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**Educational Decentralisation and the Management of  
Public Primary Schools by Local Councils in  
Cameroon**

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## Educational Decentralisation and the Management of Public Primary Schools by Local Councils in Cameroon

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### Article history

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main focus of this paper was to examine the influence of educational decentralisation on the management of Public Primary schools in the North West, South west, Littoral, West and North Regions of Cameroon. The Study was guided by two objectives: To examine the influence of organization of instructions on the management of public primary schools in Cameroon: Determine the influence of resources generation on the management of public primary schools in Cameroon.

**Materials and Methods:** The ex-post-facto design employing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was used in this study. Data were collected from 156 Councillors, 295 Primary school Teachers. Questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were the instruments used for the study. The instruments consisted of both close and open-ended questions. The reliability coefficient for Councillors was 0.938 while the reliability coefficient for Teachers was 0.891 which was above the recommended threshold of 0.7 thus, implying that the instrument was also valid and reliable for the study as the teachers to a greater extent were objective in their responses. Data from close ended questions were analysed using SPSS 23.0, with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical tools while opened ended questions were analysed thematically.

**Findings:** Findings show that Councillors'/teachers' quality ( $R = 0.628^{**}$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ), Resources Generation ( $R = 0.576^{**}$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ), strongly, positively and significantly affect the management of Primary Schools with all P-values  $< 0.001$ , far  $< 0.05$  with results from the Anova statistics predicting an effect of

54.1%. Despite this relationship, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that lack of a strong political will for the implementation of decentralisation law, limited resources and administrative bottle neck were the challenges identified hindering the effective implementation of the decentralisation laws in Cameroon. Findings showed that teachers and Municipal Councillors do not significantly differ in their opinion as a majority of the teachers 80.3% and Municipal councillors 77.9% disagreed that Municipal councils organize instruction for primary schools within their jurisdiction. Findings showed that teachers and Municipal Councillors do not significantly differ in their opinion as a majority of the teachers 80.3% and Municipal Councillors 71.4% disagreed that Municipal Councillors generate resources for effective management of primary schools within their jurisdiction. Findings showed that teachers and Municipal councillors do not significantly differ in their opinion as a majority of the teachers 87.5% and Municipal Councillors 80.4% disagreed that Municipal councils managed personnel for primary schools in their jurisdiction.

### **Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:**

To remedy this challenges that have led to new Decentralisation laws, the text of application on the management of schools by local authorities and the regional assembly should be put in place, ensure accountability, new school Boards be introduced for Primary schools, curriculum planning should be more inclusive to enable effectiveness in the management of Primary Schools.

**Keywords:** *Decentralisation, Instruction, Management*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has brought about an increased flow of technology, skills, ideas and information across national borders. The result has been an increasing demand for a change in the structure and content of education as well as the role of educational planning to meet the demands of this new world order which is characterised by innovation and flexibility. Among the strategies that have characterised globalisation is decentralisation more specifically in the area of education which was the main focus of this paper. Decentralised education provision promises to be more efficient, better reflect local priorities, encourage participation, and, eventually, improve coverage and quality. In particular, governments with severe fiscal constraints are enticed by the potential of decentralisation to increase efficiency. One of the essential desires for decentralisation is the fact that Bureaucracy in most countries appears heavy and slow in tackling issues of personnel, materials and maintenance, accountability, Search for new resources (it allows for mobilisation of resources at local level, It reduces corruption at National Level, reduces the heavy number of Ministers and Ministries as well as expenses in such ministries, relieving the central government of financial burden, efficiency, equality, equity and input. Decentralisation is also defined in terms of four degrees of transfer of authority; decocentralisation, delegation, devolution, privatisation (Rondinelli et al., 1984).

The motives of shifting educational authority and management responsibilities to local levels are a) to enhance democracy in decision making, b) to promote the effective and efficient use of resources in education, c) to make public education more responsive to local needs, d) to reduce the central government's and increase local groups' financial responsibility for schooling provision, and e) to enable schools and teachers to exercise greater professional. Before the strong advocacy for educational decentralisation, centralised educational management was looked at as an effective approach for standardizing school content and processes and to improve and maintain the quality and structure of educational systems alongside the expansion of education systems. This expansion occurred when education services became widely available to all segments of society and accessible to diverse learners because of governments investing more in education (UNICEF, 2006). Conversely, with the continued expansion of education systems due to population growth, increasing enrolment, rapid urbanisation, advancements in technologies and growing education bureaucracies, among others, the centralised management of education came under heavy strain and pressure of providing and upholding quality services within both the urban and rural settings. Welsh (1999), observed that a highly centralised education set-up demonstrated a general lack of direct relationship between the central government and the direct stakeholders or end-receivers of education services often resulting in the latter's failure to address the needs of the local communities with relevant and timely interventions.

The advocates of decentralisation assume that shifting authority and management responsibilities to local levels will promote effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources in education and make public education more responsive to local needs, and enable teachers and schools to exercise greater professional autonomy (Grobbs Cooper, 1999). In addition, a decentralised system would annul the vices of public sector service delivery, namely bureaucracy, administrative inefficiencies, fiscal wastefulness, and initiate a system that results in greater transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

However, critics have questioned these claims by drawing attention to the national and local circumstances that impede successful implementation.

The concept of educational decentralisation in this study involved more of the process of devolution of fiscal and decision-making authority. That is, from higher to lower levels of government and organisational units affecting the way school systems make policy about resource generation and spending; organisation of instruction (curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, schedule and planning and managing public schools. Here we are referring to the local authorities and the Regional Council which are responsible for the management of schools in Cameroon.

The 2019 laws on the orientation of the decentralisation process provides a number of essential objectives such as; enabling concerned inhabitants to become resolutely involve in defining and managing affairs of their regional and local authorities, fostering and promoting the harmonious development of regional and local authorities on the basis of national solidarity and regional potential and inter-regional balance. Decentralisation in education in Cameroon is therefore an instrument geared towards meeting multiple objectives one of which is the Vision 2035 through better educational implementation to spur growth and efficiency of the labour force. Vision 2035 is a programme that has been embarked for economic emergence by 2035 and in this regard, major structuring projects are being executed throughout the country (agricultural and environmental, industrial and processing, New Technologies and Governance). Vision 2035 is therefore a programme aim at ensuring that by 2035 Cameroon should be able to; create and redistribute wealth fairly, ensure equal development opportunities to all, strong and sustainable growth, enhance food security and above all ensure happiness.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the current practice, the researcher posits that centralization of educational management process does not fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century trends of participatory management as observed, empowerment, and shared decision-making. The researcher thus hypothesizes that the adoption of educational decentralization pattern may enable local communities or the regions have some access to the decision making and policies in their areas under the supervisory of the top government. In this case, there will be a process of devolution of fiscal and decision-making authority from the higher to the lower levels of government and organizational units. Educational Decentralisation may therefore affect the way school systems make policy about its resources and spending, organization of instruction (e.g. curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, schedule), personnel management (e.g. hiring / firing, pay scales, assigning teaching responsibilities, training), planning and managing public schools.

The study of educational decentralisation is crucial for Cameroons' education system in that, the quality of education will be ensured: Decentralization can have a significant impact on the quality of education as it gives local authorities the autonomy to make decisions that are in the best interest of their community. Understanding how decentralization affects the quality of education can help in creating effective education policies. Decentralization can potentially lead to greater equity and access to education by allowing local authorities to tailor policies and programs to the specific needs of their community. It is important to study how different decentralization models impact the distribution of resources and access to education. Accountability and governance: education decentralization shifts the responsibility and decision-making power from

central authorities to local entities. Studying this process can provide insights into the effectiveness of local governance in education and the mechanisms for ensuring accountability.

Education decentralization will promote innovation and efficiency by allowing for more flexible and responsive decision-making at the local level. Understanding how different decentralization models impact educational innovation and efficiency is crucial for improving education systems. Decentralised entities will be able to integrate the available features and resources into the curriculum of the school. The study of educational decentralization will provide valuable insights for policymakers on the benefits and challenges of decentralization, as well as the conditions under which it is successful. This can help inform the design and implementation of education policies that are better suited to local contexts.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, this study sought to:

- Examine the influence of organization of Instructions on the Management of Public Primary schools in Cameroon
- Determine the influence of resources generation on the Management of Public Primary Schools in Cameroon

### **Specific Research Questions**

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- How does organization of instructions influence the management of Public Primary Schools?
- How does resources generation influence the management of Public Primary Schools?

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

Ho: Educational Decentralisation has no significant influence on the effective management of Public Primary Schools.

Ha: Educational Decentralization has significant influence on the effective management of Public Primary Schools.

### **Justification to the Study**

Numerous countries around the world are considering and implementing educational decentralisation reforms, yet empirical evidence on the effect of educational decentralisation and educational output, school management remains unclear. The ambiguity could be the result of a number of measurement problems, differences in the implementation of policies and the level of effectiveness of the management systems. Some previous empirical research about the impact of education decentralisation focused on education output, others focused on school dropout rates and the lack of international comparative data, individual country centred factors among others while this study is focused on the effects of educational decentralisation on effective Management of Schools. This approach makes sense; characteristics of education decentralisation and the output of education are affected by; social, cultural, economic, and political determinants, which are country-specific. The clamour for educational

decentralisation in Cameroon following the decentralisation laws necessitates a study to examine the effect of this policy in the country. It is against this backdrop that this study was carried out to examine the effect of educational decentralisation on effective management of primary schools in Cameroon.

### **Significance of the Study**

Being a proactive measure for spurring local development, participation and attainment of goals, this study on educational decentralisation and school management is deemed beneficial in Cameroon and beyond. As such, this study would be beneficial to various stakeholders constituting primary school administrators, the local councils, parents, and administrative authorities, the public and other researchers. Firstly, this study can help decision makers at the central and local levels in education provision to appreciate and curb the identified factors that negatively influence the implementation of educational decentralisation policies in Cameroon and other developing Countries. Local authorities will be given the opportunity to be part of the policymaking on generating instructions and resources for the running of primary schools.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was delimited in four ways: content wise, geographically, theoretically and methodologically. Geographically, this study was delimited to some selected Municipal Councils and Primary Schools within five Regions out of the 10 Regions in Cameroon. These regions were the North Region, West Region, Littoral Region, South West Region and the North West Region.

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms**

#### **Educational Decentralisation**

Educational Decentralisation is defined in this study as the transfer of educational decision-making authority closer to the consumer or beneficiary. This can take the form of transferring powers to lower levels of an organization, which is called deconcentration or administrative decentralisation. A popular form of deconcentration in education is to give additional responsibilities to schools. This is often called school autonomy or school-based management and may take the form of creating elected or appointed school councils and giving them budgets and the authority to make important educational decisions. Deconcentration may also take the form of empowering school directors or directors and teaching faculty to make decisions within the school. The World Bank (1999) defines decentralisation in the public sector as “the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinated or quasi-independent government organisations or the private sector”.

#### **Effective Management**

This refers to the process of effectively initiating, implementing and evaluating change. School management, as a body of educational doctrine, comprises a number of principles and precepts relating primarily to the technique of classroom procedure and derived largely from the practice of successful teachers. The writers in this field have interpreted these principles and precepts in various ways, usually by reference to larger and more fundamental principles of psychology, sociology and ethics.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Decentralisation**

The origin of the term decentralisation is traced to a Latin word ‘deconcentria’ which means ‘away from the Centre.’ The concept has undergone extensive usage in the field of research (Rondinelli, 1981; Cohen et al., 1981; Smith: 1985; Kaufman, Thompson, 2004), yet, there is no consensus as to its precise meaning and content either within academic or professional circles. This is because decentralization of one form or another is called forth as a means for solving political and/or economic problems.

### **The Concept of Educational Decentralisation**

Educational decentralisation takes into account a number of aspects in the educational system, including budget allocation, the structure and organisation of schools, construction of school building, curriculum, procurement of textbooks and materials, teaching methods, examination and evaluation methods and teacher management and training. The degree of decentralisation generally varies in each of these aspects, and what constitutes a suitable combination of them varies from country to country. Von Braun and Grote (2000), for example, suggest that whereas curriculum setting, the organization of examinations, and quality assurance are best provided by central authorities, building maintenance and monitoring teacher performance is better done by local authorities, though this may apply to some countries but not others.

McGinn and Welsh (1999) categorise the decentralisation of education governance according to the location of legitimacy: professional expertise, political legitimacy and market efficiency. Governance by professional expertise regards technical knowledge of regional/local education authorities and schools as legitimate to control education. Governance by political legitimacy refers to decentralisation of education governance to communities or their elected representatives. This form of decentralisation assumes that non-education professionals can effectively govern education, which may indicate a loss of public confidence in professional expertise. Proponents of market decentralisation for example argue that markets can offer a variety of options to satisfy the desires and needs of consumers, which professionals are incapable of. Preference for any of these three models depends on the objectives of the decentralisation reforms.

Administrative decentralization in Cameroon is limited, with much of the power still concentrated in the hands of the central government. There are local councils and regional governments, but they have limited autonomy and decision-making power, as many key decisions still require approval from the central government. The decision of what to teach, who to teach and when to teach is in the hands of the central government. It is difficult for the local authorities to control personnel recruited by the central government. The authorities who decide on the teaching instructions and the implementers are hardly related in ideology.

Fiscal decentralization is also limited, with local governments heavily dependent on central government transfers for their budgets. There have been efforts to increase local revenue generation, but progress has been slow, and local governments still lack the financial resources to effectively deliver services to their constituents. The government provide what is known as minimum package at the beginning of each academic year which is always scrambled over due to it limited nature. Political decentralization has faced challenges due to the centralized nature of the Cameroonian state. There have been

calls for greater political autonomy for the regions, but these have been met with resistance from the central government. The ministries are reluctant to devolve the resources necessary for smooth management of schools by local authorities. Recruitment and transfer, appointment of Head teachers is all at the discretion of the ministry of Basic education in Cameroon. While there have been some efforts to decentralize power in Cameroon, the process has been slow and limited, and significant challenges remain in fully empowering local governments and regions.

**Table 1: Types of School-Level Decisions That May Be Decentralised**

Organisation of Instruction	Select school attended by student. Set instruction time. Choose textbooks. Define curriculum content. Determine teaching methods.
Planning and Structures	Create or close a school. Selection of programs offered in a school. Definition of course content. Set examinations to monitor school performance.
Resources	Develop school improvement plan. Allocate personnel budget. Allocate non-personnel budget. Allocate resources for in-service teacher training.

It is very difficult to measure the distribution of real decision-making power and, thus, it is difficult to measure and monitor education decentralisation. For example, in many former socialist republics of Eastern Europe, national legislation specifies the curriculum and staffing requirements in such detail that a school principal or school council with a high degree of decision-making autonomy might in fact have almost no room to manoeuvre and, thus, have very little real decision-making power. Similarly, in the United States school managers find themselves burdened with so many conditionality attached to Federal and state government grants that they, also, claim they have very limited decision-making power, despite the apparent high degree of decision-making autonomy.

Still, the international experience reviewed earlier suggests a few key indicators that one can use to roughly capture the distribution of real decision-making power, and these are the indicators we use in assessing specific country examples of education decentralization. These indicators can be expressed in terms of questions:

- Who determines marginal changes in teacher compensation?
- Who makes the decision to recruit or transfer a teacher to a specific school?
- Who selects the headmaster?
- Does the school community or local government partly finance the school?
- Who decides how to allocate the school's annual budget?



## **Situating Research Indicators within Existing Literature**

### **Organization of Instructions and School Effectiveness Management**

It has been argued that devolution of decision making to local and school levels and greater market orientation make schools and teachers more accountable to children and parents, more sensitive to input costs, and more efficient, thereby increasing their effectiveness. But basic questions remain regarding whether such outcomes depend on parental or local community capabilities in influencing and judging the extent of value added in schools.

If parental/community capabilities are lacking, for example, due to parents' lack of education or economic resources, what can be done about it? Designing incentive structures for schools and teachers that increase their levels of professionalism in the face of limited parental and local capabilities is a critical challenge for education policy today. Meeting this challenge may require the development of supporting mechanisms that collect and disseminate information on value added by schools. How might this be accomplished?

### **Resource Generation and Effective Management of Schools**

While decentralisation of education is being touted by some as an innovation in the delivery of schooling, insofar as it makes schools and teachers more sensitive to student learning and resource usage, it is a phenomenon largely driven by the fact that it can relieve strained public sector finances. However, although there may exist much scope for increasing user fees, the ability of many individuals to pay for education is seriously constrained, thus raising the question of whether some sort of financial assistance is appropriate. Demand-side financing is one possibility receiving increased attention from policymakers.

### **The Concept of School Management**

Educational management, also sometimes known as educational administration, is commonly associated with elementary and secondary schools as well as institutes of higher learning like colleges and universities. Educational management professionals can also be found working in governmental agencies, private companies, and not-for-profit organizations. Those working in educational management might act as policy-makers, researchers, or consultants to help evaluate and develop ways to enrich and enhance the educational system at all levels. Most educational management professionals have earned at least a master's degree and many are licensed teachers or principals.

Educational management refers to the administration of the education system in which a group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategies, and implement structures to execute an education system. Education is the equipping of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, habits, and attitudes with learning experiences. The education system is an ecosystem of professionals in educational institutions, such as government ministries, unions, statutory boards, agencies, and schools. The education system consists of political heads, principals, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, administrative personnel and other educational professionals working together to enrich and enhance. At all levels of the educational ecosystem, management is required; management involves the planning, organising, implementation, review, evaluation, and integration of an institution.

### **Management of Curriculum and Instruction**

According to Oluoch (1992), curriculum refers to “all that is planned to enable the student to acquire and develop desired knowledge, skills and attitudes”. This implies that curriculum is an intentional undertaking with set objectives and outcomes. The GoK (1999) provides a broader definition of curriculum as “all subjects taught and activities provided by the school and may include time devoted to each activity”. Accordingly, curriculum then extends beyond the classroom. The usage of instruction delimits classroom activities from out of classroom activities. A further clarification is opined by West (1992) who distinguishes three forms of curriculum. First is curriculum – in - action which he says is the one actually experienced by pupils. It may or may not be congruent with the policies or descriptions of the outlined or intended curriculum. Secondly, it is the intended curriculum that portrays the vision the school is geared to achieve. The intended curriculum is derived from the country’s educational goals. Third is the offered curriculum, which is a representation of the teacher’s version of the intended curriculum. This is the one that is captured by teachers in their schemes of work and lesson plans.

The term “instruction” on the other hand is used to denote classroom learner centred activities. According to Hatchet (1965), instruction is “the education process designed to primarily assist students gain a mastery of subject matter”. The role of the Head Teacher, among others, is to provide instructional leadership. Indeed, according to Di Paola and Tschannen-Moran (2003), effective principals are those who “provide leadership in instruction, coordinate instructional programs and emphasize high academic standards and expectations.”

### **Management of Finances and Income Generating Activities**

Mbamba (1992) has defined management of finances as “the operation whereby an organization ensures that available funds are used for the achievement of its objectives”. The head teacher’s responsibility in financial management has two dimensions: sourcing of funds and utilization of the funds. In the event of short falls, the Head Teacher analyses alternative courses of action available then picks on the best.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1997b) asserts that for prudent management of school finances Head Teachers need sufficient knowledge of the following:

- a. Identification of the various sources of funds and mobilizing skills.
- b. School budgeting.
- c. Basic legal framework and mechanism of financial management.
- d. Expending and accounting for school finances.
- e. Auditing school account books.

On the other hand, Gole (1999) identifies six concerns for head teachers in the management of finances. These are: Preparing budget estimates, Strategies for fund-raising, Cost sharing policy, managing funds, developing transparent financial systems, Personal emoluments for support staff.

In his examination of the financial management task in the Kenyan context, Okumbe (2001) identifies four sub-tasks that should be of concern to Head Teachers. These are:

- a. Understanding the sources of revenue for the school by keeping abreast of funding shifts and revisions in qualifications for funding from the government and the donor community.
- b. Preparation of the school budget which involves budgetary proposal analysis, modification and ratification.
- c. Monitoring expenditure in the light of the approved budget, which involves appropriate record keeping, accounting and auditing procedures.
- d. Management of services of non-certified personnel, which includes travel and transport services, insurance and legal advice.

This study considered the management tasks that Head Teachers undertake in managing school finances and reports on the kind of changes that Head Teachers had initiated in this area. Of interest also were the activities that the Head Teachers had undertaken to augment school revenue shortfall occasioned by fees defaulters.

### **Management of School Physical Resources**

Schools need adequate physical resources without which teaching and learning would be difficult. Mantep (1995) classifies physical resources into four types namely:

- a. Land; this is the ground owned as property by the school. Availability of land would enable the school to expand, plan for new facilities, and even improve the school environment. Fencing or planting of trees should demarcate school land. Title deeds should be secured and safely kept.
- b. Buildings are those that have been constructed for the purposes of enhancing teaching and learning. They include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, teachers' houses, stores, toilets and kitchen. Buildings require repairs and periodic renovations.
- c. Machinery and equipment referring to those items that are used to produce teaching and learning materials, transportation of students and staff, cleaning the school compound, and carrying out economic activities such as farming. Machinery and equipment should be used carefully to avoid damage. Proper repair and maintenance should be undertaken to ensure longevity.
- d. Furniture and teaching materials, these are indispensable in facilitating teaching and learning. Teaching materials include books, science kits, chalkboard and charts. Quick repair and immediate replacement for lost items should be undertaken.

### **Theoretical Review**

Theoretically, the following theories will be used to enhance the study under investigation:

#### **Soufflé Theory of Decentralisation by Parker (1995)**

In the Parker Soufflé Theory of Decentralisation, he advocates three major elements of decentralisation: administrative, fiscal, and political decentralisation. In this theory, Decentralisation involves the shifting of fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities from higher to lower levels of government. To characterize decentralisation, one must consider political, fiscal, and administrative issues. All these

components must complement each other to produce more responsive local governments that will deliver effective, efficient and sustainable services and maintain fiscal discipline. In the adaptation of this theory to this study as well as in Cameroon, the division of the Ministry of Education in Cameroon to the Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education engender the administrative decentralization process in Cameroon, however, most of the decisions are still at the central level with regards to policies, resources and decision making. In the 2004 Law on decentralisation, the state operates at the Central, Regional and Local Levels to meet her objectives and goals for each financial year. These are indicators that administratively, Cameroon has absorbed the decentralization policy as one of the strategies for good governance that will bring about economic growth and development in the country.

In Cameroon, the Minister in-charge of Basic Education is determined by an order latest 30<sup>th</sup> April of each year and within the purview of the following school year, the nature and fix the composition of the school materials and supplies to be granted to nursery and primary schools and preschool establishments by councils in the form of minimum packet. This is further confirmed by the Finance Law of the State where each year, resources necessary for the exercise of the decentralisation process needs to be transferred to the Councils. The financial resources transferred shall be recorded in the council budget and management shall respect the budgetary accounting principles in force. Generally, Soufflé theory emphasizes that for decentralisation to work effectively, all elements of the decentralization package; fiscal, political, and administrative need to be balanced and implemented simultaneously. Soufflé theory is relevant to this study in that it incorporates the aforementioned elements of political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization as they influence the effective Management of Primary schools in one way or the other.

The Administrative decentralisation seeks to redistribute authority, responsibility and financial resources for providing services among different levels of government (Hossain, 2000). The central government transfers some of its responsibilities for planning, financing and management to the local level authorities in this case educational decentralization. This enables the central government to give the local authorities administrative autonomy to respond effectively to the local needs as postulated by World Bank, (2008). The local authorities can therefore make changes and enforce regulatory decisions to govern various systems at local offices such as the procurement system and human resources management including recruitment and performance management. The local Council should be given the competent to generate resources purposely for the running of primary schools within the municipality. There is a gap between between the development of school programs and the local council authorities.

Fiscal decentralisation gives local government authority and power to generate revenues and decide on expenditures. It also transfers some funds from central government to local governments so that the local governments can deliver decentralised function (Ghazia, 2009). Fiscal decentralization takes many forms like cost recovery through user charges and expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges. Nevertheless, there should be fiscal policies and procedures to govern the

practices of local officials; checks and balances must also be built into the system (Kerr, 1998).

Political decentralisation transfers policy and legislative powers from central government to elected local authorities (Azfar, 1999). This implies that local representatives can make detailed decisions within policy guidelines formulated by the centre and the legal framework is improved to show clearly the division of responsibilities between the centre and the local authorities. However, the allocation of the power of decision making to local authorities is not enough to create successful decentralisation if local officials are not accountable to the local population (Elsageer & Mbwambo, 2004). Local accountability might be promoted through various mechanisms such as third-party monitoring by media and NGOs, extensive participation and central government oversight of local governments. There exists a gap between policymakers, and implementers. This explains why in Cameroon, there exist excellent policies on paper with zero or little implementations. This may also be provoked by the fact that most at times there are no mechanism to punish defaulters.

In the adaption of this theory to this study as well as in Cameroon, the division of the Ministry of National Education in Cameroon to the Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education engender the administrative decentralization process in Cameroon, however, most of the decisions are still at the central level with regards to policies, resources and decision making. In the 2004 Law on decentralisation, the state operates at the Central, Regional and Local Levels to meet her objectives and goals for each financial year. These are indicators that administratively, Cameroon has absorbed the decentralization policy as one of the strategies for good governance that will bring about economic growth and development in the country.

The review of literature lucidly pointed out gaps in studies so far done on school-based management and more cogently it revealed that research on the role perception of Head Teachers in the management of school-based change is glaringly missing. The findings of this study are, therefore, a purposed attempt to bring to fore thoughts of local councils on their role in management of school-based change. The results are also a bridge to the evident dearth of knowledge on management of school-based change in Cameroon when it comes to instruction and resources.

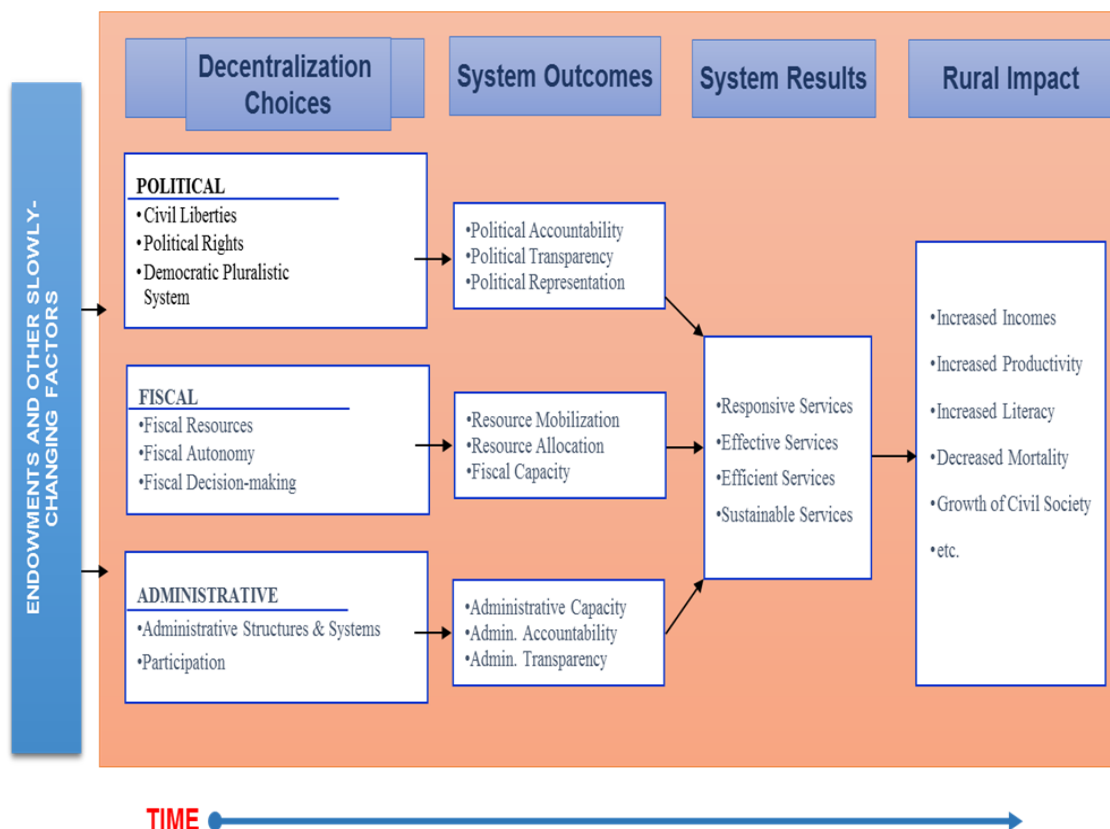


Figure 2: The Soufflé Theory of Decentralisation

Source: Adapted from Parker, Andrew N. (1995). Decentralisation: The Way Forward for Rural Development? Policy Research Working Paper 1475. Washington, D. C.: The World Bank.

### Decentralisation of Organization of Instructions and Effective Management of Public Primary Schools

In a recent systematic review of the effects of school-based decision making on educational outcomes in low and middle-income contexts, Carr-Hill et al. (2015) identified twenty-six impact studies that met a narrow set of eligibility criteria, including a low to medium risk of bias within the identified causal estimates of each study. The studies covered seventeen interventions across thirteen countries of which four were in sub-Saharan Africa. This study utilized a survey research design with a sample of 452 respondents. The results of the meta-analysis suggest that devolving decision-making to the school level contributes to relatively small but significant positive effects on dropout and repetition. Effects on tests scores are larger and more robust. Further analysis across the studies suggests that these estimates are driven by the results from middle-income countries (including Kenya) (Carr-Hill et al. 2015). Overall, the results suggest that school-based decision-making reforms appear to be less effective in disadvantaged communities, particularly if parents and community members have low levels of education and low status relative to school personnel. Furthermore, school-based management appears to be ineffective when communities choose not to actively participate in decision-making processes.

## **Decentralisation of Financial Resources and Effective Management of Public Primary Schools**

In a study by Masue (2010; 2014) in assessing if school committees which are entrusted with responsibilities of managing primary schools are effective and empowered. He used a qualitative research approach where he collected data from the community members, school committee members, teachers and student. The empowerment theory was used to guide the analysis where he used empowerment indicators of access to information, autonomy, access to resources and agency / willingness. From comparison of two cases based in urban and rural communities he found out that the criteria used by other studies in judging effectiveness and empowerment of school committees have not been so sufficient. This is because there is great assumption that these committees are effective and empowered while in reality the results are impressive but not so outstanding. From his two cases he found out that:

*Local financial resource bases were trivial, knowledge, skills and experience of the individual school committee members were inadequate; information (awareness) to the general public regarding participation in education was insufficient; and the two school committees did not adequately demonstrate equitable inclusion of women and pupils relative to men.*

### **Implications of the Literature Review**

It was apparent in the literature reviewed that school-based educational change is irretrievably intertwined with Head Teachers' management task areas. Several theoretical approaches to the study of educational change were examined and their relevance to the study pointed out. The literature reviewed established that there is no convergence of thought on identification and application of Head Teachers' management task areas in Cameroon and globally. Notwithstanding the diversion of thought, seven key Head Teachers management task areas namely general administrative procedures, management of school physical resources, school community relations, staff personnel, finance and income generating activities, student personnel services and curriculum and instruction were then adapted for the study.

The review of literature lucidly pointed out gaps in studies so far done on school-based management and more cogently it revealed that research on the role perception of Head Teachers in the management of school-based change is glaringly missing. The findings of this study are, therefore, a purposed attempt to bring to fore thoughts of Head Teachers on their role in management of school-based change. The results are also a bridge to the evident dearth of knowledge on management of school-based change in Cameroon.

## **3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The ex-post-facto design employing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was used in this study. Cohen, Manion and Keith (2003) have defined an ex-post-facto design as that in which the independent variable or variables have already occurred and in which the researcher starts with them in retrospect for their possible relationship to, and effects on the dependent variable/variables.

### Area of Study

This study was carried out in the Republic of Cameroon, specifically in the Far North, West, Littoral and Centre Regions of Cameroon. The Republic of Cameroon lies between latitudes 2<sup>0</sup> North and 14<sup>0</sup> North of the equator and latitudes 8<sup>0</sup> East to 17<sup>0</sup> East of the Greenwich Meridian. The country is bounded to the North by the Republic of Chad, to the West by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to the East by the Central African Republic and to the South by Equatorial Guinea, Congo, Gabon and the Atlantic Ocean.

More specially, the study will be carried out in five councils (Nkambe council of the North West Region of Cameroon, Douala IV of the Littoral Region of Cameroon, Bafoussam III of the West Region of Cameroon, Buea Council of the South West Region of Cameroon and Mokolo council in the Far North of Cameroon). Cameroon is a bicameral parliamentary republic with two levels of government, national and local (regions and Councils). There is constitutional provision for local government, as well as for an intermediary higher territorial tier (regions), although this has yet to be implemented. The main laws governing local government in Cameroon are Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 instituting the general code of Regional and Local Authorities. The Decentralization and Local Development is responsible for government policy on local government. There are 374 local government councils, consisting of 360 municipal councils and 14 city councils (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, MINATD, 2015). There are also 43 district sub-divisions within the cities (MINATD, 2015). Local councils are empowered to levy taxes and charges including direct council taxes, cattle tax and licences. The most important mechanism for revenue-sharing is the Additional Council Taxes levy on national taxation, of which 70% goes to the councils to be used for its activities one of which is the management of Education.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all municipal mayors, councillors and teachers of Basic Education in Cameroon. At the time of the study, there were 360 mayors/chairpersons with 30 being female and 330 Male, and 42 government delegates.

### Target Population

The target population of this study was made up of all council Mayors, Municipal Councillors, and teachers of Basic Education in Cameroon purposefully selected from the Far North, West, North West, South West, and Littoral Regions of Cameroon.

Verification of hypothesis one (H<sub>01</sub>): Organisation of instructions has no significant influence on effective management of public primary schools.

**Table 1: Relationship between Organization of Instruction and Effective Management of Public Primary Schools**

Statistical test	Test statistics	Organisation of instruction	Effective management
Spearman's rho	R-value	1.000	.628**
	P-value	.	.000
	N	295	295

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



Statistically, findings showed that there is a significant, strong and positive relationship between organization of instruction by Municipal councils and effective management of public primary schools ( $P=0.000$ ,  $\text{far} < 0.05$ ). The positive sign of the correlation values ( $R= 0.628^{**}$ ) implies that public primary schools are more likely to be effectively managed when Municipal councils are highly involved in the organization of instruction. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that organisation of instruction has no significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was rejected and the alternative that states that organisation of instruction has a significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was accepted.

Objective two: To determine the influence of resources generation on the management of public primary schools in Cameroon

### Teachers' Perception

**Table 2: Teachers' Perception on Generation of Resources by Municipal Councils**

Items	Response options			N
	Not at all	Sometimes	Often	
Material/Physical Resources	158(53.6%)	81(27.5%)	56(19.0%)	295
Preventive maintenance	216(74.7%)	43(14.9%)	30(10.4%)	295
Routine maintenance	235(79.7%)	50(16.9%)	10(3.4%)	295
Emergency Repairs	242(82.0%)	4(14.5%)	10(3.5%)	295
Predictive Maintenance	242(82.0%)	24(8.1%)	29(9.8%)	295
Financial Resources	256(86.8%)	31(10.5%)	8(2.7%)	295
Setting Priorities and Goals	263(89.2%)	25(8.5%)	7(2.4%)	295
General Life Improvement	249(84.4%)	30(10.2%)	16(5.4%)	295
Productivity and Performance	257(84.1%)	16(5.4%)	22(7.5%)	295
Human Resources	245(83.1%)	37(12.5%)	13(4.4%)	295
<b>Multiple response set (MRS)</b>	<b>2348</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>2932</b>
	<b>(80.3%)</b>	<b>(12.8%)</b>	<b>(6.9%)</b>	

Findings on Table 2 showed that a majority of the teachers of equal proportions 242 (82.0%) indicated that municipal councils do not do emergency repairs and predictive maintenance. Also, a majority of the teachers 256 (86.8%) indicated that municipal councils do not generate financial resources. Furthermore, a strong majority of the teachers 263 (86.8%) indicated that municipal councils do not set priorities and goals, involved in general life improvement 249 (84.4%), productivity and performance 257 (84.1%) and human resources 245 (83.1%). A majority of the teachers 235 (79.7%) and 216 (74.7%) respectively, also indicated that municipal councils do not carry out routine and preventive maintenance with 158 (53.6%) of the teachers denied that municipal councils provide material/physical resources while 81 (27.5%) of them said sometimes and 56 (19.0%) of them said often.

In summary, findings showed that while 12.5% and 6.9% of the teachers respectively, indicated that sometimes and often, the municipal council generates resources for schools, a majority of the teachers 80.3% denied.

**Results of Model Summary Predicting the Overall Effect of Decentralisation on Effective Management of Public Primary Schools**

**Table 3: ANOVA and Models Summary Statistics Predicting the Overall Effect of Decentralisation on Effective Management of Public Primary Schools**

Models	ANOVA Statistics					Model Summary Statistics		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	677.608	3	225.869	46.432	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.584 <sup>a</sup>	.541	.534
Residual	1308.568	269	4.865					
<b>Total</b>	<b>1986.176</b>	<b>272</b>						

a. Dependent Variable: Effective management of public primary school

b. Predictors: (Constant), organization of instruction, resource generation and personnel management

The variability explained by the model was very significant (F-test value=46.432, P=0.000, far <0.05). The multiple coefficient determination value was 54.1% (R-square =0.541) which implies that decentralisation by taking into consideration Municipal Councils involvement in the organization of instruction, resource generation and personnel management contribute to the effective management of public primary schools by 54.1%. The overall variability explained by the model was 58.4% (R=0.584) with 41.6% not explained thus, implying that asides Municipal Councils involvement in the organization of instruction, resource generation and personnel management, there are other factors that could contribute to the effective management of public primary schools.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

**Table 4: Summary of Findings**

Hypotheses	Statistical techniques	Findings
Hypothesis one (Ho <sub>1</sub> ): Organisation of instructions has no significant influence on effective management of public primary schools.	Percentages and Spearman's rho test	Descriptively, findings showed that teachers and Municipal councillors do not significantly differ in their opinion as a majority of the teachers 80.3% and Municipal councillors 77.9% disagreed that Municipal councils organize instruction for primary schools within their jurisdiction with further analysis revealing that there is a significant, strong and positive relationship between organization of instruction by Municipal councils and effective management of public primary schools (P=0.000, far <0.05). The positive sign of the correlation values (R= 0.628**) implies that public primary schools are more likely to be effectively managed when Municipal councils are highly involved in the organization of instruction. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that organisation of instruction has no significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was rejected and the alternative that states that organisation of instruction has a significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was accepted.
Hypothesis two (Ho <sub>2</sub> ): Resources generation has no significant influence on the effective management of Public primary schools.	Percentages and Spearman's rho test	Descriptively, findings showed that teachers and Municipal councillors do not significantly differ in their opinion as a majority of the teachers 80.3% and Municipal councillors 71.4% disagreed that Municipal Councillors generate resources for effective management of primary schools within their jurisdiction with further analysis revealing that there is a significant, strong and positive relationship between resources generation by Municipal councils and effective management of public primary schools (P=0.000, far <0.05). The positive sign of the correlation values (R= 0.576**) implies that public primary schools are more likely to be effectively managed when Municipal councils are generating resources. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that resources generation has no significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was rejected and the alternative that states that resources generation has a significant influence on the effective management of public primary schools was accepted.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Findings have shown that educational decentralisation have a significant, strong and positive effect on the effective management of public primary schools. It is for this reason that the central government of Cameroon have to adopt a strong political will to ensure that the educational decentralisation laws recently promulgated is effectively implemented so as to enable Municipal councils and other stakeholders like teachers, parents, etc. to actively participate in the organisation of instruction, generation of resources and management of personnel in the public primary schools within their

jurisdiction. The rationale for education decentralization involves improving efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. Therefore, with the challenges such as lack of competences by those in charge in the implementation of the decentralisation laws, constant changing of the decentralisation laws, none involvement of councillors in decision making, no empowerment of councillors, lack of resources to support the implementation of the decentralisation laws, and administrative bottle neck in Cameroon, there will be ineffective implementation of the educational decentralisation laws. Thus, that been the case, effective management of public primary schools which is one of the objective of the decentralisation law will continue to be problem. The actual design and implementation of decentralization reforms are inherently political processes; thus, the decisions about making these trade-offs rightly occur in the political arena. As Whitacre (1997) states, while almost every project identifies decentralization as a priority objective only a few have analyzed the process of decentralization or examined the education sector in a systematic way.

In a review of education reform and research in 11 West and Central African countries, Maclure (1997) states more generally that four common objectives are at the rhetorical heart of education reform policies is to adapt modern education to the socio-cultural milieu of African communities, to render education more responsive to national economic and human resource needs, to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools, and to reduce public expenditures on schooling. Therefore, if the Cameroonian government is serious on achieving these four objectives in the educational sector, the implementation of the decentralisation laws will be help if effectively implemented as in the case of other countries.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has contributed to knowledge in that educational Decentralisation should not be an issue of changing Laws after a number of years but by practical devolution of administrative and financial powers to the local Authorities to enable it carry out organization of Instruction to ensure effectiveness in the management of Primary Education. Councils should create avenues for resource Generation, Creation of Community schools, and recruitment of Personnel to enable effective management of primary schools.

The Ministry of Basic Education must fit Local Authorities in its structure and functioning in order to better implement Law No: 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 of Decentralisation Laws patterning to Education as to avoid changing the laws in some years to come without any achievement. A holistic approach must be implemented to ensure local Authorities and Ministry of Education becoming a partner in the planning and designing as well as implementing and supervising curriculum.

### **Recommendations**

It is of utmost important for the state of Cameroon to understand that time defeats policies. Law No: 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 on Decentralisation still has more to be admired than the law itself. Five years after the enactment of the new laws on Decentralisation, the text of application on the management of schools by local authorities and the regional assembly is still awaited. The Government should be timely in the implementation of Law No: 2019/0024 of 24 December 2019 on Decentralisation because time defeats policies. A policy of today can't be implemented tomorrow. A

period of 5 or 10 years should be given to Local Councils to fully run the Primary Schools. That is, 2025 or 2030 should be an assessment year on the effective management of primary schools in Cameroon.

The government of Cameroon according to findings on objective one and two should hand over complete financial and administrative powers onto the local Councils such that the local Authorities can effectively manage Primary schools as Argentina did (Hanson, 1998). That is, the Government of Cameroon (Ministry of Basic Education) should transfer at the beginning of every Academic Year financial Resources to Local Authorities. Municipal Councils shall also make use of resources generated by constructing schools, hiring and paying staff to ensure effective Management of Primary Schools in Cameroon. The Ministry of Decentralisation should ensure that all Councils have Pedagogic experts who will better manage activities in Primary Schools within her jurisdiction. The Pedagogues of the local council should be part of curriculum planning and implementation in Primary Schools at the grassroots levels.

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