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*Towards Good Governance in the Management of  
Educational Institutions in Cameroon: Importance,  
Challenges and Opportunities*

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# Towards Good Governance in the Management of Educational Institutions in Cameroon: Importance, Challenges and Opportunities

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This conceptual paper explored the path toward institutionalisation of good governance in the management of educational institutions in Cameroon. Aim was to identify key principles, assess challenges to effective governance, and explore opportunities for improvement, with the view to offer actionable recommendations that could help enhance educational management in Cameroon.

**Materials and Methods:** A qualitative approach that combines personal observations with a comprehensive textual review was employed. The review examined national and international policy documents, strategic plans, reports and academic articles to clarify theoretical constructs and practical applications of good governance in education. Recommendations were based on personal reflections and literature analysis.

**Findings:** The education sector has evolved from being simpler and less competitive to a complex, competitive and more demanding landscape, requiring technology and advanced management strategies centered on governance principles like transparency and accountability. In Cameroon, historical,

socio-economic, political, and structural challenges hinder the establishment of good governance in education. However, there is room for educational managers to navigate these realities and promote effective governance, which is essential for unlocking education's transformative potential and achieving socioeconomic development goals.

**Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The various ministries of education should work in synergy with the other stakeholders to implement a comprehensive training programme for educational managers; invest more resources in educational technology for better administrative efficiency; strengthen monitoring and auditing of expenditures; and enhance the capacity of decentralised management structures to effectively address local needs. These strategies should help create a more accountable and responsive education management framework for Cameroon.

**Keywords:** *Good Governance, Management of Education, Cameroon, Importance, Challenges, Opportunities*

**JEL Classification:** *I2, I21, I24, I28*

## INTRODUCTION

In driving the efforts aimed to enhance the achievement of educational goals and objectives, persons charged with the management of educational institutions such as schools are often required to ensure that those who contribute to the stock of educational resources and the people who would in some form be affected by the outcome of management decisions have a say, directly or through representation in decision making and the overall management of institutions. Managers of educational institutions are also required to be open in their dealings and to report and account to interest parties the manner in which resources pertaining to education are utilised. Such policy requirements generally hinge on the growing advocacy that the management of public institutions be based on adherence to principles of good governance, if institutions hope to effectively serve the purpose for which they were created.

Good governance encompasses several key principles that interact to foster a more effective educational environment. Inclusivity, for instance, involves actively involving diverse stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and community members, in the decision-making processes of educational institutions. This in turn enhances transparency and accountability which involves easy accessibility of timely recorded and accurate information related to all important educational matters, and the obligation of educational managers to answer for their actions and to demonstrate the impact of their decisions on educational outcomes (Behn, 2001). Regular evaluations of programmes and practices against clearly defined standards facilitate necessary adjustments, ensuring institutions maximise their available resources.

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of societies, and their effective management according to good governance principles is essential for fostering an environment characterised by trust, responsibility, and collaboration. This foundation is vital for achieving quality, equity, and integrity within the education sector. Despite the broad acceptance of this premise and increasing calls for public institutions to adhere to good governance principles, ambiguity remains among stakeholders in Cameroon particularly at the school level regarding what constitutes effective governance practices in education. This confusion partly rests on inadequate training opportunities and a lack of informative resources for personal development. Such uncertainty complicates the integration of these practices into the management of educational institutions. This paper addresses these ambiguities by approaching the concept from a comprehensive and in-depth perspective. The paper constitutes part of ongoing efforts to build the capacities of stakeholders, with the view to enable them to effectively contribute to achieving both national and global educational goals.

### **Legal Frameworks and Standards for Governance in Education**

Ensuring fair, inclusive, and high-quality education for all, and addressing the barriers faced by marginalised groups, necessitates the establishment of strong governance structures across all areas of societal interest. Consequently, there have been increasing calls for transparency, integrity, and effective management within the education sector and educational institutions to address issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and disparities in service delivery. Stakeholders advocate for the implementation of robust policies, active community involvement, and effective oversight mechanisms to improve the education system's responsiveness to the needs of students and society. This section outlines various legal frameworks on education adopted at the global, regional (African), and national (Cameroonian) levels and provides an overview of key commitments and recommendations aimed at promoting equity and quality in education.

## **The 2015 Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4**

The Incheon Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum organised in 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea put up a new overarching vision for education set to be achieved in 2030, as captured in Goal 4 of the SDGs and its corresponding targets (UNESCO, 2016a). The Framework for Action for the Implementation of SDG 4 which ensued this declaration outlines indicative approaches and strategies which can be adapted in different countries for effective translation into practice of the commitments made in Incheon. The strategic framework reaffirms the central role of governments as custodians of efficient, equitable and effective management and financing of public education. It tasks governments to ensure a transparent and inclusive process with other key partners as they guide the process of adaptation and implementation of SDG 4 targets; and to increase democratisation of decision-making, with the voices and priorities of citizens reflected in the development and implementation of education policies at all levels. It also emphasizes the need for partnerships at all levels to be guided by the principles of open, inclusive and participatory policy dialogue, along with mutual accountability, transparency and synergy.

## **The 2015 Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

Developed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in consultation with the United Nations (UN) member states and other stakeholders, the vision, principles and provisions contained in the recommendations concerning TVET are intended to guide initiatives in UN member states that are geared at transformation and expansion of their TVET systems in a way that it can better serve the needs of individuals and the society (UNESCO, 2016b). The recommendation calls on member states to strengthen governance models for TVET institutions and to involve and engage with relevant local stakeholders – non-governmental organisations (NGOs), representatives of learners, TVET providers, staff, parents, youths, etc. It further highlights the need to establish various forms of incentives and accountability mechanisms, to foster an environment of high quality of TVET, combat all forms of discrimination and other barriers to equal access and participation, and to ensure that all youths and adults have equal opportunity to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies.

## **The Dakar Framework for Action**

The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) is a re-affirmation of the vision set out in the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (WCEFA, 1990). Adopted by the World Education Forum which held in 2000 in Dakar, Senegal to assess the extent to which states had met up with their commitments towards the achievement of Education for All targets, the framework embodies a set of commitments, goals and enabling strategies designed to facilitate the achievement of the global vision of education for all. Among others, it commits state parties to ensure the engagement and participation of civil society (learners, teachers, parents, communities, non-governmental organisations and other bodies) in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development, and to develop responsive, decentralised, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management.

## **UNESCO 1960 Convention Against Discrimination in Education**

Adopted in 1960 in Paris, France, by the General Conference of UNESCO, this cornerstone convention covers the right of all people to enjoy education without any form of discrimination such as those arising from differences in race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origins, economic condition, or birth in line with the constitutional



mission of UNESCO which is instituting collaboration among nations to “advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex, or any distinctions, economic or social” (Daudet & Eisemann, 2005). The convention request member states to ensure by legislation that there is no discrimination in the admission of pupils to educational institutions. It also mandates member states to disallow any differences of treatment by the public authorities between nationals, except on the basis of merit, in matters related to school fees, and grant of scholarships, and to respect the liberty of parents to choose the kind of education they desire for their children.

### **African Union (AU) Continental Education Strategy for Africa, CESA 2016 – 2025**

Adopted in 2016 by the AU Heads of State and Government during their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this ten-year strategic framework aims to revolutionise education and training systems across Africa with goal to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce that can significantly contribute to realising the African Union’s Agenda 2063 vision for the continent (AU, 2016). CESA 16-25 for short has as an action line in Objective 6 (of its 12 Strategic Objectives) the need to develop curricula and gender responsive pedagogy, to meet the specific education and training needs of all learners. The document also features leadership, transparency, accountability, equity, equality and stakeholder participation in education management as guiding principles and pillars for the implementation of the strategy. As part of the recommendations for national resource mobilisation for CESA 16-25 implementation, the strategy tasks educational authorities to develop models that hinges on strengthening effective and efficient management of resource systems in public institutions.

### **Cameroon Education and Training Sector Strategy Paper (ETSSP), 2013-2020**

This strategy paper continues the education sector strategy implemented from 2006 to 2011. Designed to guide Government action in the education and training sector, its goals are to improve access and equity, elevate quality and relevance, and bolster governance and management in Cameroon’s education sector (Republic of Cameroon, 2013). The strategy includes measures to make school councils operational, enhance communication within schools and with their surroundings, and establish a comprehensive information system for managing the education and training sector. It also mandates results-based accountability and transparent, efficient resource management as core principles. Additionally, it advocates for the active participation of communities, including Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), village development committees, elite associations, teachers’ unions, local/regional authorities, businesses, NGOs, and others, in school management. The strategy also emphasizes equity and quality in education.

### **Law N<sup>o</sup>.1998/004 of 14 April 1998 for the Orientation of Education in Cameroon**

The 1998 education law established the overall framework for education in Cameroon, covering nursery, primary, secondary, and teacher training education. Part IV of the law focuses on the concept of an educational community, which consists of the authorities, administrative and support staff, teachers, parents, pupils, students, professionals, and regional and local authorities. These stakeholders are required to be involved, through their representatives, in the consultative and management bodies formed at the educational level, as well as at each level of decentralised territorial authorities, or of the national educational set-up (Republic of Cameroon, 1998).

In addition to the above, UNESCO (2009) in its policy guidelines on inclusive education, highlights the importance of ensuring that budgetary allocations for inclusive education are equitable, transparent, accountable, and efficient. Similarly, UNICEF (2020) stresses the significance of continuous learning, feedback mechanisms, and data-driven decision-making to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of strategic visions over time. It is notable that in

advocating for good governance in the education sector, these legal instruments and policy documents urge governments and education officials to adopt management models that incorporate key principles of inclusiveness, participatory management, transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This paper is grounded in Stakeholder Theory, which provides a strategic framework for corporate governance. Initially articulated by Freeman (1984), the theory defines stakeholders as any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by the achievement of a firm's objectives. A central tenet of this theory is that organisations should be managed with consideration for the interests of all parties impacted by their operations not just the investors (shareholders) who provide capital. The rationale is that all stakeholders, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, contribute to a company's capacity for wealth creation and can potentially benefit from, or suffer consequences due to, the company's activities, including environmental impacts. Therefore, it is ethically imperative that the interests of these stakeholders are considered at the board and management in the same manner as those of shareholders, for the long-term success of the organisation.

Stakeholder Theory is particularly relevant to the governance of educational institutions in Cameroon, as it underscores the necessity of considering the diverse interests of all parties involved in the educational ecosystem. In this context, stakeholders include students, parents, educators, administrators, government bodies, and the broader community. Effective governance should involve managing these institutions with an awareness of how decisions impact not only academic performance but also social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Challenges such as resource limitations and cultural attitudes may hinder this inclusive approach, yet opportunities exist to foster collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders. Prioritizing the interests of all parties can improve decision-making and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable education system.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education is a powerful tool through which individuals and societies can develop the skills and attitudes necessary to overcome poverty, improve their circumstances, and achieve economic growth and development. According to Harbison (1973), as quoted in Mbua (2002, p. 14), "a country that is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people (through education) and utilise them efficiently in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else." For education to effectively contribute to skill development, it is crucial that the required inputs are adequately provided and efficiently managed, and that teaching and learning activities take place in environments that are conducive, inclusive, and non-threatening.

Despite evidence of good practices, Cameroon and many African countries face significant challenges that compromise the quality and accessibility of education. Key issues include inadequate funding, uneven distribution of resources between urban and rural areas, and socio-economic disparities. Corruption and mismanagement, exemplified by the presence of "ghost teachers", and bribery and favouritism in hiring and promotion, further exacerbate the problem. In addition to these, fragmented educational policies and ongoing conflict create an insecure learning environment. The education provided often fails to align with market needs, while ineffective monitoring systems hinder improvements (Ministry of Basic Education, 2023; Global Partnership for Education, 2013; Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020; AU Commission, 2015).

The issues plaguing education in Cameroon largely stem from poor governance by those entrusted with management responsibilities at various levels. Managers often lack conceptual skills in educational administration and management, consequently an incomplete understanding of what constitutes good governance in education and how to effectively

integrate related principles into the day-to-day management of educational institutions. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of ongoing professional development opportunities, and the fact that many individuals in educational management roles are government appointees whose appointments are based on teaching experience and performance, following formal training at higher teacher training colleges, but lacking specialised prior training in educational management and administration (Mbua, 2003).

If this situation persists, Cameroon's educational landscape will likely remain marked by inefficiency, inequity, and poor quality. Such scenario would seriously hinder education's potential to drive national development. The repercussions of inadequate governance could perpetuate a cycle of poverty and marginalisation, stifling economic growth and social cohesion. Without urgent reforms, such as advanced in this paper, Cameroon may struggle to realise the full potential of its educational sector.

### **Aim**

This paper sets out to address the critical issues surrounding governance in educational institutions in Cameroon. The paper serves as a resource to guide training programs for educational managers, inform policy reforms, and improve governance practices within institutions. It does so by analyzing the significance of good governance, identifying key challenges, and highlighting opportunities for improvement. Aim is to provide actionable recommendations that can be utilised to develop a more effective educational management arrangement in Cameroon—one that creates a learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all while supporting broader socio-economic development in the country.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To explore pathways to the institutionalisation of good governance in the management of educational institutions in Cameroon, this paper employed a qualitative methodology that combined personal observations with a comprehensive textual review. The review included relevant national and international policy documents, strategic plans, and academic articles that elucidates the theoretical constructs and practical applications of good governance in education. For example, international guidelines from UNESCO and reports from the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education provide essential comparative insights and best practices for contextualising Cameroon's governance landscape. In the same light, academic articles by Nsolly & Ngo (2016) and Mekolle (2018) contribute valuable theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence for understanding governance challenges and opportunities in the educational sector. Table 1 illustrates the key documents employed in this analysis. Recommendations were drawn from both personal reflections and literature review, to offer a holistic perspective on governance practices in Cameroon's educational system.

**Table 1: Documents Employed for Analysis**

Type of Document	Author
Legal Frameworks	UNESCO (2016a; 2016b; 1960; 2000), Republic of Cameroon (1998; 1996b; 1998; 2001; 2004; 2013; 2019; 2023)
Strategy Papers	AU (2016), Republic of Cameroon (2013), UNESCO (2000), African Development Bank Group (2023), Ministry of Basic Education (2022)
Reports	Ministry of Basic Education (2023), World Bank (2020; 2021)
Policy Papers	Kaufmann et al. (2007), UNDP (1997)
Journal Articles	Mekolle, P.M. (2018; 2020), Ngwa, E.S. & Mekolle, P.M. (2020), Nsolly, N.B. & Ngo M.M.C. (2016), Mbake, H.L. (2019), Yaro, L. & Yufela, N.C. (2024)
Books	UNESCO (2017), Mbua (2003)
Other online sources	UNICEF (2020), UNOCHA (2022; 2024)

*Source: Adapted from Vuban & Mekolle, 2024*

Anonymity concerns were not relevant in this analysis, as the actual names of authors and institutions were used to identify the sources of information. Ethical considerations included the necessity for accurate representation and proper citation to avoid plagiarism and misinterpretation of the authors' intentions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To address these issues, all referenced materials have been meticulously cited in accordance with academic standards; the process has therefore ensured transparency and integrity as appropriate. Also, the document selection prioritised reputable sources to enhance the credibility of the paper.

## MAJOR CONCEPTUAL TAKEAWAYS

### Educational Management in the Contemporary Era

The concept of management has evolved significantly over time. In the early 20th century, management theories were primarily focused on scientific principles and efficiency, as seen in Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management, which emphasized systematic work processes and productivity (Taylor, 1911). The mid-20th century introduced more human-centered approaches, such as Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Studies, which highlighted the importance of social factors and employee well-being in productivity (Mayo, 1933). As the century progressed, the focus expanded to include strategic management and organisational behaviour, reflecting the complexities of modern businesses and the need for adaptive strategies. Today, management encompasses a blend of strategic thinking, technological integration, stakeholder engagement and sustainability, making it appropriate to view the concept as the collaborative and strategic process of running an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives in an effective and efficient manner.

When conceptualising educational management as it applies in the present, it is essential to consider the significant transformations in the education industry, from a simpler, less competitive sector to a complex and competitive one. Institutions now face intense local, national, and international competition, including from online platforms offering diverse learning opportunities. The integration of technology has introduced new challenges and opportunities, necessitating innovative approaches and data-driven insights to stay competitive and to meet students' evolving needs. Therefore, educational management is defined as the strategic process of leading and overseeing educational institutions to address the changing expectations of stakeholders in an effective and efficient manner.

School-based educational management goes beyond routine administration. It encompasses a broader vision and delves into the strategic coordination of resources, personnel, and pedagogical practices, with purpose to cultivate a vibrant learning environment where all students can flourish. Effective school management involves setting clear goals aligned with national educational standards and using data to inform decisions on performance and resource allocation. Critical in educational management is nurturing a positive and collaborative school



culture; that is one that prioritises the needs of all, and where the contributions of all stakeholders are genuinely valued and effectively utilised in an ethically correct manner. This involves strengthening ties with teachers, parents and other key stakeholders, and empowering educators through professional development opportunities to become instructional leaders and true guarantors of quality education.

### **Good Governance in Education: The Underlying Importance**

Governance refers to the manner in which power is wielded across a nation's economic, political, social, and civil sectors to utilise resources for socioeconomic progress, impacting households, individuals, and the nation as a whole. It includes “the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations” (UNDP, 1997). Good governance involves translating the people's will into public policies through a political process that establishes effective service delivery rules for all citizens.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1997) outlines a set of interrelated and mutually reinforcing principles that are widely referenced in the literature, often with minor variations. There is substantial evidence suggesting that these UNDP-based principles warrant universal recognition; they fit well in education governance and therefore constitute the focus of discussion in this section. Good governance in education can be viewed in management practices which borders on transparency and accountability, involvement of stakeholders in decision-making, responsiveness, effective and efficient management of resources, respect of human rights, observance of principles of equity and other factors that promote responsible action toward achieving educational goals and objectives.

### **Transparency**

Transparency entails the easy accessibility of timely recorded and accurate information related to educational policies, funding, budget and resource management, decision-making processes, institutional performance, etc. This includes publishing relevant documents on noticeboards, websites and public databases, which helps build trust and support informed decision-making among stakeholders like parents, teachers, and authorities (World Bank, 2021). Improved access to information for stakeholders has potential to complement audits, quality assurance checks and other initiatives poised to hold institutions accountable and bring about improvement in the education sector. In school environments, transparency is enhanced by involving representatives from various groups teachers, parents, and community members in management processes. This approach allows stakeholders to witness firsthand how resources are allocated and used, which in turn increases the credibility of reports on actions and expenditures.

Transparency in educational management is essential in that institutional ambience which are obscure in nature often breeds corruption, mistrust, and poor governance, thereby hindering performance and progress. Educational managers who adopt transparent practices can dispel suspicion and more effectively identify and address issues through public scrutiny and feedback. Strong internal transparency, supported by effective information management systems, staff training, and incentives for accurate reporting, facilitates better monitoring and detection of budget irregularities (Lewis & Pettersson, 2009). Overall, transparency fosters openness, accountability, and trust between educational authorities and the public, enhancing stakeholder participation and improving the overall quality and effectiveness of education systems.

## **Accountability**

Accountability is another key aspect of effective governance in education; it emphasizes the ethical responsibility of officials and stakeholders to justify their actions and demonstrate their impact on student outcomes and institutional performance. According to Ackerman (2005), accountability is a proactive process where public officials explain their actions and face consequences if they fail to meet their responsibilities, as genuine accountability cannot exist without predetermined consequences in place. Effective accountability systems therefore maintain a clear emphasis on achievement and excellence, while also being flexible enough to promote innovation, creativity, and a comprehensive learning experience. This necessitates balancing evaluation and assessment with the risks and potential setbacks that come with innovation, both at the individual practitioner level and within the broader system (Burns & Köster, 2016).

In education like in other public institutions, true accountability relies on officials demonstrating honesty and integrity. It also relies on having clear quality standards for teaching, curriculum, infrastructure, learning outcomes, and sufficient data on teacher effectiveness, student achievement, graduation rates and other performance metrics. This information provides benchmarks for accountability, eliminates potential for falsification, help identify areas for improvement and empowers policymakers and programme administrators to enhance the quality of education. Practices that hold educational authorities accountable ensure effective resource utilisation and prioritise the needs of students and communities in decision-making. As UNESCO (2009) notes, when communities can hold educators and officials accountable, they become more invested in school improvement and more willing to contribute resources to the effort.

## **Participation and Stakeholder Engagement**

Participation and stakeholder engagement are key indicators of good governance which play a crucial role in facilitating the achievement of educational goals. This involves actively involving a diverse range of stakeholders such as students, parents, educators, and community members in decision-making and policy development, either directly or through intermediary organisations that represent their interests. Decentralizing decision-making authority to schools, and strengthening school-based and community organisations enhances the participation of stakeholders at the grassroots level. Effective communication and trust between education authorities and stakeholders are essential for enabling informed contributions to governance. An example of this participatory approach is the parent-teacher associations (PTAs), which engages in decision-making on various school matters, including codes of conduct, resource allocation, curriculum changes, and student performance.

Participation and stakeholder engagement foster a sense of belonging, which is imperative for achieving the needed cooperation in the implementation of decisions. Empowering students, teachers and local communities also promotes the development of leadership skills, accountability and innovation. This collaborative approach strengthens school-community partnerships and improves the overall learning experience. Institutions that prioritise participation can gain insights, generate resources, and create equitable environments that address diverse learner needs, with potential to enhance educational outcomes and promote social cohesion (Vandenbroeck, et al. 2018).

## **Equity and Inclusiveness**

Equity and inclusiveness are two interrelated principles that constitute important elements of the good governance paradigm. Equity in education governance refer to management practices that are rooted on the principles of fairness and equal educational opportunity. Educational managers ensure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status and personal

characteristics, have access to high-quality education, support services, and opportunities for success. This includes addressing barriers to access such as discrimination, poverty, geographic location, and language barriers (Kaufmann et al. 2007). Equity also requires addressing achievement gaps and disparities in educational outcomes. Implementing targeted interventions like remedial instruction, personalised learning approaches, and support services to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential are some of the ways to derive equity in education (UNICEF, 2020).

Inclusiveness in education governance emphasizes adopting policies and practices that embrace diversity and address the individual needs of all students. This encompasses creating and utilising inclusive curricula, employing culturally sensitive teaching techniques, providing assistance to diverse learners, and establishing safe and welcoming school environments (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusiveness ensures that the voices of all stakeholder's, students, teachers, parents, and community members are considered in decision-making processes, often through their representation in school management boards or councils charged with budgetary issues and the making of major decisions affecting the life of the school. Educational leaders who uphold the principles of equity and inclusiveness create conditions that foster diversity, multiculturalism, and respect for various backgrounds. This cultivates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among stakeholders, which enhances the legitimacy and sustainability of educational systems.

### **Responsiveness**

Responsiveness in educational management refers to the ability of education authorities and institutions to swiftly identify and effectively address the diverse needs and concerns of students, parents, teachers, community members, and policymakers. This principle emphasizes flexibility and the timely adjustment of policies and practices to adapt to changing circumstances and challenges. It is based on the recognition that education is a dynamic process influenced by various factors, including societal changes, technological advancements, and evolving educational needs, thus the necessity to continuously update curriculum, teaching methods, assessment strategies and support services to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, educational systems globally had to rapidly transition to online learning, highlighting the critical role of responsiveness in overcoming unforeseen challenges (UNESCO, 2020a).

Responsiveness also entails a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation in educational practices based on empirical evidence and best practices. This includes using data-driven decision-making processes to identify areas for improvement and implementing evidence-based strategies (Schildkamp, 2019). Responsive education governance framework includes mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to assess the impact of policies and interventions. This involves collecting data, analyzing trends, and collaborating with stakeholders to identify areas of success, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Continuous monitoring and evaluation inform evidence-based decision-making and drive ongoing improvements in governance practices. The importance of responsiveness in education governance is seen in its potential for creating dynamic, inclusive, and effective educational systems.

### **Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Effectiveness and efficiency are key pillars of successful education governance. Effectiveness refers to the ability of education systems to achieve desired outcomes in student learning, educational quality, and overall performance. Effectiveness in education governance starts with establishing clear and measurable goals, setting academic standards and performance indicators that align with societal educational priorities, and tailoring policies to achieve these

objectives (Kaufmann et al. 2007). Governance practices that implement monitoring mechanisms and analyse data on learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and resource allocation can identify strengths and weaknesses, guiding initiatives for curriculum reform, teacher training, and support for at-risk students.

Efficiency focuses on the relationship between a system's inputs and outputs. An efficient system maximises educational results from given resources or achieves similar outcomes with fewer resources. This involves strategically allocating financial, human, and technological resources to enhance student learning and school effectiveness. Efficiency requires streamlining administrative processes to reduce waste and complexity, which can be achieved through simplifying reporting, automating tasks, leveraging technology, and exploring public-private partnerships. Mekolle (2020) emphasizes that efficient resource management builds confidence among parents and stakeholders, leading to greater commitments to educational advancement. Efficient practices not only minimise financial losses but also create savings that can be redirected to improve quality and sustain teaching and learning, especially during funding shortages.

### **Strategic Vision**

Strategic vision in education governance is a cornerstone for driving meaningful change, improving educational outcomes, and promoting sustainable development. It encompasses the long-term goals, priorities, and directions that inform decision-making and planning within the education system. An effective strategic vision aligns with national development priorities, educational policies, and global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the purpose of coherence and synergy across sectors. Essentially, a strategic vision begins with defining ambitious yet achievable long-term goals for the education system, focusing on areas such as student learning outcomes, access to quality education, and equity.

Creating a strategic vision involves analysing current trends such as demographic shifts, technological advancements, economic factors, and societal changes that affect education, while identifying challenges and opportunities. Vision is developed through engaging stakeholders, including educators, parents, students, policymakers, and community members to ensure that it is inclusive and responsive to community needs. Establishing mechanisms for monitoring progress, evaluating impact, and incorporating feedback are crucial for maintaining the vision's relevance and effectiveness over time (UNICEF, 2020). A strategic vision fosters innovation, creativity, and adaptability in addressing emerging challenges. It guides resource allocation and investment priorities to support key initiatives.

The principles of good governance are broadly acknowledged for their ability to enhance the efficiency of educational systems in reaching their objectives. Nevertheless, countries and institutions worldwide implement these principles in diverse ways when managing their education sectors. This variability is essential, as differences in contexts make a one-size-fits-all approach to good governance impractical. The UNDP (1997) advises societies to engage in broad-based consensus building to identify which core features are most important to them, determine the optimal balance, and decide how to apply these principles within each socio-cultural and economic context to reach their desired objectives.

Cameroon, as a member of the CEMAC zone, is making considerable efforts to achieve good governance in its education system. However, despite government initiatives, the realisation of this goal is hindered by challenges such as bureaucratic resistance, historical legacies, limited financial resources, inadequate training opportunities, and entrenched power structures. The following section will illuminate the obstacles to institutionalising good governance within Cameroon's education system.



## **Challenges to Institutionalisation of Good Governance in Education Management in Cameroon**

The institutionalisation of effective governance in education systems in Cameroon and other Sub-Saharan African countries is hindered by a number of challenges arising from a complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, political, and structural factors. Understanding these challenges can help better equip educational managers, administrators and policymakers with the insights needed to develop targeted strategies and implement resilient frameworks that address the unique needs of their education institutions.

### **Historical and Colonial Legacies**

The legacy of colonialism has left Cameroon and many Sub-Saharan African countries with education systems that were designed primarily to serve colonial interests rather than the needs of local populations. This historical context has led to enduring disparities and inefficiencies in the education sector, as colonial systems were often characterised by unequal access and a lack of emphasis on local languages and cultures. Cameroon operates two sub-systems of education in respect to its colonial heritage and bi-cultural nature: The French-speaking sub-system (predominant in the country's majority eight Francophone regions) influenced by French educational tradition; and the English-speaking sub-system of education (mainly in the two minority Anglophone regions of North West and South West) which model after the British educational tradition. This dual legacy has resulted in a fragmented education system with disparities in quality and governance between French-speaking and English-speaking regions (Fonchingong, 2007). For example, while the French system emphasizes centralised control, the British system favours a decentralised approach to governance. This dichotomy complicates efforts to standardise educational policies and practices across the country, and has also contributed to the inequalities in resources allocation between the English-speaking and French-speaking regions.

### **Tumultuous Political Climate and Governance Issues**

Political unrest and governance issues are significant barriers to effective institutionalisation of good governance in the Cameroon's education sector. The ongoing Anglophone crisis, which began in 2016, has triggered a situation in which several schools have been shut down due to violence, affecting the education of about 246,354 children as recorded in January 2024 (Cameroon Education Cluster, 2024). In the Extreme North Region, clashes between armed groups, especially in the Lake Chad basin have led to the destruction or closure of 119 schools over the years, leaving 34,600 children (41% of whom are girls) struggling to resume or access formal education programmes (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2024). Nationwide data reveals that 1.4 million school-aged children require humanitarian assistance in education in 2024. These needs stem from violence and insecurity, as well as underlying issues within the education system (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - UNOCHA, 2024).

Corruption and inefficiency in the allocation of educational resources and administrative processes, particularly within government institutions, significantly undermine efforts to improve educational outcomes and establish good governance. For example, Cameroon was ranked as the most corrupt nation in the world in 1998 and 1999, with scores of 1.4 and 1.5 points on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. In 2023, the country was ranked 140 on the list of least to highest corrupt nations, highlighting the persistence of high levels of corruption. Also, the World Bank (2018) makes reference to a 2018 audit which revealed significant discrepancies in the allocation of funds for educational infrastructure, indicating that funds were often diverted or misused. The lack of transparency and accountability mechanisms in the education sector further hampers effective policy implementation and management.

### **Resource Constraints**

Resource constraints are a major impediment to effective governance in education. In Cameroon, school principals work on tight budget basis as the country, like many of its counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa faces severe budgetary constraints, which limit its ability to invest in education within a context of growing student population (World Bank, 2020; Mekolle, 2020). Government's budgetary allocation for education often falls below 20% of the national budget, whereas UNESCO recommends at least 20% for effective educational development (UNESCO, 2020b). These financial limitations lead to overcrowded classrooms, insufficient number of teachers, inadequate teaching materials, and poorly maintained school facilities, all of which hamper the quality of education that children receive. For example, although government regulations permit a maximum teacher-to-pupil ratio of 1:60, the average ratio in the Extreme North and North regions was 1:149 in 2022, with some schools having as many as 200 children in a single classroom (UNOCHA, 2022). Budgetary constraints also limit the government's ability to invest in personnel training, curriculum development, and educational technology, which are essential for improving educational quality and governance.

### **Inefficient Bureaucratic Structures**

Cameroon's education system is plagued by bureaucratic inefficiencies that hinder effective governance. There is a significant degree of centralisation in decision-making and responsibility within the ministries in Yaounde, although these bodies are often cut off from local realities. Consequently, decisions made in the ministries frequently do not align with local needs. For example, the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform, in collaboration with the ministries of education, recruits all teachers of government schools in Cameroon; these teachers are then deployed to various schools, with regional and divisional delegations of education rarely influencing the process. This approach is often fraught with inefficiencies, as teachers and other educational personnel are not deployed rationally. Typically, schools in urban areas are overstaffed, while those in rural areas face a severe shortage of teachers. It is common to find teachers in government secondary schools in urban areas working just four hours per week over two days, while some teachers in rural secondary schools may teach up to 30 hours per week, covering multiple subjects and grades simultaneously (Tamukong, 2004). However, the government has adopted a number of additional legislations recently to increase the participation of stakeholders at the grassroots level to the decision making and management process in a more balanced approach to governance in the education sector, as will be discussed in the subsequent section.

### **Socio-Cultural Challenges**

Cameroon's socio-cultural diversity complicates the effective governance of education. With over 250 ethnic groups and numerous languages, developing a unified educational policy that respects this diversity is challenging. Language barriers in schools significantly affect student learning outcomes. In areas where local languages are predominant, such as in the three northern regions of the country (Adamawa, North, and Extreme North Regions), educational materials and instruction are often not available in these languages, leading to lower educational attainment. Also, early marriage and other cultural practices, traditional gender roles and economic pressures in certain communities, particularly rural areas, and Muslim communities affect girls' access to education, despite national policies promoting gender equality. Statistics indicate that in the northern regions, 75% of girls are married before turning 18. Across the country, there is a 6% gender gap in secondary education favouring boys, with only 42.5% of girls completing their secondary education. The most significant disparity is in the Far North Region, where 5 girls versus 10 boys go to school (United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA, 2023). World Bank (2020) identified the northern regions, East, South West,

and North West as regions with alarming education inequality for girls, caused by a combination of these factors.

### **Ineffective Community Engagement**

Effective governance in education rests on strong community involvement. In Cameroon and many Sub-Saharan African countries, despite a demonstrable willingness to be more involved, there is often a lack of satisfactory engagement from local communities in the decision-making processes related to education. Several factors contribute to this situation. First, the country's economy is dominated by agriculture, which employs over 60 percent of the labour force. The agricultural practices are primarily traditional, subsistence-based, and labour-intensive. Second, an estimated 37.5 percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line (UNOCHA, 2022). These, combined with recent economic hardships and rising prices of essential goods, understandably shifts the community's focus toward immediate economic activities, leaving little time for meaningful interaction with educational institutions. Also, high levels of insecurity resulting from ongoing conflicts, along with a general lack of awareness about the benefits of community engagement, further limit the extent to which community members are willing to participate.

To address these challenges and improve educational governance and outcomes, a multifaceted approach is essential, including policy reforms and enhanced community involvement. Achieving this requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders and a thorough understanding of local resources and opportunities that can be leveraged to support action and overcome existing barriers. The section that follows explores these resources and opportunities, providing insights into how they can be effectively utilised to advance good governance in Cameroon's education sector.

### **Resources and Opportunities for Educational Institutions in Cameroon**

Cameroon's education sector, while facing numerous challenges, is situated within a set of contextual realities that offer a strategic advantage for the achievement of good governance. These realities include its ongoing decentralisation efforts, commitment to international agreements and the existence of strong policy frameworks, a growing emphasis on educational technology, and an engaged civil society.

### **Ongoing Decentralisation Efforts**

Decentralisation is the process by which decision-making authority and responsibility for specific functions are redistributed from higher to lower levels of government or organisational units. This redistribution involves delegating or transferring power, resources, and operational control from central authorities to local or regional entities. The aim of decentralisation is to address the shortcomings in public sector service delivery, such as bureaucracy, administrative inefficiencies, and fiscal wastefulness, while enhancing efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability by allowing decisions to be made closer to the point of impact and by those directly involved with the issues at hand (Mekolle, 2018). In education, decentralisation of service delivery is advocated to make the community responsible for the basic education of its people and eventually build a sense of ownership of the educational arrangements made to extend basic education to different clientele groups (UNESCO, 1998).

Cameroon set in motion the process of decentralisation of its education system after the 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien in Thailand (UNESCO, 2005). The process began with the establishment of guidelines and basic principles at the 1995 National Education Forum in Yaounde, Cameroon, which were crucial in shaping the reforms which followed thereafter, notably the School Management Board (SMB) and the 1998 education law. SMB was created by the Decree of the Prime Minister No. 96/016/PM of 13 February

1996, to assist with the effective and efficient management of schools (Republic of Cameroon, 1996b). Article 2 of the decree defines the SMB as a Board set up in every government secondary school, charged with the responsibility of supervising the management of resources and disbursement operations provided for by the decree. SMBs play several specific roles, including adopting the project of the institution; approving and overseeing the execution of the budget of the institution; adopting administrative accounts and its management; evaluating the performance of the institution, etc. (Article 3).

The composition of the SMB, as laid down by the instrument of creation is as follows: the school head or principal, 03 elected representatives of teaching staff, 02 elected representatives of students 11 representatives of the school administration, 04 representatives of parents, 07 representative of local communities and the business sector and 02 representative of teachers' trade union (Mbake, 2019). An important provision of the 1998 law on the orientation of education in Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon, 1998) is its emphasis on involving stakeholders at the grassroots level in the educational development and management process, within the framework of the educational community discussed earlier in this paper.

The above reforms paved way for the adoption of various tools and the establishment of institutions and programmes aimed to enhance educational development and management. Recently, the Government of Cameroon adopted Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 bill to institute the general code of Regional and Local Authorities collectively referred to as local authorities (Republic of Cameroon, 2019). The law defines local authorities as regions and councils and outlines their roles, responsibilities, and administrative structures. It also transferred to these bodies the administrative and financial powers necessary for their economic, social, health, educational, cultural, and sports development in line with the territorial decentralisation model. Aim is to promote effective local decision-making and governance and to foster the harmonious development of regional and local authorities through the involvement of concerned inhabitants in the definition and management of local affairs.

Also, Decree No. 2023/223 of April 27, 2023, to lay down conditions governing the exercise of some powers devolved by the State upon regions in the area of secondary education (Republic of Cameroon, 2023), provides, among other things, in Article 2 for council representation in the management and dialogue bodies of government secondary and high schools. This builds on Law No. 2004/018 of July 22, 2004, which had previously delegated educational responsibilities to councils, including establishing, managing, and maintaining council nursery and primary schools and pre-school establishments; managing support staff; participating in the procurement of school supplies; and engaging in the management and administration of state high schools and colleges in the region through dialogue and consultation structures (Republic of Cameroon, 2004: Article 20).

The willingness and efforts made by the Government of Cameroon to decentralise education through the reforms highlighted offer educational managers and administrators with a number of strategic opportunities to enhance good governance in educational institutions. First, the establishment of SMBs and their defined responsibilities such as adopting institutional projects, approving budgets, and overseeing resource management empowers local educational leaders and representatives of the various stakeholders of education to make decisions that are directly responsive to their specific context. In other words, educational managers can utilise this opportunity to actively involve local stakeholders and to tailor educational programmes and resource allocation more effectively and efficiently.

Second, councils serve as the central authority in local communities; they possess the administrative and financial power to shape education in their area of jurisdiction (Mekolle, 2018). There are 376 councils in Cameroon elected for the purpose of local governance,



including 14 city councils and 42 subsidiary councils within the cities. Composed of elected representatives from various geographic communities, councils are dependable structures that, if effectively engaged, can provide local educational managers and administrators with valuable support in enhancing good governance in education. The legal frameworks pertaining to local authorities provide the essential backing required by educational managers to create the needed rapport.

### **Cameroon's Commitment to International Agreements and the Existence of Strong Policy Frameworks**

Cameroon's commitment to international agreements and the country's robust policy frameworks offer significant opportunities for educational managers and administrators to institutionalise good governance in educational management. As a member of the UN, Cameroon has ratified several key conventions that promote human rights and educational reform. Notably, the country is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which emphasizes the right to education and mandates the progressive enhancement of access and quality (UN, 1966). Cameroon has also embraced the UNESCO frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda, particularly SDG 4, focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015).

Again, Cameroon is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which underscores education as a fundamental human right and advocates for free and compulsory education for children (OAU, 1981). The country also benefits from the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), which aims to improve education systems across the continent (AU, 2016). These instruments provide a solid foundation for aligning Cameroon's educational policies with global standards and principles, complementing national policies aimed at enhancing educational governance and quality.

On the national level, Cameroon's policy framework for educational governance is built on a combination of constitutional provisions, national legislations, and strategic plans. The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon provides a broad legal foundation for educational governance, stipulating the right to education and the government's responsibility to ensure access to quality education (Republic of Cameroon, 1996a). In terms of specific policies, Cameroon has developed several strategic documents to guide educational reform. For example, the ICT Policy and Strategic Framework for Basic Education, which would be seen under the next opportunity (Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education, 2022), and the Education and Training Sector Strategy Paper ETSSP (2013-2020) (Republic of Cameroon, 2013). The ETSSP outlines the government's vision for education, with emphasis on equity and relevance, service quality, teacher training and robust information systems for the management of the education system and training sector. The strategy aims to improve governance at the institutional level by decentralising administrative authority, which is intended to enhance accountability and responsiveness in educational institutions. Adherence to the ETSSP's focus on equity can lead to programmes that address educational disparities, ensuring equal opportunities for all students.

Besides, the Cameroon government has established various regulatory bodies and agencies to oversee educational governance. For example, the National Commission for Private Higher Education (Commission Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieur Privé, CNESP) plays a crucial role in assisting the Ministry of Higher Education with the establishment, development, monitoring, control, and evaluation of private higher education institutions, as outlined in Order N°073/CAB/PM of 06 December 2001 (Republic of Cameroon, 2001). The establishment of Regional and Divisional Delegations of Education offers an opportunity for more localised

oversight and accountability. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance (MINFI) sends control missions two or three times a year, consisting of three or four individuals, to visit different tiers of government regional delegations, divisional delegations, inspectorates, and schools to monitor whether accounts related to budgets and expenditures are properly maintained. These missions primarily conduct internal audits, assess the adherence to financial guidelines, and review the construction of new schools by taking photographs, examining project logbooks, and consulting with staff (World Bank, 2012).

Both international and national policies stress the importance of accountability and transparency. Educational managers can align their practices with these standards to boost institutional effectiveness and build and maintain trust within their institutions. Implementing systems for monitoring and evaluation, such as regular audits and public reporting, can enhance accountability and foster a culture of openness. When strategically harnessed, these opportunities will contribute substantially to the advancement of Cameroon's educational sector.

### **Educational Technology Offers**

Educational technology, often referred to as EdTech, encompasses a broad range of tools and systems designed to enhance teaching, learning, and educational administration. These resources include, Learning Management Systems (LMS) (like Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas), Virtual Classrooms (like Google Classroom, Zoom, or Google Meet), Assistive Technology (such as speech-to-text software, screen readers, and specialised keyboards), and Information Management Systems (IMS) (e.g. Administrative Management Systems and Assessment Management Systems). In the contemporary educational landscape EdTech has emerged as a transformative resource that can significantly enhance governance within educational institutions. Although educational institutions in Cameroon are still tied to traditional methods of operation, however, the country's education sector is witnessing progressive adoption of technology, supported by government initiatives and international partnerships.

The development of educational technology in Cameroonian institutions has been documented in the literature (e.g., Nsolly & Ngo, 2016; Josué, 2007). By the 1990s, private and mission primary and secondary schools, such as College François Xavier Vogt, had already begun integrating ICTs into their educational practices. These schools, located in major cities like Douala and Yaounde, had acquired computers and started offering ICT courses well before their introduction in government schools. A significant shift occurred following the President's address to Cameroon's youth on February 10, 2001, which advocated for orienting education towards a knowledge economy and proposed making imported computers and accessories duty-free for schools. Around the same period, the World Bank's ICT task force introduced the concept of cyber education, aiming to advance computer technology, enhance learner access to information technology, and foster digital inclusion in developing countries. Building on this momentum, MINEDUC tasked the Inspectorate General of Pedagogy with designing and implementing a cyber education project in Cameroon, which was launched in April 2001.

Josué (2007) highlights that since this period, the Cameroonian government has enacted several decrees to facilitate the introduction of ICTs in education. In 2002, a ministerial decision was published outlining the conditions for establishing Multimedia Resource Centers (MRCs) in government secondary schools. The following year, a decree was issued by the Ministry of National Education mandating ICTs as a compulsory subject starting in September 2003. Consequently, the Ministry of Secondary Education, created by Presidential Decree No. 2004/320 of December 8, 2004, was restructured to include the National Pedagogy Support Unit (Cellule d'Appui à l'Action Pédagogique CAAP), which was further equipped with a

distance training unit (Unité de Formation à Distance UFAD), tasked with teacher training and capacity-building, including distance learning.

In 2004, key strategies for ICT use in education were outlined in the first official draft of the Cameroon National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policy and plan. This document, prepared with support from the UNDP and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), recognised ICTs as a national priority alongside education, health, forestry, and governance. The NICI plan committed the government to modernizing the educational system through ICT integration, incorporating ICT training modules into national universities, developing a sectoral ICT policy for education, training teachers in ICT usage, equipping all schools with ICT facilities, expanding pedagogic resource centers, establishing distance learning facilities, and providing support for the production of ICT teaching materials.

Since the implementation of this plan, many educational institutions including universities, professional training institutions and technical schools, and some government secondary schools have received presidential grants to set up Multimedia Resource Centers (MRCs) with Internet access. Also, new learning platforms have been developed, state universities have been networked through various initiatives by the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) (such as partnership agreement with Cameroon Telecommunication Corporation CAMTEL on September 8, 2020 Yaro & Yufela, 2024), and training units have been established within these institutions. These efforts align with the government's goal to extensively integrate ICTs into the education and training system as a means to modernise it across all levels, as outlined in the ETSSP (2013-2020), which also emphasized on enhancing digital infrastructure and providing comprehensive training for all stakeholders (Republic of Cameroon, 2013).

Recently, the Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education launched its ICT Policy and Strategic Framework for Basic Education. This initiative aims to ensure equitable access to education, enhance educational quality and relevance, and improve service delivery, assessment, monitoring, and evaluation systems to boost student learning outcomes. The framework also seeks to streamline school administrative processes through automation and facilitate the effective management of financial and material resources. It includes the development of necessary infrastructure, creation of supportive environments, and the implementation of training programmes for teachers, students, and school administrators. The strategy further emphasizes the deployment of IMS in schools and the strengthening of community partnerships to achieve these goals (Ministry of Basic Education, 2022).

For higher education, the Government of Cameroon has recognised e-learning as a key solution to the challenges that characterises this sector. A significant step in this direction was the signing of an agreement with China on June 18, 2015, to support the digital transformation of Cameroonian universities through the E-National Higher Education Network project. This initiative aims to modernise universities with advanced technology, including computer networks, data centers, and e-learning systems. It also seeks to improve student access to digital resources and build essential digital skills. In 2016, President Paul Biya donated 500,000 computers to students to support this initiative. Also, a number of universities have established technology centers and implemented learning management systems to enhance online learning and student research capabilities.

School managers and administrators in Cameroon can harness the evolving landscape of EdTech to drive effective governance and enhance institutional management. Integrating tools like LMS and Virtual Classrooms can help simplify teaching and administrative processes, ensuring more efficient communication and collaboration. The adoption of Assistive Technology can support diverse learning needs and improve accessibility, while IMS can facilitate better resource allocation and financial management. Building on the government's

commitment to ICT integration, administrators can focus on implementing the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policy and the ICT Policy and Strategic Framework for Basic Education. Engaging with these initiatives not only aligns institutions with national priorities but also positions them to utilise technology for improved educational outcomes, enhanced operational efficiency, and stronger community partnerships.

### **An Engaged Civil Society**

In Cameroon, civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the Cameroon Teachers Trade Union (CATTU) and NGOs like the Cameroon Association for the Protection and Education of the Child (CAPEC) play a crucial role in advocating for educational reforms and ensuring institutional accountability. These organisations also focus on providing education and training for underprivileged and vulnerable children in society. They are instrumental in promoting transparency and responsiveness within the education sector, which significantly contribute to a participatory approach to governance. Their efforts are instrumental in holding educational institutions accountable and fostering a culture of effective governance, ensuring that stakeholders' needs are addressed and that governance practices are both transparent and inclusive.

Despite facing financial and operational challenges, these organisations have significantly expanded their influence on public affairs, playing a key role in shaping public policies and driving socio-economic development. They have successfully implemented innovative projects across multiple sectors, including education, health, environment, and agriculture. Their ability to mobilise communities and affect public policy highlights their important role in national development. This growing influence underscores the importance of civil society in advancing public welfare and effecting meaningful change (African Development Bank Group, 2023).

The presence of an engaged civil society is crucial for enhancing educational governance and building a more supportive learning environment. Involving CSOs groups in decision-making processes provides schools with valuable external oversight which helps to prevent mismanagement and corruption. Educational managers and administrators would maximise the benefits offered by CSOs if they establish formal structures for collaboration, such as advisory councils or partnership agreements to ensure ongoing interaction with community stakeholders.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Achieving good governance in the management of educational institutions in Cameroon is crucial for unlocking the transformative potential of education and advancing equity and the attainment of the country's socioeconomic development goals. The strong advocacy for effective governance, supported by international, regional, and national legal frameworks and policies, reflects a significant political commitment to improving educational standards and practices for the benefit of all. However, implementing these commitments in Cameroon is challenged by a range of issues such as historical legacies and resource limitations. As a result, the effectiveness of the education system is significantly hindered by inadequate transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. Resource mismanagement, corruption, and ineffective monitoring systems also obstruct progress and compromise the quality of education.

These challenges notwithstanding, there are considerable opportunities for improving governance in education. Decentralisation presents a pivotal chance to allow local authorities to tailor decisions to their specific educational contexts thereby enhancing the relevance of the education system. Cameroon's commitment to international agreements, such as the 2015 Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 and the African Union's Continental Education



Strategy for Africa (CESA), provides a solid foundation for reform. These robust policy frameworks outline clear goals for educational quality and inclusivity, offering a strategic direction for aligning national practices with global standards. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on educational technology introduces transformative potential, enabling more efficient administrative operations, better data management, and innovative teaching methodologies. Through the incorporation of technology, educational institutions can enhance their management practices and learning environments. These opportunities, coupled with the role of the civil society offer a comprehensive pathway to overcoming existing governance challenges and advancing a more effective, equitable, and responsive education system.

To get there, however, it is essential for educational managers and administrators to gain a thorough understanding of good governance principles, recognise their importance for sustainable educational development, and effectively integrate these principles into daily management practices. There is a need for a concerted effort to align educational management practices with an adequate blend of the principles of good governance, ensuring that policies are not only well-designed but also effectively implemented and monitored. Also, institutional managers must continuously navigate and balance the top-down pressures from central regulations and standards with the internal needs of teachers and students, as well as the external expectations of parents and the local community as advised by the stakeholder theory of organizational management. Emphasizing a culture characterised by good governance will enable Cameroon to improve its educational outcomes and better harness the potential of its educational sector for national development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the issues and arguments presented in this paper, the various ministries of education are encouraged to work in synergy with the other stakeholders to continually explore means to enhance governance structures within educational institutions. A crucial aspect of effective governance is ensuring that stakeholders have the necessary capacity to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Specifically, they must possess a solid understanding of educational policy objectives and their implications, a sense of ownership and commitment to drive change, and the resources needed to implement reforms as intended. Developing and implementing a comprehensive training programme for educational managers and administrators, focusing on key governance principles, management skills, and best practices would be essential. The training should address areas such as transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, to build capacity and improve governance at all levels of educational management.

The government is advised to invest more resources in educational technology to enhance administrative efficiency, resource management, and data collection. Implementing robust, technology-supported systems for ongoing monitoring of stakeholders would help combat corruption and prevent misallocation of funds. An effective strategy is to introduce a biometric rollcall system for education personnel, established at divisional delegations of education and at higher education institutions, linked to a central database managed by the ministries. This system would require teachers to sign in periodically to confirm their presence and engagement. Such a system would help eliminate “ghost” employees’ individuals who may collude with educational managers to perpetuate corruption and undermine the effectiveness of the education system.

Strengthening implementation, monitoring, and auditing mechanisms for educational expenditures would help mitigate the risk of improper use of funds and ensure that scarce resources are distributed equitably and effectively. A similar approach towards educational policies, institutional arrangements and strategic plans would ensure that frameworks are not

only designed with good intentions but also executed effectively through regular evaluations and adjustments, based on feedback from relevant stakeholders and the need to align with contemporary governance standards and best practices.

Also, managers of educational institutions are encouraged to foster greater community involvement in educational management and decision-making processes, in line with national decentralisation efforts. They should embrace participatory governance by actively involving parents and other stakeholders in school management and policy development. In doing so, efforts should be made at the institutional level to develop targeted strategies to address the socio-cultural challenges that impedes educational governance. This requires engaging with local communities to understand and mitigate these barriers, and promote cultural inclusivity within the educational system.

Finally, the Government of Cameroon should support decentralisation efforts by strengthening the capacity of decentralised management structures to effectively address local educational needs and challenges. This support should include providing training for grassroots stakeholders and equipping local authorities with the necessary resources to fulfill their roles in governance and management.

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