

# Tracing the Evolution of Decentralization Policy in the Ministry of Basic Education in Cameroon, an Overview of the History and Challenges of the Process

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explored Cameroon's decentralization policy in the context of educational reforms which entails the adoption of universal legal framework which aims at universalizing free primary education such as that from the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education for All (EFA) by 2015 and the Dakar 2002 Action Framework. Basically, the government strives to provide free education to pupils, so as to support the underprivileged and enable them read and write in a bid to reduce illiteracy and to bring education to the people. This paper is also anchored on the observation that every major decentralized education throughout the world has to involve some legislative changes to the law. In the case of Cameroon, decentralization constitutes a legal, institutional and financial means through which regional and local authorities operate to foster development with the active involvement of the population. Assessing the legal framework and implementation by various stakeholders shows that the decentralization laws passed over the years in Cameroon have local development and governance as their main thrust. But this review posits that the process for the adoption and implementation of the decentralization policies is slow, partial and seemingly unserious thus barricading the smooth functioning of Basic Education in Cameroon. Unfortunately too, empirical science has narrowly escaped the decentralization process as it pertains to Education (primary) in Cameroon. As such, this paper acts as a clarion call for more studies to understand how the process unfolds in Cameroon and how it affects the primary education sector.

**KEYWORDS:** Decentralization, decentralization policy, Education

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and the basis for progress in every country; reason why schools exist to assist learners to become the best they can be intellectually, physically, morally, psychologically, spiritually, socially, culturally and professionally. According to the 1998 Law (Section 4) as cited in Tambo (2003) the general goal of education in Cameroon at the level of nursery, primary and secondary education is to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and smooth integration into society bearing in mind prevailing economic, socio-cultural and moral factors.

This law is further supported by Law No. 2001/055 of 16 April, 2001 on the orientation of Higher Education acknowledging education as a national priority which entails that quality outcome in education is vital for economic growth and development of the country. Education should therefore be flexible such that it can adapt to the ever changing socio-economic and political needs of the society given the diversities in cultural settings and advancement in technology.

In education as in other fields of human endeavour, every official action of an organisation must have a backing or a basis; hence the need for a policy that serves this purpose. A policy defines the area in which decisions are to be made. However it does not make the decision but provides general guidelines that facilitate decision-making as well as direction for educational activities. The formulation of an educational policy sets the stage for implementation which, according to Ukeje (1986) is perhaps, the most important aspect of planning. Planning is usually an action which succeeds policy formulation but precedes implementation.

There is no way the goal and objectives of an educational institution can be achieved without putting in place certain mechanisms towards ensuring the success of such institutions. In the school system, part of the integral prerequisites to be put in place towards the actualization of the educational goal and objectives requires adequate provision of resources, maximum utilization and appropriate management of education resources to avoid wastages and improve the quality of the teaching-learning process in the academic environment. The administration of a school institution has as responsibility bringing together various

**How to cite this paper:** Ngong Gaius Mufua "Tracing the Evolution of Decentralization Policy in the Ministry of Basic Education in Cameroon, an Overview of the History and Challenges of the Process"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-4 | Issue-3, April 2020, pp.771-780, URL: [www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd30620.pdf](http://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd30620.pdf)

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resources and allocating them effectively to accomplish the general goals of education (National Teachers Institute - NTI, 2006).

The government has an obligation to prepare her citizens for life in a world that is characterized by rapid social, economic, political and technological changes. The relevant levels of government have been investing a substantive resource in setting up educational institutions for this purpose (NOUN, 2010). According to Okendu (2012), human and material resources are to be assembled together by educational administration, within the school system for effective teaching and learning cannot be over emphasized. This is possible through harnessing the available resources allocated to the schools to realize the goals of education.

Across the world today, decentralization as a policy is becoming a panacea for broader political and socio-economic problems plaguing nations. Decentralization is not an automatic remedy. The dangers of decentralization have been listed by many, and include a lack of capacity causing macro instability (Prud'homme; 1995; Tanzi, 1995). To others, there is the diversion of funds in decentralized settings (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004) while still others have warned of the dangers of capture by local elites (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000). According to Dillinger (1994), 84% of countries having a population of more than 5 million had adopted decentralization as their main developmental strategy.

Conyer (1983) as cited in Sutiyo (2014) anecdotically called decentralization as *"the latest fashion in development administration"*. In Africa, over the past 30 years the aims of decentralization has been that of improving efficiency and making educational policy more relevant and responsive to the increasing and challenging needs of local people (Cabral, 2011). The importance and impact of raising education quality gives weight to the question; *"Can educational decentralization raise quality?"*. Implicit in this is the assumption that increase participation in schools would lead to democratic governance, increase accountability, and empower communities towards their own development (Khan, 2002; World Bank, 2000).

The inability of the central government to reach its citizens effectively suggests that something else is necessary. The continuing strength of the democratic norm in the city and countryside demonstrates the persistent desire of people to participate in the management of their own affairs (Kasfir, 1993). According to the 2009 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) which presents as reference, a framework for government action over the period 2010-2020, the Cameroon government plans to extend nursery school coverage by developing community experience for the benefit of the rural population and with the strong involvement of decentralized local authorities. This extension of pre-school education translates into improved infrastructure, personnel and the implementation of integrated and flexible programmes. At the primary level, the goal of universal primary education for all is still top priority where the quality of education services is expected to significantly improve.

Schools exist to address community needs and that of the individuals. In fact, an educational policy regulates and

control conduct of the national education system as well as provides a basis for the daily administration (Mbua, 2003).

Decentralization gives a voice and power to local leaders and school personnel who are believed to have firsthand knowledge of what is happening in schools in their communities as well as what it takes to contribute towards quality school outcomes than the central government.

In order to understand the process of decentralization especially in the Educational sector in Cameroon, this paper explores its historical path internationally and narrows it down to the context of Cameroon as it pertains to governments' policy towards decentralization as enshrined in the constitution. It is worth noting that decentralization in education in Cameroon can only be understood if its conception and execution is regarded through the lenses of the government and the constitution. However focus is narrowed down to the educational sector. It should be noted here that policy formulation is translated into budgeting decision and that policy implementation will be influenced not only by the capacity of the implementers but by the socio-political and cultural condition of the community.

### **The concept of decentralization**

Decentralization refers to delegating centralist authorities on decision making, planning and public service operations to a local organization or institution (Poteete, 2004; Arslan & Atasayar, 2008; Kessy & McCourt, 2010). The World Bank defines decentralization as passing centralist authorities and responsibilities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations, or to local administration units which are at a lower level. The purpose of decentralization in the public sector is to enhance productivity, democratization, accountability, and equality in delivering services, participation in decision making, decreasing the workload of the central government in order to minimize its responsibilities (World Bank, 1999; Cinkir, 2010).

Winkler and Gershberg (2000) state that decentralization in education focuses on discussions to redefine to what extent educational financing, effective use of sources and productivity and the power of decision making will be. When considered from this point of view, decentralization promotes managerial effectiveness and flexibility. In addition, by giving citizens the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, their cultural and educational needs will be met more easily (Florestal & Cooper, 1997).

### **The evolution of decentralization**

Decentralization has its roots from the neo-liberal philosophy with the view that favours strong local governance, use of market forces, professional autonomy and private provision of education thus rejecting government role over education (Lauglo, 1995). Neo-liberal policies advocating decentralization lays emphasis on the fact that school systems should be reformed in order to be democratic, efficient, accountable responsive to the community and to empower teachers and parents towards improving quality education.

According to Zajda (2004) decentralization reforms can be traced back to the 1960s and widely put to practice in many countries in the 1980s. With the disappearance of military autocratic governments in Latin America between 1970s and

1980s, emerging democracies increasingly looked at educational decentralization as a way to improving administrative services, increase the quality of education, share power with the local citizenry and stakeholders, advance the pace of national development, foster sense of ownership, improve student and teacher motivation, increase parents participation and increase community willingness to contribute financially to education. According to Hanson (1997), this reform became a worldwide movement spanning from the Federal systems of government (e.g. Argentina, India, Nigeria, and the United States), unitary systems (e.g. Colombia, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea), and large countries (e.g. Australia, Canada, and Spain) to small countries (e.g. El Salvador, Malta, Nicaragua, and Zaire).

Amongst the earliest decentralized nations, the impetus for transferring decision-making authority to local governments was usually a broader political and economic reform. In much of Latin America, for instance, decentralization formed an integral part of wider political democratization movements (Litvack, 1998). In the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, decentralization of education authority accompanied the important shift from a command to a market economy (De Grauwe, 2005). In other countries such as South Africa and Sri Lanka, decentralization emerged as a tool for addressing ethnic diversity and conflict (World Bank, 2008). Hence the goals and perspectives for decentralization varied as it was envisaged to address different issues affecting the life of the country.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been significant progress in literature on educational decentralization. The most crucial development perhaps has been the growing consensus that inputs such as desks, textbooks and blackboards are not enough to enhance learning (Hanushek, 1995; Glewwe & Kremer, 2006). This consensus resulted in an enhanced focus by governments and donors alike on governance reforms such as decentralization. A concomitant development has been the increased availability of data on students' attainment which has permitted more rigorous evaluations on the impact of decentralization on quality education.

The persistent and widespread issues of poor quality education and ill-equipped educational institutions especially in developing countries and the strong push by donors towards achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals have been a strong force fueling the policy of decentralization. This makes an inventory of all the education decentralization programmes that have been implemented since 2000 not only close to impossible, but also of limited analytical value in understanding policy evolution. The wide implementation of decentralization policy has focused on decentralization of power and decision-making processes concerning the organization of curriculum, financial management, personnel management and resource allocation in the various sectors of the country (Ainley & McKenzie, 2000; Zajda, 2004).

Accelerating economic development by modernizing institutions, promoting democratization, increasing local control through de-regulation and enhancing the quality of education by reducing dropout rates and increasing learning are often interrelated goals driving the change towards

decentralization policy in education (Hanson, 1997). The proponents of decentralization who borrowed heavily from modern management in industrial and commercial organizations in the 1980's believe that all stakeholders of schools should share the decision-making power at the school level (Samad, 2000).

Decentralization, since the middle of the 1980's is transforming the structure of governance in Africa given that most countries have started transferring powers, resources and responsibilities to their sub national governments or local government. The introduction of the decentralization policy is the most important determinant of decentralization in Africa. Most citizens and donor organizations consider decentralization a practical way of hiring services to neglected peripheries, obtaining more equitable distribution of public services and increasing popular participation. Therefore, the drive to empower local authorities and their communities to take charge of their development through decentralization is not a new phenomenon in the African system of government nor a novelty as far as Cameroon is concerned (Nforbin, 2005).

For more than three decades following independence in 1960, Cameroon functioned under a highly centralized government structure. The need to consider local interest has always preoccupied Cameroonian legislators who after consecrating the co-existence of the local administration and that of the central state during independence, proclaimed in the constitution of 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1972 that Cameroon is a decentralized unitary state with three strata namely the Central State, the Regions and Councils. The Regions and Councils are the decentralized local authorities which are endowed with legal personality and management autonomy.

The Constitutions of 1961 and 1972 stressed the unitary nature of Cameroon, attempting to foster national unity between its Anglophone and Francophone parts and its different ethnicities. The country's 1961 constitution established two decision-making bodies namely the Presidency and the National Assembly which operated at the national level (Ndongko, 1974). As far back as 1986, the President of Cameroon acknowledged the need to introduce decentralization in order to "make the people aware of their responsibilities and develop their sense of participation". Cameroon embarked on a course towards government decentralization in January 1996 when the government promulgated Law No. 96-06, which effectively amended the 1972 Constitution (Ischer, Tamini, Asanga, & Sylla, 2007). From year 2000 onwards, international institutions urged the government of Cameroon to implement decentralization as part of its efforts to achieve the cancellation of its international debts. The government responded with the introduction of the Laws on Decentralization in 2004, which empowered local authorities to become active players once financial and human resources are put at their disposal.

Decentralization in its current form is based notably on the constitution embodied in Law No. 96/06 of 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1996 where Cameroon became a decentralized unitary state made up of regions and councils as regional and local authorities respectively. On the strength of the provisions of article 55 of the said constitution; decentralized local entities of the Republic shall be regions and councils, decentralized local authorities shall be legal entities recognized by public



law, they shall enjoy administrative and financial autonomy in the management of local interests and they shall be freely administered by boards elected in accordance with conditions laid down by law.

The decentralization implementation process received a boost with the promulgation on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2004, of three laws/bills in Cameroon namely: Law No. 2004/017 on the Orientation of Decentralization, Law No. 2004/018 to lay down the rules applicable to Councils and Law No. 2004/019 of the '*Orientation Strategy Paper on the implementation of decentralization*' prepared by the then Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD). These laws replace the hitherto laws of 1974 on local councils with their multitude of subsequent amendments. Under the provisions of the laws of 2004 (Article 23:1, Orientation Law), decentralization is by devolution of powers accompanied by the transfer of financial, material and human resources, to local entities. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization is responsible for government policy on territorial administration and local government. Since then, the legal framework of decentralization in Cameroon has been completed by successive amendments.

Circular No. 2008/013 of 17 January, 2008 relating to the inclusion of decentralization in sector strategies called on the various administrations (Ministries) to mainstream decentralization which entails the deployment of their services and policies on the field. This was reinforced by the Prime Minister with June 2009 as deadline for Ministers to forward their respective programmes for the transfer of powers and resources to the Local Service Inter-ministerial Committee (LSIC) for scrutiny and amendments. It should be noted that the main bodies in charge of monitoring the decentralization process included the National Decentralization Council, the Inter-ministerial Committee on Local Services, the National Finance Committee and the Inter-ministerial Commission for Decentralized Cooperation. The Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL) created by presidential decree of March 2, 2018 became operational in August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018; the Head of State stressed the missions in Article 1(2) that the Ministry is responsible for elaborating, following up, putting in place and evaluating government policy in matters of decentralization, as well as the promotion of local development. On 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 the pioneer Minister of MINDDEVEL, Georges Elanga Obam held talks with members of the United Cities and Councils of Cameroon (UCCC) who saluted the efforts of setting up the ministry that will facilitate the implementation of decentralization and consequently boost local development through councils. However they made the following proposal:

- A harmonious and integrated strategy for the transfer of resources from the central authorities to the decentralized communities in a bid to optimize the functioning of the state,
- The amount of state resources allocated to decentralization should be raised to at least 10%.
- The need to help Councils manage their resources and meet their set goals.
- The need to finalize the status of local elected official and the staff of decentralized territorial communities

Opening the first ever General Conference of Councils in Yaounde on January 6-7, 2019 that brought together 360

mayors, 14 government delegates, municipal Councilors, etc; the Prime Minister, Head of Government and Special representative of the Head of State, Joseph Dion Ngute stressed government commitment in accelerating the decentralization process in Cameroon. The conference had as theme "*Deepening decentralization for a new face of local councils in Cameroon*". Key issues addressed in workshops included; the legal and institutional framework governing councils in Cameroon as well as the transfer of powers, planning and local development, management of council resources and local governance.

The creation of this ministry by Decree No. 2002/216 of 24 August 2002, now divided into two as the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) and Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL) in 2018, seems to translate the will of the state to advance the process of decentralization while at the same time taking into account imperatives of preserving national unity and social cohesion in a country characterized by social and cultural diversity. All councils have similar responsibilities and powers for service delivery with the exception of the sub-divisional councils, which have a modified set of powers. Council responsibility for service delivery includes utilities, town planning, health, social services and primary education.

The National Governance Programme (PNG) which is composed of decentralized and local development sub-commissions liaises with the Directorate in charge of Councils in the MINATD towards the implementation of decentralization. Also, the Local Government Training Centre (CEFAM), Special Inter-communal Equipment and Support Fund (FEICOM) are other specialized state institutions under MINATD that are meant to assist Councils in the implementation of the decentralization policy. FEICOM plays two useful roles in decentralization. It collects and redistributes the additional council surtax and provides financial grants and loans to Councils.

The Local Government Training Centre (CEFAM) is responsible for providing training and refresher courses to municipal staff. On the subject of capacity building, MINATD in partnership with other development cooperation agencies embark on a vast training of municipal councilors and officials on leadership and council management, with focus on how to be effective in their task. Councils constitute the power hub of local communities; they possess the ability to influence the extent to which communities contribute to local development projects.

Currently, Presidential decree N°. 2020/111 of 02 March 2020, transformed the aforementioned institution into Cameroon's National School of Local Administration-NASLA. It is a public administration and a professional establishment with a distinct legal personality, and financial autonomy. Placed under the technical control of the Ministry in charge of Decentralisation and financial authority of the Ministry in charge of Finance, NASLA, according to Article 2 of the decree shall be responsible for training personnel in 'Local Administration.' This implies the personnel will be schooled on the administrative management of councils, regions and other aspects of decentralised services.

The created institution replaces the Buea-based school that trained all staff of local governance in Cameroon popularly

known by its French acronym CEFAM. NASLA's creation, observers hold, is an exhibition of the will of the President of the Republic towards accelerating the process of decentralisation as Article 5 (1) says the establishment has as mission ensuring the professional training of personnel in domains specific to local administration in conformity with the general orientations defined by government.

This has been reiterated in the presidential decree No 2019/024 of 24 December, 2019 bill to institute the general code of regional and local authorities. **Section 3:** (1) The North-West and South-West Regions shall have a special status based on their language specificity and historical heritage. According to Chapter III, Section 161a of the said decree, the following powers shall be devolved to councils:

- Setting up, managing, equipping, tending and maintaining council nursery and primary schools as well as preschool establishments, in keeping with the school map;
- Recruiting and managing the teaching and support staff of the said schools;
- Acquisition of school supplies and equipment;
- Participating in the management and administration of state and regional secondary and high schools through dialogue and consultation platforms

The greatest investment a nation can make is believed to be the one committed to the training of its citizens. This is why investment in human capital is key to the development of every nation (Mbua, 2003). Many countries have reformed their educational systems, due to the repeated failure of centralized structures to inspire the school personnel and foster the pre-requisite attitudes, opinions and behaviours that are necessary for generating improvements in school outcomes. The Cameroon government exemplified a democratic attitude when it summoned in 1995 the National Education Forum which was a consultative body aimed at making proposals for the formulation of a new educational policy for Cameroon. According to Mbua (2002), one of the rationale or objective for the holding of the national forum on education was the lack of a proper education policy. The current orientation of the national educational policy includes;

- The consecration of education by the National Constitution as a major mission of the State. This assertion comes from the preamble of the constitution of 16<sup>th</sup> January 1996 states that:
  - The state guarantees the education of the child
  - Primary education is compulsory
  - The organization and control of education at every level is the responsibility of the state
- The recognition of education as national priority. Law No 98/004 of April 1998 on the orientation of education in Cameroon and Law No. 2001/005 of April 2001 on the orientation of higher education both contain explicit purviews on this in their article 2 and 3 respectively.

According to the Sector Wide Approach (2006) for Education, the laws of 1998 and 2001 thus assigns new orientation to the Cameroon educational system with mission to train citizens who are deeply rooted in their culture, but open to the world and respect the general interest and of the common goal;

- The promotion of science, culture and social progress;

- The solidification of the sense of ethnics and of national consciousness;
- The promotion of democracy and of the development of democratic spirit
- The development of creativity, of a sense of initiative and of an enterprising spirit,
- The training and improvement of managerial staff;
- The promotion of bilingualism and the mastering of indigenous language;
- The search for excellence in every field of knowledge;
- The physical, sporting, artistic and cultural training of the child,
- The promotion of hygiene and health education
- The education on the family.

Basic education represents an indispensable domain in the promotion of children's rights and welfare and the development of a nation. Education is a basic human right that builds the capacity of individuals (UNESCO, 2005). According to laws of 1998 and 2001 assigning new orientations to the Cameroonian educational system, education is to train citizens who are rooted in culture, but open to the world.

According to the Sector Wide Approach Document (2006) the primary school is the major system of training which ensures the child's fundamental education and that the state assigns it the objective of providing a solid base for the continuous training and development of the Cameroonian child. The other levels of education and training build on the primary level. For this reason its vocation is to inculcate in the child the essential learning tools (reading, writing, oral expression, counting, problem solving) and the basic educational contents (knowledge, aptitudes, values, attitudes) which the young Cameroonian needs to be able to solve the immediate problem of survival and of leaning all through his life.

Cameroon is a bilingual country with two sub systems of education i.e. the Anglophone Sub System (which dominates in the two English speaking regions) and the Francophone Sub System (dominating the French speaking regions). Each of these systems has its own uniqueness and specificity when it comes to method of evaluation and certification. For instance in the Anglophone Sub system, a primary school pupil completes with a FSLC while in the Francophone, they obtain a BEPC.

At first, Cameroon had only one Ministry of Education but thanks to the decentralization policy that segmented it into three namely Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) which is concerned with Nursery and Primary Education, Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) which deals with Grammar, Technical and Commercial studies), and the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP). Education in Cameroon is generally oriented by the State through these ministries who supervises the curriculum and pedagogic activities in all the schools under them.

Cameroon is divided into ten administrative areas called Regions. These Regions are in turn divided into 52 Divisions, which are further divided into Sub-Divisions. There are 374 local government councils, consisting of 360 Municipal Councils and 14 City Councils. Constitutional amendments in 2008 made provision for an intermediary regional level of

local government, but implementation is still a process. With respect to decentralization, Basic education is headed by Regional Delegates at the Regional level who in turn supervises the Divisional Delegates monitoring the Inspectors of Basic Education.

However the Inspectors of Basic Education work with the Mayors to ensure the smooth running of schools in the municipality. Specifically, Inspectors oversee the activities of Head teachers of various primary schools in the Sub Division who are answerable or report to them. It should be noted that Cameroon has both public and private schools at all levels. Public schools are set up, financed and managed by the State while for private schools, responsibilities lie in the hands of the proprietors while government exercising pedagogic control though it sometimes offer financial assistance called subventions.

According to Fonkeng (2010) Cameroon's educational system has always been centrally managed with little decentralization especially the devolution of power and responsibility to the various levels or different interested parties. However, as part of Cameroon's decentralization strategy, responsibilities of education management especially at the level of Basic Education (including coordination of pedagogic activities and administrative personnel management) has largely been transferred to Regional, Divisional and Sub Divisional levels with Municipal Councils having a major role (Republic of Cameroon, 2012).

Cameroon's decentralization policy in the context of educational reforms entails the adoption of universal legal framework which aims at universalizing free primary education such as that from the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education for All (EFA) by 2015 and the Dakar 2002 Action Framework. Decree No. 2005/140 states that education should be provided for free to pupils, the goal is to provide education to the underprivileged to enable them read and write so as to reduce illiteracy and to bring education to the people (MINEDUB, 2017).

The Dakar Framework for Action invited member states to draw up a National Plan of Action by the end of 2002 with a view to achieving the goals of EFA which include improving all aspects of quality education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. The main goal of the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) is to shoulder the responsibility of elaborating and implementation of government policy in the Basic education sector. Specific duties of the ministry include the following:

- In charge of the organization of functioning of all nursery and primary schools
- In charge of conceiving, determining, and control of teaching and its action plan.
- To elaborate, plan and follow up the implementation of the school map.
- In charge of conceiving and publishing ideas rules and evaluation procedures for learners in the basic education sector.
- In charge of training personnel.
- In charge of research on the most appropriate methods of teaching in the Basic education.
- Fight against illiteracy of the young generation.

- In charge of dispensing civic/intellectual training of children of schools going age.

It should be noted that these duties or responsibility of MINEDUB are deeply inspired by the Jomtien and Dakar Education conferences given the fact that Cameroon was a participant. The pursued to meet the above goals is a major path to achieving quality school outcomes especially in the education sector.

The government of Cameroon has taken considerable measures to elaborate policies, which facilitate the implementation of the recommendations in favour of quality school outcome for all. Decree No. 2010/0247/PM of 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2010 lays down conditions for the exercise of some powers transferred by the State to Municipal Councils relating to Basic Education in the decentralization process. The Municipal Councils under the umbrella association of the United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC) are the major institutions responsible for the implementation of the decentralization policy. Some of these responsibilities include;

- Building of school infrastructure particularly, classrooms, administrative blocks, lodgings, playgrounds and latrines, as well as wells and boreholes attached thereto, accomplishing of school gardens and canteens, equipping of school infrastructure with the necessary furniture and materials, maintenance of all school equipment, taking all necessary measures to ensure hygiene and sanitation within and around these schools and establishments.
- Acquiring materials and school supplies, recruiting and taking charge of support personnel (auxiliary staff, PTA teachers) of the schools.
- The determination of conditions for the creation, opening, functioning and control of public and private establishments; the drawing up and updating of the school map, etc.

Florestal and Cooper (1997) observed that for every major decentralized education throughout the world it has to involve some legislative changes to the law. In the case of Cameroon, decentralization constitutes a legal, institutional and financial means through which regional and local authorities operate to foster development with the active involvement of the population. Assessing the legal framework and its stakeholders shows that the decentralization laws passed in 2004 in Cameroon have local development and governance as their main thrust. Some of these regulatory measures summarily include the following:

- Decree No.2008/013 of January 17, 2008 on the organization of the national council of decentralization which is in charge of the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of decentralization.
- Decree No. 2009/248 of August 05, 2009 laying down the assessment procedure and the distribution of the general endowment of decentralization. This will give way to the implementation of the first generation of transfer of competences and resources through the 2010 finance bill and will devote the distribution in General operating endowment and general investment allocation.

The Presidential Decree No. 2002/004 of 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2002 on organization of the Ministry of National Education in



Cameroon seeks to dismantle certain structures in the central services (General Education Inspectorates) and to give a more specialized focus to pedagogical monitoring in the various levels of education. Article 78 and 79 of Law No. 2004/17 of 22 July, 2004 to guide decentralization created a National Decentralization Board (NDB) and a Local Services Inter-ministerial Council (LSIC) known as monitoring tools by the same law. The role of the structure is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of decentralization. This Board is expected to submit to the President of the Republic an annual report on the state of decentralization and the functioning of local services and also to state an opinion and recommendations on the yearly programme to transfer powers and resources and conditions for transfer.

These laws provide opportunities for Regions, Divisions and Councils to develop their growth strategies while considering the available potentials and constrain or challenges. However the central government still takes measures to safeguard the nation's integrity and values through its supervision of all other sectors of the economy. The Cameroon government has lot it on Municipal Councils to exercise these powers without prejudice to the following responsibilities and prerogatives;

- the definition and implementation of the national policy relating to preschool and Primary education,
- the definition of global objectives and guidelines as well as national education and training programmes,
- control of building and equipment standards of public and private education.

The transformation of youths is certainly the main purpose of education. Most proposals for decentralization seek to improve on the quality of outcomes or benefits produced by education. The implementation of the decentralization policy makes young people better able to compete in a globalized world. However, according to the GESP (2010), quality outcomes come from the maximization of efforts by all stakeholders and good coordination of the actions of all the structures to promote at all levels a school of excellence.

An educational system can be judged dynamic and performs well only if the necessary and available human resources are managed in a rational and transparent manner. This can only be met with the existence of a worthwhile information system, the decentralization of the management of education, the allocation of responsibilities and the instrumentation of different hierarchical levels, as well as the obligation of results from personnel in charge of piloting the system.

Decentralization challenges are enormous due to the fact that there are no clear cuts as to the functions of the Head Teachers, Mayors, Inspectors and Delegates of Basic education. Under the supervision of the Director of Human Resource (MINEDUB), trained teachers from recognized public or private institution are recruited and send to public primary schools. Often time teachers sent might not meet the ever increasing population of pupil in primary schools hence overloading the few government trained staff. According to Decree No. 2010/0247/PM of 26 February, 2010 to lay down conditions for the exercise of some powers transferred by the State to Councils relating to Basic Education, it is therefore the responsibility of Councils who are expected to be well versed with the deficiency of staff in schools in their

municipalities, through the help of the Head teachers and Inspectors to recruit teachers on contract terms.

According to Cameroon Sector Wide Approach Document, at every level, the Cameroon educational system is suffering from the shortage of qualified teachers. Statistics indicate that most of the teachers recruited by Councils to fill up the shortages in primary schools are those who either have just graduated from teacher training institutions and are waiting on government to launch recruitment or those who were not selected or integrated into the public system due to age limits or mere bias.

There are three categories of teachers: civil servants, part time teachers and parent teachers. If the first two categories have undergone adequate training, the last category is mostly recruited amongst holders of secondary school certificates (BEPC, BAC, A/L, O/L) who have no pedagogic training. This task of recruiting becomes challenging to Councils in moments when resources (financial resources) are not sufficient to meet the needs of the public schools in that municipalities. This alone might cause Councils to stand the risk of employing unqualified teachers.

The 1961 Addis-Ababa Conference on education in Africa stated that teaching in good conditions must be a productive investment which contributes to economic growth (Draft Document of the Sector Wide Approach, 2006). It is the responsibility of the community to provide land and construct classrooms for their children though the government might provide some financial or material assistance through the Councils. Good school sites and learning environments (classrooms, latrines, playing grounds, etc.) are all rubrics to quality school outcomes. This is the responsibility of the Service for Material Construction and Equipment (MINEDUB) headed by a Chief of Service who follow-up construction projects and school equipment, repairs of materials, buildings as well as respect the period guaranteed for project completion.

It should be noted that the economic crisis in the 80s post serious consequences such as unemployment and lack of access to basic social needs (education, health, food, social security, etc.). This gave a hard blow to both social and economic demand of education. The value of formal education started diminishing in the eyes of the public, given that education no longer had same virtue as was the case before the adjustment. There was also the rejection of economic demand, because not only did the products fall short of corresponding to needs, but their qualities were not also those needed. This situation questions the present education system which can no longer satisfy its main consumers: the family and the enterprise. There is thus need to shape schools to the consumers taste: men who find fulfillment through access to knowledge and enterprise that are developed with a man-power trained to their taste.

National, Regional and Municipal power-sharing arrangements are more effective when the terms of transfer are negotiated, rather than imposed. For effective and efficient organization and management, an educational system must simultaneously support some centralized and some decentralized decision making, depending on the type of decisions and actions involved (Hanson, 1997). The legal framework relating to decentralization is overlapping,

cumbersome and contradictory, and in many respects open to different interpretations. The main difficulty is that decentralized functions are ill-defined and not distinct from “deconcentrated” operations of the central government. The tension between subsidiarity and concurrent competencies is one such example. There are also some provisions, such as the bailout clause for local governments that are extremely damaging in terms of the effects on local government behavior and incentives.

While a decentralization process may take several years to implement fully, it is common for some functions to be decentralized, while others might be retained by the center and administered by officials responsible to the center under a deconcentrated arrangement. Thus, primary education may be decentralized, while higher education remains deconcentrated or under direct provision by the center. The whole thrust of a decentralization program is that local preferences may be better represented, and the local officials are held responsible for the outcomes. With deconcentration, it is harder although not impossible for local preferences to be accommodated, and the spending may reflect the choices of a central planner, and accountability is effectively transferred to the central government.

The above situation in the decentralization process reveals a vice of articulate self-interests evident in the perceptions of Teno (2011) Mayor of Batibo Council in Momo Division, North West Region, “*Government is Deconcentrating, not Decentralizing.*” while the Government Delegate for the Limbe City Council, Andrew Motanga Monjimba (2011), “*Government is Decentralizing Slowly But Surely*”, painting a different picture of the decentralization process in Cameroon. This situation clearly depicts the perception of some key officials of the decentralization process in the Anglophone Cameroon.

According to Section 2(2) of law No 2004/17 of July 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization it should be noted that “*decentralization shall constitute the basic driving force for the promotion of development, democracy and good governance at the local level*”. The triggering forces in the buildup of this policy process reveals that it was in most part externally driven coupled with internal civil unrest rather than from the genuine and functional will of a one-time longstanding and unapologetic one party state seeking to positively redefine the social contract between the state, the governed and the private sector (Tani, Abangma & Bruno, 2012).

### **The problematic of decentralization and education in Cameroon**

Governance and decentralization is deeply rooted in the political economy argument that decentralization leads to better service delivery (Aslam & Yilmaz, 2011). A search in literature could not reveal studies carried out in Cameroon with respect to the resource disposition and challenges facing the implementation of the decentralization policy in the Ministry of Basic Education. This has become a motivation to this paper to inspire calls for empirical investigations so as to increase knowledge, offer solutions and recommendations to enhance decentralization in Education especially at the level of basic education that will

eventually help in achieving educational goals and objectives for Cameroon.

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