An Evaluation of Leadership Effectiveness in the implementation of Higher Education Reforms: The Case of the Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon

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Abstract

This study sets out to evaluate outcomes of internal stakeholders' Provision of High-Quality Leadership (PHQL) effectiveness in the implementation of Equal Access (EA), and Professionalization (P) of Educational Leadership (EDL) in Higher Education (HE) reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon. This paper evaluated that Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education lacks adequate leadership strategies that will enable it achieve the goals of Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. It reports findings from research materials; field notes documents and transcribed interviews with 8 academic staffs and 4 students of the University of Buea. The findings will help stakeholders in the Faculty of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to gauge the progress of High-Quality Leadership (HQL) in the delivery of Equal Access and Professionalization of Educational leadership. It proposes that the Postgraduate Diploma, Master in Education Empowering Educational Leadership and Doctor of Education could enable the government to deliver some of its important educational reforms. It argues that society has a moral obligation to make sure that its members receive an adequate education that empowers them with skills to develop their society.

Key words: High quality leadership, equal access, professionalization of educational leadership, reform, Cameroon Universities,

Introduction

Cameroon Higher Education (HE) has come under serious criticisms for failing to deliver some of its it's important higher educational reforms to provide support for the expansion of student numbers, increased marketization and student choice, improve professionalization and continuing globalisation of the sector (Njeuma et al. 1999; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020; Lavngwa, 2019). Improving access to education and employment for marginalized communities, developing the leadership capacity of head teachers and principals through on-the job training or using information technology, distance learning and part time learning, can help students to enhance their learning and adapt better to the changing society (Njeuma et al., 1999; Ebot Ashu 2014; 2020; UNESCO, 2010; 2016; 2021; GESP, 2010; Republic of Cameroon, 1963; 1998; 2001).

An evaluation of leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in Higher Education reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon has been a crucial part of the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education's Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down Guidelines on Education in Cameroon; Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 to create five universities all over the national territory and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon (Njeuma et al. 1999; Tamukong & Ngeche, 2018; Ebot Ashu, 2020). These reforms addressed the challenges of developing human capital and well-being, promoting employment and economic integration, governance, decentralization and strategic management of the state (UNESCO, 2010; GESP, 2010; Republic of Cameroon, 1963; 1998; 2001). Yet inequality in Higher Education for socio-economically disadvantaged people remains a major policy challenge (Njeuma et al., 1999; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020; UNESCO, 2010; GESP, 2010; Republic of Cameroon, 1963; 1998; 2001; Njeuma, 2003; UN, 2016; 2021).

Previous empirical studies on the provision of high-quality leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access, and professionalization of educational leadership in higher education reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon are very scarce. Literature on the quality of educational leadership curriculum reform in Cameroon higher education has either single or multiple case studies (see Tamukong & Ngeche, 2018; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020) in employing qualitative methodology. Also, quantitative studies have focused on higher education reform outcomes, such as the university structures, staffs, students learning outcomes and high quality teaching in higher education (Njeuma et al., 1999). Quantitative or qualitative measures of the process and impact of the leadership of curriculum programme reforms of 1993 and 2001 are largely missing. A critical review of this will be presented below.

Aims to address the Policy Challenge

This study aims to evaluate outcomes of internal stakeholders' provision of high-quality leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in higher education reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon. It reviews research materials; field notes documents and interviews of university academic staff and students in measuring the success of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership at the Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon. It examines leadership training programmes that empower practitioners and young education leaders with transformational, distributional and sustainability learning outcomes. These leadership training programmes dovetail into Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) of Cameroon higher education (See Ebot Ashu, 2020) promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; full and productive employment and decent work for people of our nations.

This study shall address the following research questions:

What does the literature tell us about the provision of high-quality leadership in higher education for the 21st century?
How is the leadership provided by the Faculty of Education (university of Buea) perceived by internal stakeholders to be crucial in the implementation of equal access in the higher education?
What are the important factors perceived by internal stakeholders in the faculty of education about the provision of high quality leadership learning programs?

In this introduction, the subject area summarized the literature that has influenced this study. The aims of the study and research questions are then presented and followed is a justification about important policies on higher education reforms in Cameroon. What will follow are antecedents of the study illustrating theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were used to interpret, analyze and discuss internal stakeholder's provision of high quality leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in higher education reform introduced by the government of Cameroon are also described. Thirdly, the philosophical and methodological approaches are outlined. Fourthly, the analysis of the field notes documents and interview transcripts and the ethical considerations are presented. Finally, the findings and discussions of data are discussed.

Policy challenges of Equal Access and Professionalization in Educational Leadership

A historical perspective of Cameroon's educational, political, economic, social and philosophical transition is spread within the lanes of indigenous, missionary activities, colonialism, independence, one party system, democracy and multiparty democracy that greatly affect educational reforms in Cameroon aimed at the development and progress of the national economy (Lavngwa, 2019; Ebot Ashu, 2020b). Njeuma et al. (1999) study evaluated similar Cameroon educational policies (e.g. Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998: To Lay down Guidelines on Education in Cameroon; Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 creating five new universities all over the national territory and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon objectives were designed to address the challenge of providing quality education, granting of more academic and management autonomy to universities, the provision of more varied programmes (more professional and adapted to respond to the needs of the job market); reduce unemployment among graduates since the main university focused on classical liberal programmes compared to specialized professional and technical institutions seemed to receive more attention from an immediate development perspective (Njeuma et al., 1999; Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993). There were interrelated problems inherent in the nation's bilingual status, difficulty of determining equivalence between Francophone and Anglophone qualifications, conditions for recruitment and promotion of university teachers were categorized as Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers (chargé de cours), Associate Professors (Maître de Conférences) and Professors (Professeurs). Njeuma et al. (1999) study continues that Cameroonian teachers who had degrees from countries other than France had little difficulty in entering the ranks of Lecturer and Associate Professor but encountered serious difficulty in being promoted to the rank of Professor while those with degrees from French universities progressed to the rank of Professor more easily. So, these policies issues identified to make judgments about contexts, activities, characteristics, or outcomes of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership policy processes in Cameroon. This evaluation may inform and improve policy development, adoption, implementation, and effectiveness, and builds the evidence base for policy interventions. The above policies better outlines an on-going debate of higher education reforms in Cameroon which gives general judgments about high quality leadership, professionalization, goal attainment, program effectiveness, good governance, public accountability and contributes to citizens' trust in government.

Theoretical Framework

Tikkanen et al. (2019) provide the framework for analysing internal stakeholder's provision of high quality leadership effectiveness in the implementation strategy for achieving equal access and professionalization of educational administration in higher education. This plays an important role on how these factors are realized, hence providing a central determinant of reform success and what it doesn't (Fullan & Milles, 1992). It is presumed that strategies in educational leadership for achieving (e.g. quality practical learning programme, capacity building, use of technology to achieve results of professionalization) consist of top-down-bottom-up reform implementation strategies and collective proactive strategies of well-being and are crucial for universities in Africa development (Fullan, 1994, 2007; Petko et al., 2015). Thus, Tikkanen et al. (2019) imply that top-down–bottom-up implementation strategy, consisting of leadership for change management and knowledge sharing can promote university impact of equal access and professionalization in Higher Education reform in terms of deep, long-lasting changes (1994).

High quality leadership change management (Jones et al., 2013; Fullan, 2016) practices are likely to enhance knowledge sharing of educational leadership in higher education reform. Top-down-bottom-up reform implementation strategy calls for leadership for change management and the enhancement of knowledge sharing curriculum reform, especially in local curriculum, work widely involving educational practitioners in the transformation of national curriculum to local curricula (Tikkanen et al., 2019; Fullan, 1994; 2007).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) prescribe that sustainability leadership development framework can be established to context-sensitive development work, where the learning and well-being of stakeholders in the reform work are put on centre stage. In such educational establishment development plan, learning is considered both as a means and the goal of the development work to achieve such plans suggested by stakeholders (Anholon et al., 2020). In this study curriculum, related theories are used to develop models of change in higher education and provide explanations regarding the degree of success of some initiatives over others. Lessons from these theories and conceptual frameworks below can be used by curriculum implementers to guide teachers implement the curriculum and other improvement programmes as intended (Fullan, 2001).

Fullan (1991) in his work on educational improvement reminds us of successful implementation patterns sustaining the improvement programme (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991; Fullan, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework which informs this study are drawn from the provision of high-quality leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access, and professionalization, of educational leadership in higher education reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon.

The Provision of High Quality Leadership (PHQL) in Higher Education (HE)

Within the literature on the PHQL by their very nature, are conscious Instructors, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professor using government policies in building vision, setting strategic direction, influencing, and developing people, redesigning HE institutions, and managing the teaching and learning programmes in university and the educational community (Black, 2015; Drugus & Landoh, 2014; Filho et al., 2020; Burguel & Busch, 2018; Njeuma et al., 1999). A good conscious HE leader executes through inspiration and develops implementation capacity networks through a complex team building process with internal, external, national and international stakeholders (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a). A good conscious manager plan, direct, coordinate and make good decisions about the smooth running of his or her school, organize, lead, motivate and control the human resources, financial, physical, and information resources of an organization to reach its goals efficiently and effectively (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2021b). The problem is that educational leadership is failing because the system does not develop the moral character and excellence of the soul (Lavngwa, 2019; Ebot Ashu, 2021). It is erroneous to believe that practical success and wisdom in other fields of human endeavor can suffice for effective educational leadership. Failure to distinguish technical from moral excellence has made most educational leaders to cause more harm on society (Lavngwa, 2016; Ebot Ashu, 2020b). The possession of professional skills, wealth, and popularity without moral probity can ruin the society. If a leader lacks knowledge of the Good, no other knowledge will be beneficial to him and to his society (Lavngwa, 2019. Ebot Ashu, 2020).

Promoting Equal Access (EA) in Higher Education

Equal access in education can refer to alternative flexible routes of higher education in vocational, professional schools and university studies, to involve work-based learning, and different modes of study such as on-the job training, distance learning and part time HE routes, or acceptance of a wider range of qualifications, or by encouraging a broader range of student to apply (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; Njeuma et al., 1999; Njeuma, 2003; DfEs, 2003; HEFCE, 2006; 2009; GESP, 2010; Ebot Ashu, 2020). EA strategy aims to address discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different under-represented groups of staffs and students (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; Njeuma et al., 1999; Njeuma, 2003). Gifted and talented academic staff and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, lower income households and other under-represented groups such as those with disability may face barriers to entry or succeed in higher education (Tchombe, 2001; Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001). A review of the 1993 and 2001 policies on equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in higher education shows that there is a more sophisticated approach in the whole student lifecycle in developing leadership skills. These initiatives extend from raising aspirations, through fair admission to retention, flexible progression, outreach partners, flexible delivery and lifelong learning (HEFCE, 2006; 2009; GESP, 2010; Tchombe, 2001; Njeuma et al, 1999).

Professionalization of Educational Leadership in Higher Education

Professionalization is a social process by which any trade or occupation transforms itself into a true profession of high integrity and competence (Njeuma et al., 1999). Implementing Professionalization of Educational Leadership in higher education requires innovative leadership practices to ensure Equal Access (EA) improvement programmes within universities will require a broader range of students not just to apply and begin, but to stay and gain qualifications that meet HE expectations and gain employment or venture into business in the current job market (HEFCE, 2006; 2009; Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; GESP, 2010; Tchombe, 2001; Njeuma et al., 1999; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020). Whilst professionalization initiative inevitably involves some form of organisation improvement Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) suggest that lack of attention to the process of improvement is a major reason for its failure. Fullan's (1982; 1991) model identified four broad phases in the improvement process namely: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome.

The implementation phase is said to be crucial and Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) identified the major factor affecting implementation: government and other stakeholders should consider before committing the university improvement effort or rejecting it (Ebot Ashu, 2020a). Professionalization researchers have consistently stressed the importance of HE institutions commitment to nurturing leaders and managers in academia, and the form of developing the capacity of middle managers and students' use of information technology to enhance teaching and learning in the changing society scenarios (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; GESP, 2010; HEFCE, 2006; 2009; Ebot Ashu, 2020a; Njeuma et al., 1999). This paper reports about increasing international interest of universities' provision of both formal and non-formal leadership learning opportunities within the framework of the principle of lifelong education (UNESCO, 1997; Njeuma et al., 1999; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a).

Student Voice

Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon (1992; 1993; 2001) considered the distinctiveness of the provision of professional programmes in universities, professional schools and vocational training institutes in HE from the students' perspective in different learning institutions in Cameroon (Parry et al. (2004). In particular, the student experience was addressed within the sections; the context for; curriculum development; professional learning programmes; academic advice and support: the student life-cycle was addressed (HEFCE, 2006; 2009). Parry et al.s report considered extrinsic and intrinsic features, such as social life, costs, resources, administration and tutor accessibility (Parry, 2006; Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1992; 1993; 2001).

High Quality Leadership Learning programmes in Higher Education

Throughout the world, universities are creating educational leadership learning in HE as a degree programme that offers career growth to educators. It can enable teachers and other educational professionals to become school administrators, such as principals or head teachers (Ebot Ashu, 2020a; 2014; Burguel & Busch, 2018).

Burguel & Busch (2018) discussed the theory programme in France which consists of gaining an in-depth understanding of school administration and management in schools or different workplace (Dering et al., 2005). According to Collins (2002), the image of organisational leaders as experts in administration, strategic leadership and team management skills were the most distinctive modifications in the content of leadership and management development programmes in France. Huber and West (2002) argue that the French system emphasizes experiential methods and course-based learning opportunities.

In England universities, course module includes: understanding school improvement, leadership for school improvement, leadership enquiry and in year 2 students take educational policy and improving schools and their dissertation programmes are distinctive, evidence-focused. Educational Leadership Masters course builds on National Professional Qualifications to develop capacity for leadership and expert practice in schools. Some other universities offer online modules that consist of the leadership landscape, leadership in action: making changes, developing strategy, researching leadership and management and dissertation.   There is little evidence about the quality of school leader's informal training in Cameroon. One of the few sources is Ebot Ashu (2014) drawing from Akoulouze et al.'s (1999) guide for primary school head teachers that gives pragmatic advice in relation to many aspects of in-service-training, notably: pedagogical management, functions of head teachers, management of teaching and learning, human resource management, resource management, personnel management, financial management, learning and assessment, school relationship management, learning development, the school within its environment, performance management, self-development of leaders, health and safety, research in education, leadership in education.

Ebot Ashu (2020a) has critically conducted an assessment of the M.Ed in Education Leadership programme at the Faculty of Education which envisage the growing recognition and use of Essential ICT Management Skills for School Leaders, Leadership in Education: Deputies and Middle Managers, Foundations of Education, School Resource Management, Education Administration and Planning, Leadership in Education: Senior Leadership, The Cameroon Educational System, Managing Education Change Policy, Research and Statistical Methods in Education, Strategic Management in Educational Leadership, Seminar in Research Methods in Educational Leadership, Organisation Effectiveness, Improvement and transformation, Human Resource Management, Review Moderation Systems and Process, Practicum and Thesis.

Cameroon Higher Education (HE) still lags behind in adequate human capital to free citizens from colonial subjugation and train them to become holistic persons (Lavngwa & Ngalim, 2015). For Higher Education to be truly liberating, its curricula must involve African philosophies and epistemologies that aim at resolving concrete problems. Such an African epistemology must transcend the indulgence of mere curiosity. It requires not only keenness of intellect and moral integrity, but courage to face the truth head-long. Such an indigenous philosophy relies on the resources of the entire personality and his intellectual and moral probity (Lavngwa, 2019; Lavngwa & Ngalim, 2015). Overall, it is evident to summarize that the need to improve schools, organisations and educational systems performances through the development of leaders and managers has been given priority by many countries (Ebot Ashu, 2020a). In turbulent times, we argue that such modules taught internally and in other counties may be relevant to develop the current and new generation of global university leaders and managers, as they often lack an outside perspective.

In the next section, the research methods are considered in more detail, allowing a critical review of their appropriateness for the study.

Philosophical and Methodological Approaches

The aim of this section is to locate and justify the research approach and the evaluative case study methodology used. This section falls into two distinct parts. Firstly, the research will be located within wider African Union philosophical Education (AUPE). Secondly, the researchers will clarify their research methodology and method and give details of how they analysed the interview transcripts, taking into account issues such as validity and ethics.

Research Approach

This study utilises the humanistic knowledge domain of Gunther and Ribbins (2003) whose humanistic approach gathers theories from the experience of Professors, Associate Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers and Students in a university. Within the interpretative paradigm, researchers adopted a case study approach to investigate internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in the implementation of equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in higher education improvement programmes (Denscombe, 2003). This approach stresses subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency, detailing internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in implementing equal access and professionalization of educational leadership in Cameroon universities.

Philosophical Approach

In the last 100 years, many African philosophies have emerged and persisted in diverse guises in modern organisations. Table 1 provides a framework of 7 "dimensions" of philosophical assumption-based approaches to knowledge in the social sciences.

Table 1: Approaches to Knowledge

African Philosophies of Education	Institution	Educational System
Ethnophilosophy	Associate and interpret collective world view of the African people cultural artefacts, narratives, folklore, literature, music of the African people.	Examine the system of thoughts of existing African people pre- and post-colonisation; determine and encourage what can be ideal forms of authentic Africa philosophy and praxis in the emerging postcolonial situation.
Ubuntu (Ochemabissi Ka Ore Ezuume)	We need other human beings in order to be human.	Embodies all those virtues that maintain harmony, and the spirit of sharing among other members of the society.
Community (Etek)	Thinking together in a non-confrontational and truly democratic way.	Empower people in any given context to be active citizens and to generate ideas from the grassroots.
Reasonableness (Atah)	The quality of being plausible or acceptable to a reasonable person in the community or society.	Public reason, liberal legitimacy, political liberalism must be encouraged.
Moral Maturity (Ayaamba	Apply a body of knowledge or skill to the solution of a problem.	Moral agency, harnessing cognitive ability, harnessing emotional resources, using sound skills, using principles, respecting others, developing a sense of meaning for others.
Maat or Ma'at (Moninkim)	The kind of leadership and teaching needed today requires truth, balance, order, harmony, peace, love, unity, law, morality and justice represented by the Goddess who personified these concepts and regulated the stars, seasons and creation and not her ideological opposite was Isfet (Egyptian *jzft*), meaning injustice, chaos, violence or to do evil is against the principles of Maat.	Apply the principles of truth, order and justice, harmony, balance, righteousness, and revival of the spirit of human victory in every aspect of life. Pursuit of the goal of organising society into a peaceful paradise.
The Teachings of the Vizier Ptahhotep (Obasinjom)	Morality, social propriety, duties towards superiors, duties towards equals and duties towards inferiors.	Improving ethical values; unity of the cosmos and social order and justice.
The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant (Ntii-aloh Nkpak)	Intervene against injustice, respect values and norms of society.	Develop leaders, protectors who are creator of good.
The Dialogue of a Man with his Soul	Ba is the part of the soul with great mobility; Ba leaves the body after death and helps with the transition to the afterlife	Cling to life despite the challenges since what comes after death is rather uncertain.
Imhotep(Ntuifar)	Connect with peace, love and harmony.	Development of intellectuals, scientists, theologians, architects, physicians and inventors to promote peace.
Kemetic	Human perfectibility, truth, justice, balance, order, compassion, harmony and reciprocity.	To preserve life and respect through Kemetic principles (human perfectibility, truth, justice, balance, order, compassion, harmony and reciprocity).
As Above so Below (Ossow yah Enssi)	Human societies below have been organised according to the world universal order above.	Accomplish the miracle of one thing rendered on earth as in heaven.

Source: Adapted from Ebot Ashu (2020b; 2021b)

Table 1 presents assumptions in research that deal with the understanding of the basis of the African reality. The notion of an AUPE in EDL emerged with the advent of a de-colonial education and the call for an educational philosophy that reflects this renewal. It focuses on Africa and its cultures, identities and values, and new imperatives for education in a postcolonial era. Such an AUPE based on indigenous epistemologies and socio-political values must liberate Africans from the sad historical experiences of colonialism that 'enchained' them and must dialogue with humanity to be relevant (Lavngwa, 2019).

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive methodology because it allows the researchers to get the data directly from the internal university stakeholders themselves by hearing their views, voices, perceptions and expectations. This strategy contends that knowledge is subjective and truthful 'in a way that is faithful to the original as possible' (Denscombe, 2003, p. 101). This study combines the best features of a case study including review of research materials, documents and transcribed interviews recorded as case studies. The conclusions reached, in the absence of quantifiable data, although subjective in nature, will be based on clear evidence emerging from the interviews with 8 lecturers and 4 students at the University of Buea.

Sampling

The technique used in this study is random sampling (Denscombe, 2003). The approach of 'random sampling involves the selection' (*p.12*) of internal stakeholders from a larger group (university population) 'literally at random' (*p.12*) and each member of the population had a known, but possibly non-equal, chance of being included in the sample.

A detailed breakdown of the sample is given in **Table 2:** Interview Sample

University	Professors and Associate Professors		Lecturers and Assistant Lecturers		Students		Total	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
University A	4	4	4	4	4	4	12	12

In this study, three groups were interviewed - one comprising 2 Professors and 2 Associate Professors; 2 Lecturers and 2 Assistant Lecturers and 4 students in the case study university. We used students studying at different levels at the Faculty of Education in the University of Buea. The researchers were not personally acquainted with any of the respondents and their consent was sought. However, Table 2 above shows the cross section of respondents' were chosen to add validity to the data generated by means of respondents' triangulation.

Methods

The three research questions (highlighted above) for this study determined the aim of the study and established the philosophical and theoretical frameworks for the methodological approach. The research design flows from the initial research questions and a qualitative design has been chosen comprising elements of field notes documents and interviews as good examples of a case study research design and methods (Yin, 2002; 2013).

The field notes document analysis-based research was designed around the literature review. The basis of this understanding informed the identification of further documents from Cameroon. In particular, Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Decree No. 92/74 of 13 April 1992 complemented by Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) enabled the identification of the case study university in Cameroon for the qualitative research and a sample of university stakeholders.

This study employs interviews as a structured group process 'to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about (Denscombe, 2003, p. 169) internal stakeholders' PHQL effectiveness in the implementation of Equal Access and Professionalization of Educational Leadership in Higher Education improvement programmes. The semi-structured interview questions schedule guided the interviews. The enquiries were based on the research questions. However, flexibility was given to Professors, Associate Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised.

Field Notes Document analysis Process and Interview Data Analysis

Field document analysis develop from literature and policy documents on higher education in Cameroon are presented thematically using emergent themes which are dealt with individually in turn using relevant codes to create data sets as recommended by Silverman (2000); for example, UBPD1Mutt22-Utt28, as coded by Ebot Ashu (2014; 2018), refers to field document analysis from the University of Buea (UB), Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon Policy guidelines (PD1), the Meeting (M) took place which the quote was taken and Utterance 22 to Utterance Utt28 in the field document analysis.

The transcribed interviews were coded with numerical numbers to create data sets as recommended by Silverman (2000) and the analytical technique of pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to interpret the interviews. This enabled the researchers to come up with relative manageable themes related to the research questions, and allowed preliminary analyses undertaken by the allocation of codes.

For the interpretation of the results within philosophical and theoretical conceptual frameworks, interviews' alphabetical codes were assigned to each Professor (P), Associate Professor (AP), Lecturers (L), Assistant Lecturer (AL) and student (S) as a descriptor for where the interviews were collected; respondents were not referred to using their real names but were assigned an alpha-numerical code based on their numerical number (e.g. UBP1MUtt10-Utt14 or UBAP2MUtt6-Utt8 (cf. Ebot Ashu, 2014). The first code UBP1MUtt10-Utt14 identifies the organization (UB), Professor 1 and Meeting (M), Utterance 10 to Utterance 14 or UBAP2MUtt6-Utt8 refers to interview analysis from the University of Buea (UB), Associate Professor 2, the Meeting (M) took place which the quote was taken and Utterance 6 to Utterance 8 in the interview transcript.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were given the highest importance in that informed consent was sought from all the samples and their gatekeeper, in this case the university Vice-Chancellor. Care was taken to inform respondents that audio-recording would be used but their identities would be safeguarded and the reporting would be done in anonymity. The Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education and the University of Buea research guidelines were adhered to in order to ensure respect for each person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom.

Findings

This section presents the findings, broken down into themes, based on qualitative data collected from the field note documents and interviews with university internal stakeholders' (Professors, Associate professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students) inquiry in the form of process-outcome evaluation.

High Quality Leadership (PHQL) in Higher Education (HE)

Within the policy documents governing Higher Education in Cameroon and interview with two Professors, regarding which university stakeholders implementing policies are under increased pressure to use their competencies and improve consciousness through creating shared vision, set goals and strategic direction that influence stakeholders wellbeing in education (UBPD1Mutt22-Utt28). It is interesting that the university offers varied postgraduate programmes routes that improve the competence and led students into employment as Instructors and Assistant Lecturers (UBP1MUtt10-Utt14). The Faculty of Education aim to improve the moral character of these Assistant Lecturers and lecturers develop innovative quality research and teaching strategies that compliment with transformational, distribution and sustainable leadership (UBAP2MUtt6-Utt8).

Findings from a Lecturer and an Assistant Lecturer noted the management and administrative roles in planning, organizing, controlling and evaluating day-to-day operations that would improve performance, interpret operational organisational strategy and react to resolve problems (UBL1MUtt6-Utt8) as they arise in any learning institutional rules, while ensuring economy and efficiency (UBAL2MUtt22-Utt23)**.** Lecturer revealed that within an ever-changing Higher Education sector in Cameroon, their role has challenges as most of them have to deal with complex academic, pastoral, moral, administrative and pragmatic decisions. They must engage in preparing lessons and carrying our research, providing on-going training and support from senior colleagues (UBL2MUtt24-Utt28) will complement the quality of leadership in the faculty of education.

Two Professors said specific emphasis should be placed on opportunities for self-reflection, debriefing and the sharing of experiences with peers (UBP1MUtt12-Utt13). At the heart of on-going training and support should be the strategic engagement of Lecturers into administrative and management services in the university (UBAP2MUtt16-Utt18).

Promoting Equal Access (EA) in Higher Education (HE)

An Associate Professor and a Professor noted they are raising aspirations of students from marginalized communities into the academia community (UBAP2Mutt98). More people younger colleagues from under-represented groups should be offered fair admission, particularly low socio-economic groups and those not engaged in politics or secret religious sects are very much empower to become lifelong learners (UBP1Mutt102-104). Cameroonians in the diaspora should be encourage as out-reach partners with those in Cameroon universities, and support each other to develop world class work force of tomorrow (UBL1MUtt12-Utt16). EA is very vital and is the duty of the Faculty of Education to partner with internal and external stakeholders, encouraging vocational and professional routes into HE giving non-traditional students choice about different modes of study e.g. on-the-job training, online learning, distant learning and 'full time courses' (UBP2MUtt3-Utt7), and supporting learners gain a wide range of qualifications 'at different sorts of levels' that enable equitable career opportunities (UBL2MUtt6-Utt8).

Professionalization of Educational Leadership in the Faculty of Education

In Cameroon school leaders are eager to engage in a Postgraduate Diploma that leads to employment as principal or head teacher can improve their ICT Management, school resource management, education administration, management and leadership, research and strategic management skills (UBAL2MUtt140-143). It is the university's internal policy to provide learning programmes that promote diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice, change management support the development of these minority stakeholders through their daily practices and external evaluation (UBP1MUtt32-Utt36). These learning programmes will enable learners with knowledge and skills that drive the decisions of their school and the educational system (e.g. provide a safe, secure and healthy learning environment; engage stakeholders with the wider community (UBI2MUtt19-Utt21), promote involvement in professional development so that leaders can assign tasks to aspiring leaders that will optimize their performance, build successful organizations in effective collaboration with others (UBL2MUtt6-Utt11).

Other Assistant Lecturers and Instructors noted that teaching groups for the leadership in education for deputies and middle managers and senior leadership courses at postgraduate level should be smaller (8-25 students) groups offer greater flexibility in learning and improve researcher's identity and epistemology at the doctoral level (UBAL1MUtt24-Utt26). Other courses like human resources management, strategic management, school resource management, school effectiveness content should be professionally taught through the use of case studies and projects (UBAL2MUtt6-Utt8). ICT-based pedagogies should cover a range of learning contexts including e-learning at Postgraduate and Doctoral level. The Faculty should encourage other assessment approaches to e-portfolios, e-assessment projects and using software and mobile technologies to support learners in their degree programmes (UBI1MUtt16-Utt17).

Students' experience was a strong consideration within the context of professionalization in Educational Leadership in the Faculty of Education. The students suggested a government funded Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and a paid Doctorate programme in Educational Leadership (EdD) was recognized as strength, particularly for those pursuing professional routes and those who have interest in Entrepreneurship Programme (ENT) is a cost-effective investment in the development of entrepreneurial capacity of young people (UBS3MUtt3-Utt5). All students are obliged to take Practicum in Educational Leadership at both Postgraduate and Doctorate programme operates with structure partnerships between schools and the different educational systems UBS2Mutt14-16). Whilst students feel a strong need to fit in a professional training programme in the Faculty of Education, University of Buea sponsored by the government, they want the leadership team to support progression pathways and their achievements. Others stressed on motivating factors with significant funding resources and employment at the end of the programmes. Finally, a recurring theme mentioned by many was the criticality of ideas on inclusive learning. So, putting the learner first was the key (UBS2MUtt8-Utt9).

Discussion

Having summarised the themes and described the evidence in response to the research question, the researchers now relate these findings to the literature reviewed and theorise what impact these findings can potentially contribute to the deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The Provision of High Quality Leadership (PHQL) in Higher Education (HE)

The findings and the literature explores in more detail high quality leadership that are influencing stakeholders achieve equal access and professionalization in educational establishments (Njeuma et al. 1999; Tamukong & Ngeche, 2018; Ebot Ashu, 2020). The content of these policy documents encompasses strategic directions, methods and systemic solutions to problems and to redesign higher education towards innovation and a more sustainable educational organizations that will offer employment or training for youth from disadvantaged or working class family backgrounds (Black, 2015; Drugus & Landoh, 2014; Filho et al., 2020; Burguel & Busch, 2018; Njeuma et al., 1999; Ebot Ashu, 2020a). Policy documents and interview transcripts identified HE stakeholder have the most important leadership qualities and skills to look for in a great HE leaders e.g. innovation, communication, integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, vision, influence as conceptualized by (Black, 2015; Drugus & Landoh, 2014; Filho et al., 2020; Burguel & Busch, 2018; UNESCO, 2016; UN, 2021; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2021b). It is disappointing that some Professors and Associate Professors are more of the administrative culture bearers because the educational sector has not succeeded in one of its basic tasks of enabling and stimulating users' leadership skills (teachers, head teachers, principals and students) to professionalize in Educational Leadership (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a; UNESCO, 2010; 2016).

These administrative and management qualities and skills have had a particular influence on both Associate Professors and Professors have become culture founders (a leadership role) and not culture bearers which are a management role carried out by Instructors, Assistant Lecturers and Lecturers (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a; Drugus & Landoh, 2014; Filho et al., 2020; Burguel & Busch, 2018). The Key qualities shared by Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers and Instructors that makes a good HE manager great are: honesty, communication skills, confidence, responsibility, empathy, focus and creativity are relatively lacking (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2021b; Black, 2015; Drugus & Landoh, 2014; Filho et al., 2020; Burguel & Busch, 2018).

This paper provides leadership qualities and skills designed to assist educational organisations in developing the moral character and excellence of the soulful academic staff at local, national and international level (Lavngwa, 2016; Ebot Ashu, 2020b; Actionaid, 2017). Worldwide, there is a growing thirst for high quality leaders with moral probity to enhance the development of higher education staff, equitable access to higher education, the prospect of better employment and personal outcomes in knowledge-based societies (Lavngwa, 2016; 2019; Burguel & Busch, 2018; Tamukong & Ngeche, 2018; Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a). All this takes place in an increasingly competitive and financially constrained higher education sector. Thus, new types of private, non-traditional and online providers increase their offer and open access to wider learner cohorts (Burguel & Busch, 2018).

Promoting Equal Access (EA) in Higher Education

The findings identified that in current political discourse, Equal Access and Professionalization improvement programmes are at the forefront of national debate on HE and aim to increase the number of disadvantaged students in universities taking professional programmes that lead to employment, since both developing and developed societies require knowledge demands in higher level skills in the labour force (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; Njeuma et al., 1999; Njeuma, 2003; DfEs, 2003; HEFCE, 2006; 2009; GESP, 2010; Ebot Ashu, 2020a).

Discussions of economic and social justice ensure that the opportunity to work or enter higher education should be open to those with a potential to benefit from it, regardless of age, sex, political views, religion, gender, tribe or family background (Tchombe, 2001; DfES, 2003; Njeuma et al. 1999; Burguel & Busch, 2018; Tamukong & Ngeche, 2018; Lavngwa, 2019; Ebot Ashu, 2020a). Educational systems in developed and developing counties must identify, encourage, admit and support to graduation all with a potential to succeed (Njeuma et al., 1999; Tchombe, 2001; DfES, 2003; Ebot Ashu, 2020a). Fair access to university study and employment is vital to governments of developed and developing countries in expanding higher education and committing to high standards of research and teaching.

The articulate responses from findings concur with the suggestions by these policy documents (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1998; 1993; 2001), that long-term success of the improvement programmes requires robust quality mechanisms in implementing the key features of promoting Equal Access through raising aspirations, fair admission and orientation, and a basis for flexible progression, outreach partners, vocational emphasis, flexible delivery and lifelong learning (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 1993; 2001; GESP, 2010; Njeuma et al. 1999).

Professionalization of Educational Leadership in the Faculty of Education

Professionalization is the process of giving educators professional qualities, typically by increasing training or raising required qualifications (Ebot Ashu, 2014; 2020a). Depending on the stage of your professional journey, the Faculty of Education (University of Buea) is essentially an effective and competent establishment for providing leadership courses for the National Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma in Educational Leadership for Principals and Head teachers (Ebot Ashu, 2020a). Graduates can continue for a Masters in Educational Leadership and Doctor of Education (EdD) (Ebot Ashu, 2020a).

The findings support Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Decree No. 93/034 of 19 January 1993 and Law No. 005 of April 2001 (LOHE) in their commitment to propose university improvement with new classical professional programmes and the different courses identified in the findings. Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) suggest that lack of attention to the process of improvement is responsible for university's failure to subject educational leadership training for educational leaders' (also Fullan, 1991; 1994; 1991; 2001; 2007; 2016) model that identifies four broad phases in the improvement process: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome will be identified in the preceding sections.

Findings also uphold the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon (1993; 2001) that in Cameroon as elsewhere, universities accept challenges and profound transformations, shaped by the theatre of political, economic, cultural and social changes. Findings corroborate Government policies for a sophisticated approach in educational leadership that is based on the student lifecycle in developing leadership skills (UNESCO, 2010; UN, 2016; 2021; GESP, 2010; Ebot Ashu, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This evaluative case study was conducted in the form of reviewing policy documents and interviews with university Professors, Associate Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students. It contributes knowledge pertaining to internal stakeholder's PHQL effectiveness in the implementation of Equal Access and Professionalization of Educational Leadership in Higher Education reforms introduced by the government of Cameroon in 1998, 1993 and 2001, and so provides practitioners in Educational Leadership with 'what works' in the context they know and understand.

The Contributions of Knowledge

This study supports the need for further understanding of internal stakeholders' Provision of High-Quality Leadership (PHQL) effectiveness in the implementation of Equal Access (EA), and Professionalization (P) of Educational Leadership (EDL) in Higher Education (HE) improvement programmes which has become a dilemma for education and social science researchers.

Figure 1: Conceptualising the Provision of High Quality Leadership (PHQL) in Higher Education for the 21st century
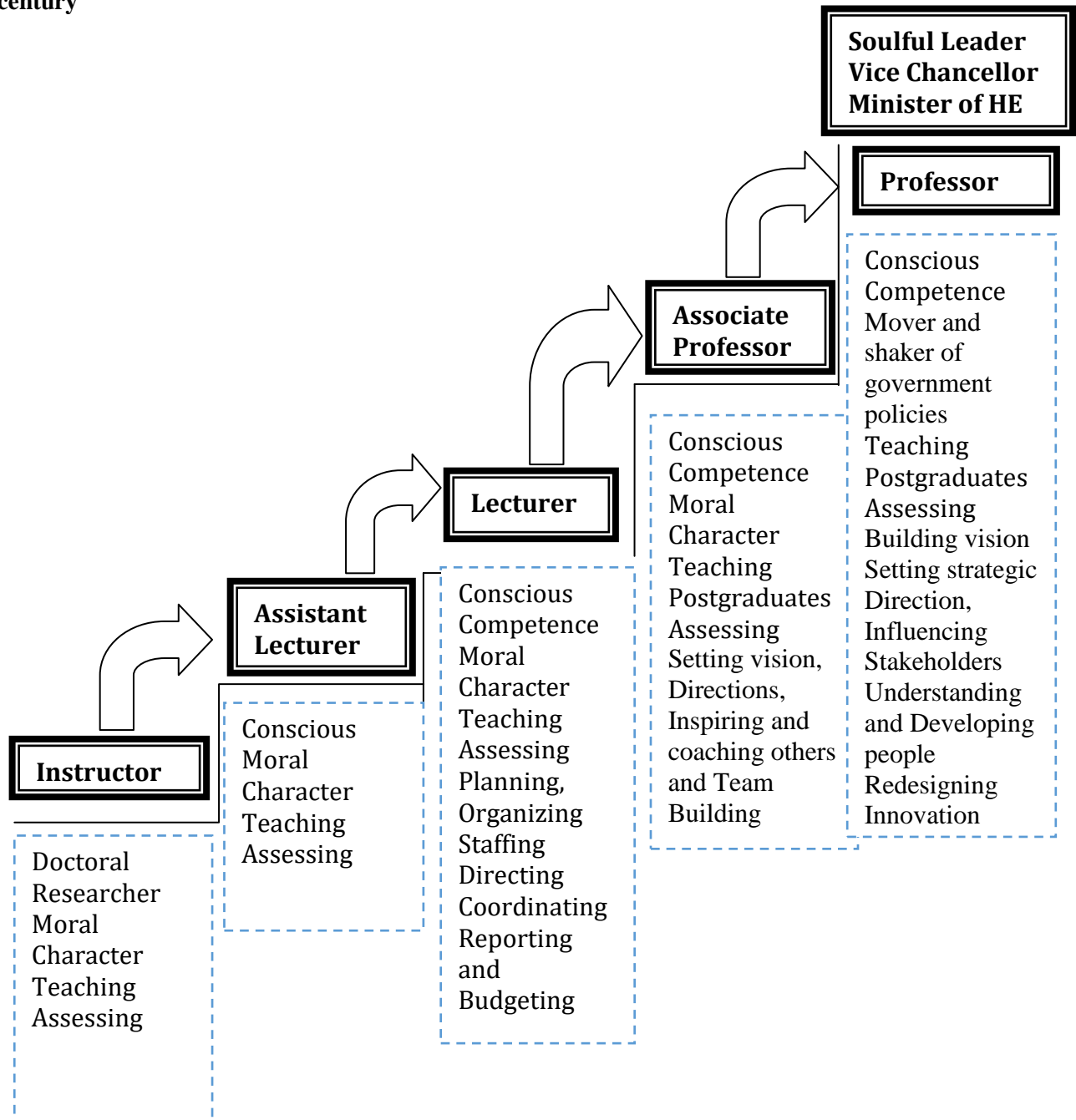

Figure 1 illustrates a Conceptual diagram of the Provision of High Quality Leadership (PHQL) in Higher Education for the 21st century

How the Contribution can be applied

The conceptual diagram showed that PHQL by its very nature has conscious competence scholars who are able to interpret government policies, build vision, set strategic direction, influence stakeholders, understand and develop people, redesign and demonstrate innovations in different disciplines. There are some Instructors, Assistant Lecturers and Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors promoting management and administration culture cannot empower a good leader become a vice chancellor or Minister of Higher Education. The role of university staff indicates that there is a continuing shift in emphasis from Instructor to Professor must learn to promote transformation, distribution and sustainable leadership qualities in their leadership, management and administrative duties.
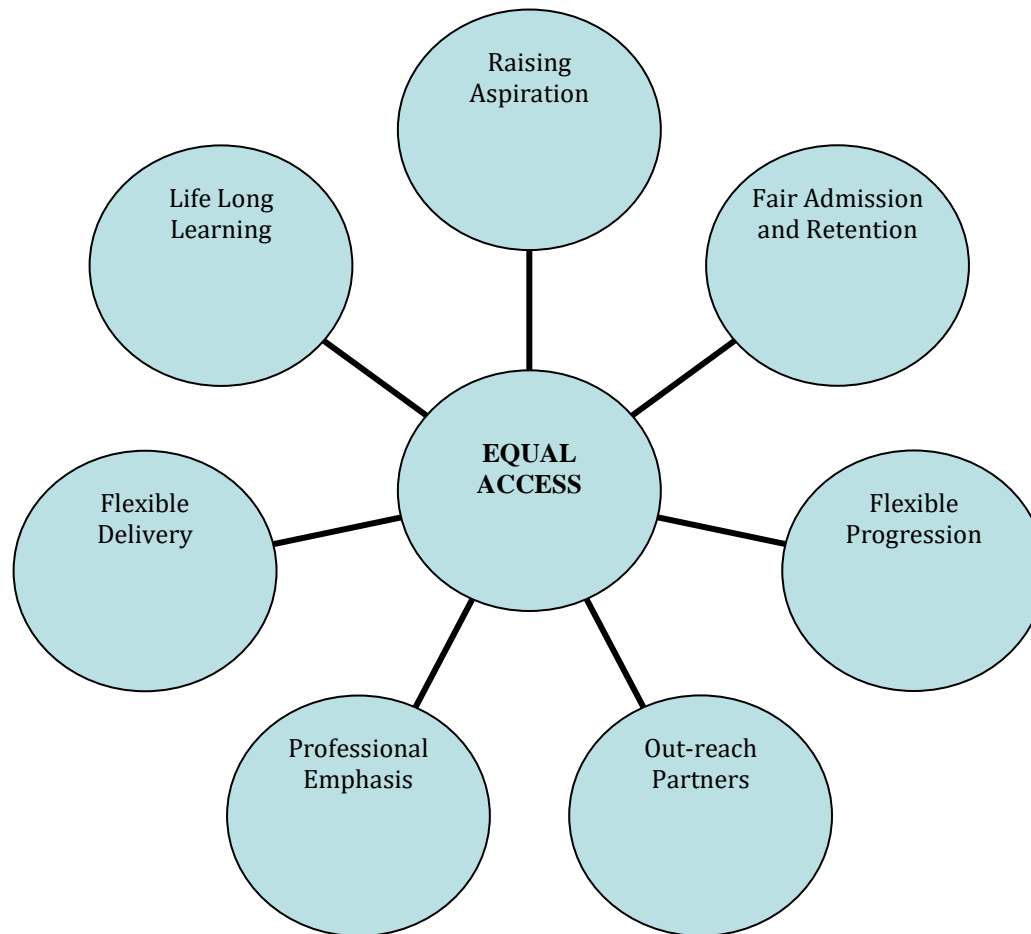
Figure 2: Typology to measure Equal Access at all points of the Student Life-Cycle

Figure 2 shows a typology for promoting Equal Access in learning Institutions

How the Contribution can be applied

Promoting Equal Access is not simple. Firstly, what is to be measured is not always clear. At institutional levels, the key points outlined in Figure 2 are raising aspirations, lifelong learning, fair admission and retention, flexible delivery though groups have changed over time, flexible progression, out-reach partners, vocational or professional emphasis, and attention has shifted from recruitment and admission to retention, on-course support, and access to equitable career opportunities.

Provision of High-Quality Leadership Learning programs

This paper equally proposes nine months Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership (PGDipEd Leadership), M.Ed in Education Empowering Educational Leadership and a three years paid Doctor of Education (EdD) that enables leaders to make the right journey towards skill acquisition and to deliver extraordinary results. These education and leadership learning programmes will help education leaders (Primary, secondary and tertiary levels) to create and sustain ethical, inclusive and socially just learning environments.

The Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership (PGDipEd Leadership, 80 credit) is a nine month course; the M.Ed in Education Empowering Educational Leadership is a 2 years programme, 120 credit and the Doctor of Education (EdD, 180 credits) is a three-year programme designed to prepare professionals to pursue leadership roles in primary, secondary, tertiary institutions and corporate, governmental and non-governmental educational organizations. The learning programmes below seek to target persons who are engaged in administrative, supervisory and leadership functions.

These would include: senior teachers, principals, head teachers, ministry officials, education inspectors, teachers, educational trainers, lecturers and instructors in a variety of educational settings and organisations (e.g. state, private, public, commercial or voluntary sectors) of education who aspire to senior leadership and management positions. Suitably qualified persons wishing to develop graduate competences in education leadership, management and administration are welcome and many graduates of the course attain senior management positions in educational organisations. These postgraduate degree programmes are based on the University of Buea credit rating for doctorate and taught master's degrees programmes.

How the Contribution can be applied

The researchers envisage that efforts towards the decolonization of educational leadership in African Universities will need the growing recognition and use of Essential ICT Management Skills for School Leaders at the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters levels is designed to equip participants with knowledge and skills related to the use of ICTs for educational purposes.

The *Leadership in Education for Deputies and Middle Managers* course at both Postgraduate Diploma, Master and EdD levels focuses on the changing roles, responsibilities and professional development of deputies, middle managers and senior management teams (or leadership groups), in schools and other educational organisations.

Strategic Management in Educational Leadership at both Master and Doctor of Education (EdD) programmes will help participants to deliver the best outcomes for their pupils as they learn to plan strategically for their respective schools and educational systems.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice at the Doctor of Education (EdD) level will deepen students; experience of the multicultural nature of the African continent, and further all aspects of indigenous pedagogy while advancing our commitment to diversity, equity, social inequality and social justice in Africa. We introduce the principle of decolonization (of knowledge, teaching, and pedagogy) so that it can most succinctly capture the elements of diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice.

School Resource Management is learnt at Postgraduate Diploma and both at the Master and Doctorate (EdD) levels. It sets out to provide students with the knowledge to be financially literate and to interface confidently with the finance function in order to achieve the school's strategic plans. With sustainability as a cross cutting theme where students are introduced to the main topics in accounting and finance that impact on the strategic decisions that are made in organisations on a daily basis. Through the use of case studies and projects, students gain hands-on experience in the strategic deployment of financial literacy by managers.

With regard to *Leadership in Education,* senior managers learn leadership in education at the Postgraduate Diploma, Master and Doctorate (EdD) levels that will enable both managers and leaders to develop knowledge, understanding of critical perspective—based upon evidence drawn from research, scholarship, practice and the wider literature—of the work, lives, careers and perspectives of senior managers as leaders within educational institutions and contexts.

Managing Education Change Policy is a course that is learnt at the Postgraduate Level, Master and Doctorate (EdD) levels is an important prerequisite for increasing the potential of educational leaders to manage changes they initiate in their different learning establishments.

Organisational Effectiveness, Improvement and Transformation is a Master and Doctor of Education (EdD) course that will help develop staff and students' skills in change management, improve organizational effectiveness, enhance their decision-making, and develop analysis and research expertise.

The *Human Resources Management* is a course learnt at both the Masters and Doctorate (EdD) levels and it is designed to enable school leaders to understand and be able to apply relevant content knowledge in leading and managing people and material resources.

An interesting module for the Postgraduate and Master programme is the *Entrepreneurship* programme (ENT) which is a cost-effective investment in the development of entrepreneurial capacity of young people. Students learn foundational leadership and venture-vetting skills that are appropriate for starting a new business, advancing in their current company or joining a brand-new business (versus one that's already established).

A National Centre for Education Research is required in the Faculty of Education, university of Buea so that it can enable rigorous research that contributes to the solution of significant educational problems. The new research centre can work with the different educational system, partners and students to examine the effectiveness of educational programs, practices, and policies, including the application of technology to instruction and assessment.

The school of education research centre can support the different departments of education in providing a compulsory course in *Research Methodology and Scientific Writing* must strive to understand researcher's identity and philosophy at both the master and doctorate level that would address the need to embed research enquiry within a particular research paradigm. Research students at the Faculty of Education, University of Buea are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interplay between research paradigms, African philosophies, and ontology, epistemology, methodology and research methods prior to initiating a research project.

Research and Statistical Methods in Education course at both the Master and doctorate (EdD) level seeks to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results and the presentation of research outcomes. Using *Sources/Producing Analysis in Research Methods* at the master and doctorate level also builds on the research skills developed in earlier modules. These research modules will be delivered in tandem with the thesis at both master and doctorate level.

The content of the *Seminar in Research Methods in Educational Leadership* focuses on the aspects of philosophical, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods that will help you develop a research project in the future. It begins by considering research questions and then looks at the concepts of research paradigms or scaffolds. It concludes with an appreciation of the importance of Ethics in research.

Review Moderation Systems and Processes for educational leaders and teachers is a Master and doctorate course is designed for developing a school wide moderation policy and the systems required for its implementation. School leaders will learn the strengths and weaknesses of moderation systems and processes are identified in terms of their manageability and effectiveness in facilitating judgments on the quality and validity of assessment decisions**.** Recommendations contribute towards the improvement of moderation systems and processes in line with the different of educational systems.

All students are obliged to do *Practicum in Educational Leadership* at Postgraduate Diploma, Master and Doctorate levels which are designed to give students a hands-on experience in educational leadership. Students are required to spend 200 hours in an educational organisation under the supervision of a cooperating leader or manager or academic staff of the department. Students explore current thinking on how organisations are judged as effective or improving. They are challenged to critique contemporary research in these areas applying the views of colleagues both locally and globally. Every candidate in the Postgraduate, Master or doctorate level in Educational Leadership (EdD) completes a culminating dissertation or Thesis (Master and Doctorate levels) employing their professional knowledge and new learning in order to demonstrate transformative and distributional leadership, organization, and community change and sustainable leadership.

Overall, this study proposes Educational Leadership programmes offering more interactive, reflective and experiential learning approaches than the education administration courses provided in the department of Educational Foundations and Administration. Further research is essential to find out what kind of leadership curriculum influences students, schools, university, educational system and the Association of African Universities performance, and the circumstances under which these performances may be most effectively enhanced. Given the ever-increasing investment in decolonising education curricula in developing countries, this becomes a disturbing void in the educational research

This study concludes that in order for internal stakeholders to succeed in the provision of Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership. Master in Education Empowering Educational Leadership and a Doctor (EdD) of Education within the Faculty of Education, there is need for greater regional collaboration between the Ministry of Higher Education and university institutions, and that quality assurance mechanisms must be standardized across institutions. Furthermore, stakeholders on these programmes need much time to reflect upon their activities and that the provision will be most effective where there is a critical mass of staff and students.

This study also concludes that clear strategic planning involving internal and external stakeholders is needed in the relative effectiveness of partnerships, but that differences in the relative status of partners can become a source of tension. The Ministry of Higher Education with the Faculty of Education, University of Buea, can collaborate in a variety of ways that can be categorised as preferred partner (e.g primary, secondary school linked to one university in this evaluative case study), but sometimes a large mixed-economy states, faiths and private schools with diverse Higher education links.

Limitations of the Research

Besides, struggling to decentralize the provision of these educational leadership programmes in the faculty of education, faces management deficiencies associated with overly decentralized decision-making which makes it hard for institutions to respond to local conditions, needs and preferences of students, lecturers or establishments. Also, evaluation of activities is not yet decentralized. Complete decentralization or a federal system of government is required in the field of evaluation of work quality to improve leadership, access and professionalization in both universities and professional learning institutions in Cameroon and the global leadership community.

Suggestions for Further Research

We propose an improvement of leadership skills of school and university leaders, updating participants about relevant and current sector trends and providing global professional networking opportunities with peers. Our new models offer knowledge sharing, new organizational frameworks and leadership skill acquisition, often working with case studies and building on participants' experiences. There are proposals to develop a local, national or international marketing and communication strategy to promote educational leadership training across the full range of providers.

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