</sup>Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, "Address by the Secretary of State, the Hon. L.M. Ndamukong at the opening of the Bamenda Domestic Science Refresher Course", *West Cameroon Teacher's Journal* 2, No.4(1964): 8.

Division – such as Ntenako, Ndekwai, Ossing and Kembong.

In this regard, the West Cameroon Education Board session of 1964 debated on the idea of making education rating a regional scheme in West Cameroon. It forwarded recommendations to the Secretary for Education which led to the adoption of the West Cameroon Education Rating Scheme of 1965. The scheme was supervised by Local Government Councils and was paid by taxpaying adults in the form of tax rates. The main aim was to lessen the financial burden of parents as well as encourage the enrollment of many more children within the school going population. Therefore, people who did not have any child in school automatically subsidized those who had many children enrolled in school. The scheme was however limited due to the fact that it did not exceed primary education.

Furthermore, the Education Board sustained the educational vision of the West Cameroon Government in ensuring the all-round development of the human personality. This involved matching education with character formation. Emphasis was placed on sound religious training and insertion of religious instruction in the curriculum of schools. The intention was to cultivate good morals and civic responsibility in pupils and students. In drawing up the curriculum of schools in West Cameroon, the Education Board took into account extra-curricular activities like physical education, music, community service and even the formation of a student government. Ejedepang-Koge shares his experiences as a student leader and chorister in Basel Teacher Training College Batibo and Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology Bambili.<sup>60</sup> Nostalgic about this era are Ngonangie, Ayukeba and Tasi Tang who attest that the school prepared pupils and students for communal life.<sup>61</sup> Evidently, the regular renewal of the educational system indicates the influence of the Education Board in addressing the manpower needs of West Cameroon. This resulted in the diversification of education to include grammar and practical education. Hence, educational progression was expected to cover pre-school, secondary school, sixth form, teacher training, pre-university as well as grammar and technical universities.

Additionally, the policy of indigenization was necessary to address manpower needs in the newly independent and reunified Cameroon. Crafted at the Federal level, the policy was implemented in West Cameroon along the lines of its constitutional specificities. Hitherto, the withdrawal of British/Nigerian expatriates made the man power concerns of West Cameroon dire.<sup>62</sup> Ndi believes the first response of the Foncha government was to *Cameroonize* the West Cameroon public service.<sup>63</sup> Hence, A.D. Mengot was appointed to the office of Director of Education, while Eugene Awa Ekiti and E.K. Martin became education secretaries of the Basel and Cameroon Baptist Missions.<sup>64</sup> The composition of the West Cameroon Education Board maintained a broad-based representation, with members drawn from different works of life. This was intended to guarantee all round efficiency as well as ensure Government's appropriation of a truly inclusive regional system of education in West Cameroon.

To achieve this, the role formerly played by the commissioner of the Southern Cameroons was usurped by the Prime Minister. This included constituting and convening the Education Board. More so, the West Cameroon Education Board was attached to the Secretary of State for Education and Social Services, who was answerable to the West Cameroon House of Assembly. Although representation of Government and voluntary agencies on the Education Board remained largely unchanged, the number of Divisional representatives increased from six to eight in 1961. Entrusted with full powers over educational matters, the Board was expected to make enormous contributions in the advancement of education, necessary for the provision of the manpower needed for the development of the region.

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<sup>60</sup>S.N. Ejedepang-Koge, *In the Service of People: My Roots—An Autobiography* (USA: Xlibris, 2013), 135-163.

<sup>61</sup>Augustine Ngonangie, aged 81, retired secondary school teacher. Interviewed by Gopte Caleb Animbon at Bambui, March 2018; George Ayukeba, aged 67, ex-pupil of government school Mamfe. Interviewed by Gopte Caleb Animbon at Bonadikombo-Limbe, 15 April 2018; Lucas Tasi Tang, aged 72, former Deputy Director of Examinations in MINEDUC. Interviewed by Gopte Caleb Animbon at Mile 3-Bamenda, 28 March 2018.

<sup>62</sup>Edward A. Podesta, *Education and Manpower, Volume VII of: The Economic Potential of West Cameroon priorities for Development* (California: Stanford Research Institute, 1965), 29-33.

<sup>63</sup>Anthony Ndi, *Southern-West Cameroonns Revisited (1950-1972) volume one: Unveiling Inescapable Traps* (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2014), 70-73.

<sup>64</sup>West Cameroon, Board of Education, Sb/a (1963) 4.

By 1963, the composition of West Cameroon Education Board was modified. Official representatives appointed to the Education Board by the Secretary of State for Education included the Director of Education, Inspector of Education, a Woman Education Officer, one education officer and principal of Government Trade Center Ombe or his representative. Representatives of confessional institutions on the Education Board included the education secretaries of the Roman Catholic Mission, Basel Mission and Cameroon Baptist Mission schools and a representative each for the Roman Catholic Mission Teacher Training Colleges and Protestant Teacher Training Colleges. Additional members included; seven Local Council representatives appointed by the secretary of state for education, one member appointed to represent the interests of CDC schools, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Education and Social Services or his representative and one member appointed by the secretary of state for cooperatives and community development.<sup>65</sup>

The post-reunification period was also marked by diversity in approach towards harmonization. This was envisioned to blend best aspects of the inherited educational subsystems into a single Cameroonian system of education.<sup>66</sup> Educational aspects assigned to the Federal Government and Federated States were clearly distinguished in the Federal Constitution of 1961. In parallel, Decree No.62/1F/84 of 12 March 1962 created the Federal Ministry of National Education in order to accede the role of the Federal Government in the management of national education. Also, the visit of a UNESCO mission between 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March 1962 reiterated the need to harmonize national education.<sup>67</sup> The West Cameroon Government was thus, expected to approach educational management in a way that favors a harmonized national system of education. For this purpose, West Cameroon Education Board sessions of 1962 and 1963 spared no efforts in making proposals. Though in favor of harmonization, the desire to protect specificities in the English subsystem of education was strong among members of the Board. Standing Committees and Subcommittees advised the Education Board on the strategies to adapt harmonization to needs of West Cameroon. The main aim was to place the Federated State of West Cameroon in a better position during Federal deliberations on harmonization.

Glaringly, the perception of the Federal Government was not exactly the same as that of the West Cameroon Government. The manner in which harmonization reforms were dictated to West Cameroon substantiates Fonkeng's claim that the Federal Government desired a highly centralized educational system.<sup>68</sup> Yet, West Cameroon Education Board was required to advice on ways to adapt Federal harmonization reforms to the needs of West Cameroon. After debates in plenary and specialized committees, the Education Board proposed a Memorandum on Education Policy that inspired the West Cameroon Government to pass the Education Ordinance of 1963. Issues concerning the harmonization of the date of resumption, length of primary and secondary school course were addressed by the West Cameroon Education Ordinance of 1963. To this effect, the month of September marked the resumption for all schools in West Cameroon and the primary school course reduced from eight to seven years while the length of the secondary school course was fixed at seven years.

At first, the Federal Cultural Delegation in West Cameroon was placed under the control of the Director of Education. Thus, A.D. Mengot managed the two services concurrently between 1961 and 1965. It was until 1965 when these services were to be managed separately. S.N. Shu assumed the office of Director of Education, Tanyi Mbuagbaw was Federal Cultural Delegate in West Cameroon while Honourable L.M Ndamukong was the Secretary of State for Education and Social Services. It is worth stating that the process of harmonizing educational structures was orchestrated by the Federal Government. However, the West Cameroon Education Board was very instrumental in designating those members who took part in the West Cameroon delegations during the different harmonization meetings organized by the Federal Government.

During meetings of the harmonization commissions and Higher Council of National Education, the West Cameroon delegation was better organized. Yembe states that at the debut of each session, the West

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<sup>65</sup>West Cameroon, Board of Education, Sb/a (1963) 4.

<sup>66</sup>L.I. Tambo, "Strategic Concerns in Curriculum Development for Cameroon Schools", In Educational Development in Cameroon, 1961-1999 (eds.) T.M. Ndongko and L.I. Tambo (Platteville: Nkemnji Global Tech, 2000), 153.

<sup>67</sup>UNESCO, *Cameroonian Education Planning Group: Report drawn up on return of the first mission, 10<sup>th</sup> March-20<sup>th</sup> May, 1962* (Paris: UNESCO, 1962), 43.

<sup>68</sup>George E. Fonkeng, *The History of Education in Cameroon 1844-2010* (Bamenda: Maryland Printers, 2010), 101.



Cameroon delegation often made reference to a common working document prepared during consultative meetings held among them.<sup>69</sup> This was the case with the first harmonization committee meeting in Yaoundé from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966. Prior to this meeting, consultations took place among members of the Principals' Committee who met in Kumba on 31 August 1965. It should be recalled that the Principals' Committee was a Standing Committee of the West Cameroon Education Board; responsible for reviewing the curriculum, syllabuses and timetables. By the end of the meeting, which lasted two days, participants prepared a report containing proposals to the Federal Minister of National Education.

A telegram message from the Federal Minister of National Education, William Eteki Mboumoua lauded the initiative taken by the West Cameroon Principals' Committee.<sup>70</sup> By the time the first harmonization committees met at Yaoundé in January 1966, members of the West Cameroon delegation were fully prepared and debated on a common platform. Such inclusive and participatory approach was reflected in all successive preparations of the West Cameroon delegation. No wonder they could easily chart a distinct course in sessions during plenary and workshops of subject commissions in the harmonization commission meetings. West Cameroon delegates were determined to preserve key aspects of the English educational heritage. In the end, harmonized syllabuses prepared by specialized subject commissions hinged on the work of the Higher Council for National Education and four harmonization commissions that met between 1966 and 1971 in towns like Yaoundé, Buea and Douala. The inability of these harmonized syllabuses to see the light of day can only be blamed on the lack of political will.<sup>71</sup>

Also perceived differently was bilingualism. The Federal Constitution of 1961 hinted on the bilingual nature of the Cameroon Federation (English and French as official languages). This altered the language policies of the Federated States, as French and English either became first or second foreign language. The West Cameroon Government was now supposed to emphasize the teaching of French as a second foreign language in her own subsystem of education. To achieve this, the West Cameroon Education Board was expected to seek ways of adapting bilingualism to the needs of the region. However, the Education Board chose a gradual approach towards bilingualism. In proposing the 1963 West Cameroon Education Ordinance, the Education Board felt that French should be made compulsory only for secondary and post-secondary institutions. This was intended to avoid "maladjustment" in young learners at the level of primary schools, who did not have any solid foundation in the English language.<sup>72</sup> The hope was to achieve a "graduated bilingualism", either by conscious or unconscious means, or by more frequent social contact with the citizens of the Federated State of East Cameroon.

Contrarily, the Federal Government considered a more aggressive approach to bilingualism. This included the opening of the Bilingual Grammar School at Man O'War Bay in 1963, transferred later to Buea in 1970. More so, Bilingual Grammar Schools were opened in Yaoundé, Mamfe, Bamenda and Nso. In addition, the Federal Government established a linguistic center at Buea with courses offered in the French language. The Radio Buea was opened as well as language laboratories to facilitate the dissemination of programs in the French language.<sup>73</sup> All these paved way for French intrusion in the affairs of West Cameroon. Even Fonlon who earlier advocated for bilingualism expressed shock at the fast pace at which the French language found inroads in West Cameroon.<sup>74</sup> Extrapolating from Altbach's contention, financial assistance cannot be separated from policy goals of the donor country or government.<sup>75</sup> In this connection, Fonlon's fears of a possible "cultural absorption" might have been justifiable.<sup>76</sup> Konings and Nyamnjoh observe that unparalleled

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<sup>69</sup>Omer W. Yembe, *Harmonization Commission for Secondary School Programmes. General Report, Part I, Social Studies and Language*, Yaoundé, 1971.

<sup>70</sup>John Ngwene, *An Introduction to the Cameroon Educational System* (Bamenda: Mella Press, 1990), 45.

<sup>71</sup>V.B. Ngalim, "Revisiting the Political Will in Educational Development: The Case of Cameroon," <https://www.academia.edu>, accessed on 29 April 2021 at 2:45am.

<sup>72</sup>Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, *West Cameroon Education Policy; Investment in Education* (Buea: Government Press, 1963), 2.

<sup>73</sup>C. Courade & G. Courade, *Education in Anglophone Cameroon 1915-1975* (Yaoundé: ONAREST, 1977).

<sup>74</sup>Bernard N. Fonlon, "Language Problem in Cameroon: A Historical Perspective", *ABBIA* 5 No.1 (1969):49.

<sup>75</sup>P.G. Altbach, "The distribution of knowledge in the Third World: A case study in neocolonisation", In *Education and Colonial Experience* (New Brunswick, 1984), 273.

<sup>76</sup>Bernard N. Fonlon, "We Will Make or Mar?" *Cameroon Cultural Review, ABBIA* No.1 (1964):11-12.

attention was paid to the teaching and learning of the English language in East Cameroon.<sup>77</sup> According to Torrent, this was because French presence was “pervasive” compared to the much more “restricted” British presence in the affairs of Cameroon.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the perception of some West Cameroonians towards Ruralisation as a policy in education seemed antagonistic. Though consistent with earlier efforts made by the West Cameroon Government, to Ndille the approach of the Federal Government was like replacing six with half a dozen.<sup>79</sup> In West Cameroon, domestic science centers had been opened as well as school exhibitions, agriculture and handicraft included in the curriculum of schools, which can be credited to the Education Board. Yet, the Federal Government approached Ruralisation in West Cameroon the same way as East Cameroon. Probably the hope was to ensure uniformity in the second five years development plan to be realized between 1966 and 1971. Consequently, *Institute Pédagogique d'Applique Rurale* (IPAR) was first established at Yaoundé in 1967 and later at Buea in 1974. The main purpose was to develop research in order to enable the provision of syllabus, teachers' guides and aids adapted to opportunities provided by the rural environment. At the grassroots level, the implementation of Ruralisation was challenged by teachers and parents. According to Yaro, some teachers felt teaching did not include soiling oneself in the farm.<sup>80</sup> While some parents likened Ruralisation to be a ploy by the political class to deprive children of the poor from white collar opportunities and access into the public service.<sup>81</sup>

## V: CONCLUSION

Education management has been approached from varied scholarly standpoints. This study provides an insight into the contemporary situation in Cameroon. It explored the geneses and transitory hallmarks of Education Boards in the Southern and later West Cameroon(s). Emerging from the desire to appropriate the archetype of English-oriented education, Education Boards were empowered to seek the best strategies possible to properly direct government actions on education development. In 1961, the West Cameroon Education Board was appropriated on the strands reflective of education management established during the British colonial rule in Nigeria and the Southern Cameroons. The approbation for a colonial paradigm in the management of education, by some means, sidetracked from the popular trend in post-independence Africa to decolonize the collective colonial project. The study has appreciated the budding phases and major dynamics of Education Boards. The investigation revealed that the boards were broad-based in composition, democratic in structure and autonomous in deliberations. The expansion of education to nooks and crannies of the Southern Cameroons was the collective enterprise of diverse and fertile deliberative outcomes emanating from plenary sessions and specialized committees of the Education Board. In the process of debates on education, suggestions were often assessed from the angles of educational professionals and strategic stakeholders. Fascinated by this, Government was very keen on the deliberative resolutions and consequently made frantic efforts to design education policies that responded to the proposals made by the Education Board. The reunification of the two Cameroons came with a new experience that tilted educational reforms to centralized Federal control. In spite of the impediments to attain the goals of the Education Board, the British/Nigerian colonial educational experience remained engraved in the minds of several West Cameroonians. This somehow informed their limited harmony of interest with the calls for indigenization, harmonization, bilingualism and ruralization that characterized the post-independence education reform era. It is in this nostalgic context that the culture of British inherited educational system reverberated among diehard adherents of the old-order. As an expression of conservative loyalty they petitioned and revolted against any attempt to what was considered as an ‘educational reference structure.’

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<sup>77</sup>Piet Konings & Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003).

<sup>78</sup>Melanie Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 76.

<sup>79</sup>Roland Ndille, “From Adaptation to Ruralisation in Cameroon Education Policy, 1922-2002: Replacing six with half a dozen”, *African Educational Research Journal* 3, No.3 (2015):153.

<sup>80</sup>Loveline Yaro, “Post-Colonial Curriculum Policies and Implementation Trends in Cameroon” (PhD thesis, University of Buea, 2016).

<sup>81</sup>Ndille, “From Adaptation to Ruralisation in Cameroon Education Policy, 1922-2002”, 161.

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