

**NON-UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION; THE GERMAN  
FACHHOCHSCHULEN: AND THIS SECTOR IN THE CAMEROON  
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**International Master in Higher Education  
Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work  
Department of Social Sciences  
University of Kassel**

**By:**

**Mesue Wilfred Essajume**

E-mail: [wellymesue@yahoo.com](mailto:wellymesue@yahoo.com)

***INTRODUCTION***

Higher Education has been on a constant dynamics towards better quality and efficiency of graduates. The concluding decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a major expansion and the emergence of certain distinct features in the higher education system. From a small elite sector where very few school-leavers participated to a mass sector. Gellert (1993, P. 17) insist that there are a number of ‘essential areas of change’ in the higher education system. A number of features are closely linked to the expansions that did occurred in the 1960s onward. Among the trend that Gellert identified was institutional differentiation, which includes the establishment of new forms of higher education institutions and programmes, functional modification, new modes of teaching and learning, increased concerns with access and educational opportunity, the prevalence of government intervention and accountability.

The thrust to increase and, to a lesser or greater degree, to widen participation in higher education in most countries is associated with a number of themes within the larger banner of lifelong learning. They include the ‘economic imperatives created by a global competition, technological change and the challenge of the knowledge economy, individual responsibility and self-improvement, employability, flexibility of institutions and individuals, social inclusion and citizenship’ (Osborne, 2003). Hence, the difficulty to have an internationally clear distinction between a university

**Mesue Wilfred Essajume – [www.inparametric.com](http://www.inparametric.com)**

sector and another sector of higher education, often pejoratively called ‘non-university higher education’, ‘short cycle’ or ‘alternative’ (Teichler, 1998, 2001).

In many countries, institutional differentiation is evident in the creation of new types of institutions that runs parallel and complement existing traditional universities. In some cases, such as the Britain, in an initial phase of development, a polytechnic sector was created as a parallel vocational and technical alternative to universities. The use of these institutions both as providers of qualifications with national recognition and as feeders to the second or third year of universities has effectively established a new, but fuzzy, binary line, and a higher education structure that increasingly is assuming the characteristic of a stratified system. Hence, the UK system is beginning to resemble the North American system with its two-years Community College programme that are designed to articulate to universities (Bonham, 2002).

In the 1960s and 1970s there were reasons why governments preferred to articulate dual systems and/or create binary structures to cope with the strains of rapid growth. First, the traditional ethos of the universities was respected. With the move towards much higher levels of participation there were fears that universities would be contaminated by less scientific values. Again, it was believed that undifferentiated systems inevitable produces ‘academic drift’ which undermined attempt to produce more vocational forms of higher education (OECD, 1973). But the increasing numbers of jobless graduates made the alarm bells to call for more strengthening of the “less noble” sectors of higher education. The current age of mass higher education is the heir of many different traditions and the so-called ‘Learning Society’, new traditions are being added at all time and the so-called ‘short-cycle higher education have long ago ceased to be a residual sector (Ibid.).

Universities are multidisciplinary institutions in charge of both research and teaching, entitled to award advanced academic degrees (notably the doctorate) and, where applicable, entitled to award subsequent degrees qualifying for senior academic positions (the ‘*doctor scientiae*’ or the ‘*Habilitation*’), are considered the key institutions of higher education (Teichler 2001). Certain institutions have a disciplinary specialization such as agriculture, teacher training, administration, medicine, physical education, etc, but the current trend is towards a more comprehensive disciplinary context. Closely linked to this trend is diversification of level of study. The programmes usually classified as undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate and which lead to one of the three main types of degree – bachelor, master and doctor (or their national and professional equivalents), are the main forms

of certification in higher education.

However, many functions associated with higher studies and training is now taking place in environments other than traditional universities. These programmes often responds to a specific learning needs of the highly diversified clientele – for example by providing distance learning courses – and answer the demands of further professionalisation and the constantly changing labour market. Their classification raises problems of both an academic and professional nature, including the need to grant academic recognition of skills acquired out side academic institutions (UNESCO 1995).

The duration of these programmes are usually shorter (between two to three years). Generally, these types of institutions do not offer doctoral degrees. Some traditional universities also offer courses that can be considered as non-university programmes, for example short vocational programmes established at Italian universities since the early 1990s. Again, some non-university higher education institution like the *Fachhochschulen* in Germany offers programmes leading to traditional university degrees of bachelor and master (programmes with applied emphasis) and not doctorate (Teichler, 2002).

In the course of this essay, I shall attempt to identify the relevance of this sector as a factor institutional diversification. Focus shall be on how it is in Europe but with particular attention on the uniqueness of the German *Fachhochschulen*, one of the pillars in this sector of alternative higher education. I will then examine the sector as it is obtained the Cameroonian higher education system and see how it differs from the German system.

### ***RATIONALE FOR NON-UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION***

Although universities in particular, which cherish their long-established traditions, are somewhat resistant to change, higher education as a whole has undergone far-reaching transformations in recent decades. The following reasons can better explain why:

- Drastic cuts in spending on public higher education compelled the institutions to design alternatives and more cost-effective programmes and delivery systems;
- In many countries there is the concern that intermediate-level occupations, requiring a demanding type of education and training considered to be post-secondary, might be not sufficiently attractive and recognize both nationally and internationally, if their education and training were not part of higher education;

- The need to widen access to higher education and to increase the production of graduates. This is so because the higher education base would have been narrow if only the more intelligent would have been selected for studies;
- In some countries there is an overlap in educational thrust and quality between universities and other institutions of higher education; hence the rationale for keeping distinct institutional types gradually faded away;
- Constant changes in the labour market needs which have required higher education institutions to make provision for training in new professional, technological and managerial fields and in new context; enormous advances in sciences, communication and information technologies;
- Selective research funding of university academic staff could be more easily justified, if the number of universities were inflated;
- In some central and Eastern European countries, universities and other institutions of post-secondary education were permitted to establish short-cycle or bachelor equivalent courses in higher education because there were funds available and a strong political backing to establish those types of institutions;
- Some serve as initiatives for patent education. Good examples are the summer schools at universities that aim at preparing the pupils for university studies, hence, raising the students' qualification prior to entry;
- In countries like Austria, Denmark, Italy, Finland, there were concerns about the large proportions of relatively prolonged courses.

### ***ALTERNATIVE (NON-UNIVERSITY) HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE***

The cumulative functions of the factors mentioned above produce diversity within the national systems of higher education, mainly concerning institutional structures, programmes, student population and funding sources. Hence, since the 1960s, there has been pressure towards increasing systematic knowledge in the middle-level occupations that had led to the creation and or upgrading of the institutions serving the training of these occupations. Higher education institutions have responded by creating academic programmes to accommodate students with a wider range of capabilities. Some new programmes allow students to earn lower-ranking degrees relatively quickly

In Europe, there is a contrast in the spread of alternative university education. Italy, Portugal, Greece and to a less extent Spain, all have higher education systems in which alternative education is weakly developed while in northern Europe, it is well established. Most obvious explanation of this is the different pace of industrialization across the continent. On the whole the industrial revolution started earlier and more

intensely, in the north. The growth of an industrial economy was a powerful factor in reshaping the university sector and stimulating the development of non-university higher education sector. Until recently, the southern part had no such pressure. But the last 25 years have seen some real changes.

Examples of some non-university institutions of higher education in Europe are: Austria (*Fachhochschulen*), Belgium (institutions offering only short courses), Denmark (all official higher education institutions not named universities or *Højere læreanstalter*), Finland (*Ammattikorkeakoulu/Yrkeshögskola*), France (*Instituts Universitaires de Technologie, Section Technicien Supérieurs, grand ecoles*), Germany (*Fachhochschulen*), Greece (*Anotati Scgoli Lalou Technon, Technonlgika Ekpaideftika Idrimata*), Ireland (Regional Technical Colleges, Colleges of Technology and Colleges Education if not associated with a university), Netherlands (*Hogeschole-HBO*), Portugal (*Institut Superior Politéchnico*), Sweden (*Hogskola-grundutbildning*), United Kingdom (Higher Education Colleges, Further Education Colleges), etc.(Teichler,1998).

In some countries the creation of new forms of higher education was subsumed within the wider policy of expanding and reforming the universities. For example, in France, the ITUs (*Instituts Universitaires de technologie*) were designed to offer more vocationally oriented courses. Again, the highly selective non-universities (*grandes ecoles*) in France are very important and even superior. The highly selective *grandes ecoles* are designed to train the future 'leadership class', and therefore have no reason to envy universities obliged to admit baccalaureate-holders (Scott 1996). In the late 1960s, the British established the polytechnics as an alternative form of higher education (Scott 1984). In Sweden, a decade later, a unified system of universities and colleges was established. In 1991, Finland upgraded and merged vocational schools to a vocationally oriented second type of higher education, the *Ammattikorkeakoulu* (AMK). Austria (1993) and Switzerland (1996) began to establish *Fachhochschulen* that have much in common with German *Fachhochschulen*, without, however, exactly copying the model (Teichler, 1998.).

### ***DISTANCE LEARNING***

The institution of distance education universities as a means of combating lack of educational opportunity for reasons of geographical location, disability (CEDEFOP, 2001), and employment and home circumstances have a long history. It is now considered as an integral part of non-university higher education. This offers a powerful channel for bringing education to groups that have previously been

excluded. Numerous examples exist of this form of provision being used as a strategy for securing 'second chances'. They include the *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya* in Spain (Sangra, 2001), the Dutch Open University (Dijkstra, 2001) and the Finnish Open University, United Kingdom's Open University, etc. Already over 12% of the United Kingdom's Open University students are resident outside the UK (Ibid.).

Students take classes primarily via radio, television and or the Internet. Educators have long been using radio and television to reach students in remote parts, but new satellite- and internet-based technologies promise to expand distance-learning systems to a broader group of students. In the United States, the University of Phoenix is vigorously promoting its online courses, while in England, the publicly funded Open University has over 100 courses that use information technology links as a central part of the teaching- with 4000 students per day connecting via the internet (UNESCO, 1995)

Through these opportunities, students are conferred end-of-course certificates and diplomas and some even undertake courses leading to the traditional university degrees. Worth mentioning is that two great African statesmen Nelson Mandela (former President of South Africa) and Robert Mugabe (President of Zimbabwe) earned their degrees in this way, at the world's oldest distance learning university, the University of South Africa (Ibid.).

#### *THE GERMAN FACHHOCHSCHULEN*

In 1968, the Prime Ministers of the states (*länder*) signed a treaty that led to the establishment of another (new) type of higher education institutions called the *Fachhochschulen*. Formal engineering schools (*Ingenieurhochschulen*) and higher vocational schools (*höhere Fachschulen*), predominately in the social sciences and economics areas were upgraded into *Fachhochschulen*, which started in 1971 (Teichler, 1998). Around 1980 the federal and the state governments established *verwaltungs Fachhochschulen* for the training of the second rank of the public administration and service sectors. They differ from the *Fachhochschulen* in that: only persons previously employed by a public agency could enroll and that the total period of both study and Practical training last only three years.

The Framework Act for Higher Education formulates the tasks for higher education institutions in Germany. Generally, "institutions of higher education shall contribute to the fostering and development of the sciences and arts through research, teaching

and studies. They shall prepare students for occupations that require the application of scientific findings and scientific methods or creative ability in the artistic fields”. On the whole, the individual states have the mandate to define different tasks of the institutional types. Thus, higher education laws of the individual states differ in determining the tasks of *fachhochschulen*. As a rule, the *fachhochschulen* are primarily for teaching though they might embark in applied research. On the other hand, universities are supposed to undertake both teaching and research.

The *fachhochschulen* are therefore viewed as the home of a different educational goal and a different approach to teaching and learning, that is, more applied emphasis on the preparation of work. As in other countries, employers and the government try to stabilize the “less noble” sector against the pressures of “academic drift”, and perceive a need to counterbalance the trend that too often want to become “chiefs” and too few want to remain “Indians” (Teichler, 1996).

Until the 1960s, the German higher education system was in line with the traditional understanding of a university which was previously used only for institutions active in research and teaching, entitled to award the *Habilitation* and offering more or less the full range of traditional academic disciplines, was extended to institutions focusing on one or a small range of disciplines, notably medical and engineering institutions (Teichler 1996). The famous German *Fachhochschulen* (sometimes translated as ‘Universities of Applied Sciences’) was a novelty in this quest for alternative higher education. They provide access for those without the traditional school-leaving qualification, the *Abitur*. German *fachhochschulen* provides a relatively long period of study. The degree awarded by these institutions is considered equivalent to a bachelor’s. At the same time, vocational type of qualification is generally conceived to be terminal. Thus, the structure of the degree pattern in the second type of higher education is not articulated with that in the universities nor does it allow for automatic progression to higher education studies.

In the 1960s and 70s, most of the teachers’ colleges (*pädagogische Hochschulen*) were upgraded and merged into universities. All *Hochschulen* awarding a doctoral degree eventually were understood to be university-level institutions of higher education. Only colleges of fine arts (*kunsthochschulen*), that is, institutions not awarding a doctoral degree remained a small separate sector. In the course of the establishment of the *Fachhochschulen*, there was the idea of merging all the institutions of higher learning into comprehensive universities (*Gesamthochschulen*). By 1970, some politicians had started working in its favour because it was believed that this will reduced the gap between the programmes and institutions and thus ease

transfer as well as share resources (Ibid.).

The proportion of students enrolled at *Fachhochschulen* among all students at institutions of higher education was 17.3% in 1975, 19.3% in 1980, 22.5% in 1985, and finally, 23.6% in 1992. About one third of first year students in Germany enroll at *Fachhochschulen* (Teichler, 2002). The courses and programmes at *Fachhochschulen* are shorter and the range of fields offered at *Fachhochschulen* are smaller than that at universities. Thus, the proportion of students enrolled is naturally lower than the proportion of new entrants students into higher education. More than half of the students at the former institutions are enrolled in engineering. As regards individual fields, most students in 1991 were enrolled in mechanical engineering (21.7%), economics fields (14.8%), and social work (9.7%) (Teichler, 1996).

In the early 1970s, 98 *Fachhochschulen* were established. The figures were 95 in 1980 and 100 in 1992. In addition, we note 20 *verwaltungsfachhochschulen* in 1980 and 24 in 1992. The total numbers of official institutions of higher education changed most strikingly at the time the *Fachhochschulen* were founded. There were 126 of such in 1960, 230 in 1970, 229 in 1980, and finally 251 in 1992 (Ibid.).

While universities may restrict enrolment only when/if the government introduces the policy of *numerus clausus* nationwide, the individual *Fachhochschulen* in contrast might restrict the entry of students. It is generally assumed that restricted admission is more widespread at *Fachhochschulen* than at universities.

There are also entry differences in among them. The *Hochschulreife* (maturity for study at institutions of higher education) is required for entry into universities. Four years primary education and nine years of academic secondary education, that is 13 years of schooling altogether, completed by the *Abitur* exams, is the typical route. The *Fachhochschulen-schulreife* is also based on four-year primary education, six years of lower secondary education at the intermediate level (*Realschule*), and two years at a vocational upper secondary school (*Fachoberschule*). Students at the *fachhochschulen* are compelled to attend courses and attendance is frequently monitored and measured. The duration of a course programme at *Fachhochschulen* was typically defined as three years up to the late 1980s though now it is four years of studies. As a rule, the courses comprise three years of study but some institutions and departments envisage a period for the final exams after completion of the course. In contrast, with the exception of the short teacher-training programmes, university programmes require at least four years of study. Some university departments set the final exam period on the top of the period reserved of courses. It

is also assume that *Fachhochschulen* serve a terminal pre-career function. Only a few advanced courses are provided for those having been granted a *Fachhochschulen* degree. Also *Fachhochschulen* are not entitled to become doctoral candidates. They must complete a university degree in its entirety if they so desire.

With respect to the transfer of students from a *Fachhochschulen* to a university, there are clear regulations though only partially standardized for the whole country and partially by the *länder*. Students haven successfully completed half of the *Fachhochschulen* course are entitled to transfer to the respective field at the universities, and graduates from *Fachhochschulen* are entitled to transfer to universities to study. It all depends on whether the receiving university departments to decide if the former *Fachhochschulen* students have to start the university programmes from the very beginning or to what extent previous courses are considered equivalent to a part of the university courses.

The German *Fachhochschulen* can be considered as mixed realities. According to Teichler (1998) they tend to be praised by both the German politicians and the employers as being a veritable alternative to the universities. Their strength lays on their stability for over 30 years and on the fact that *Fachhochschulen* strive to buttress their position by getting closer in their programmes to those of universities (Ibid.). They seek a regular role in applied research instead of a traditional one that left research optional for individual academic staff. Their proposals have all aimed at improving opportunities for applied research, increase of junior academic staff positions, measures of permeability towards a doctoral degree, etc, can be termed as moves toward academic drift. In the 1990s, the *Fachhochschulen* successfully claimed the right of awarding both bachelor's and master's degrees (Ibid.). Experiments are currently underway to see the implementation of such programmes. However, it is premature to start assessing whether or not *Fachhochschulen* will eventually stabilize to a two-type structure or if will be upgraded into full fledge universities.

### ***NON-UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAMEROON***

Most universities in Africa were established at a period of high optimism and confident hope that they would be major instruments for the socio-economic transformation of their countries. It was envisaged that they would accomplish the three-fold tasks of: producing skilled graduates equipped with requirements for national development, promoting the advancement of learning and lastly,

transmission of cultural values. Though the first generation universities tried to pursue these three objectives, it was discovered that they were transmitting western cultural values and attitudes that led to the production of a small, privileged elite more European in behaviour and orientation than African (Mazrui, 1992, Sawadago, 1994) and lacking the relevant skills needed by the private sector after independence.

It was in a bid to arrest some of these shortcomings that the UNESCO Conference on the Development of Higher Education in Africa (1962) critically examined the role of African universities in the transformation of their societies suggesting among other things that the universities must expand. In the Report's (UNESCO, 1962) words:

In addition to its traditional functions and obligations to teach and to advance knowledge through research, the role of higher education in the social, economic and cultural development of Africa must be: to train the 'whole man' for nation building and to develop completely the human resources for meeting manpower needs; among many others.

In general, economic development is associated with a more refined division of labour, and higher education institutions have an essential role to play in imparting skills. The increasing importance of knowledge makes this range of skills in wider demand than ever. Today's developing economy needs not only civil servants, but also a whole host of other professionals such as industrial engineers, doctors, computer scientists, pharmacists, etc. Higher education institutions are adapting and new ones are emerging to provide training and credentials in new areas. Non-university higher education institutions offer programmes that are practical, job – oriented, designed to facilitate the student's entry into the labour market upon graduation.

With the inception of higher education in Cameroon that was expected to play a preparatory role for professional work, the dual structure seems suitable for the early 1960s for the desire to fight underdevelopment was quintessential. There was a new premise to work on: that the higher education system in all modern countries is influenced by certain societal, economic, technological, cultural or educational factors.

But in the country, there was political dimension on the higher education policies deeply linked to the country's colonial past. The political approaches underscored the potentials for choosing specific options. For instance, government has the obligation to pursue an elitist and or an egalitarian approach, or a system that will likely have a low level of diversity.

## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION TYPES AND CREDENTIALS

Cameroon has a variety of higher education institutions, comprising the universities and polytechnics, as well as diverse training centres, colleges and institutes, which offer training opportunities and programmes of study, leading to the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees in a wide range of fields. The system is a fusion of both the French and the British models, a consequence of her colonial past. The sector has a complete mix of traditional university degrees and certificates conferred at the end of short-cycle courses offered by both universities and non-university institutions. The complexity can be better understood if a look is given at her higher education credentials below:

- a) *University Level (First Stage)*: In Economics and Management and in Law, the first stage leads to a *Diplôme d'Etudes universitaires générales* (DEUG) after two years of university studies. The *Licence* or Bachelor's degrees are obtained after three to four years of studies in the Humanities and in the Sciences. In Engineering, the *Diplôme d'Ingénieur des Travaux and d'Ingénieur de Conception* are conferred after three years' study (up to five years for *Ingénieur Conception*). In medical Sciences, the *Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur de la Santé* is awarded after three years and the *Diplôme en Soins infirmiers* after two years. In Agronomy, a *Diplôme d'Ingénieur agronome* is conferred after four years' study at the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique*.
- b) *University Level (Second Stage)*: In Law, Economics and Management, the *Maîtrise* is conferred after a further one to two years of studying following the *Licence*. In the Law it is conferred after one year beyond the *Licence*. In Engineering, a *Diplôme d'Ingénieur* is awarded after a total of five years' study. In Medicine, the *Diplôme de Docteur en Médecine* is conferred after six years. In Anglophone Universities, Master's Degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas are awarded at least one year after the Bachelor's Degree.
- c) *University Level (Third Stage)*: A *Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies* (DEA) and a *Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures Spécialisées* (DESS) are conferred by the Francophone universities one year after the *Maîtrise*. A *Doctorat de Troisième Cycle* is conferred after two years of a *Licence*. (NB: There is doubt with this Cameroon equivalence because by all international standard, *Doctorat de Troisième Cycle* is equated to a Master Degree.). This is evidence of French dominance over Anglophones in Cameroon. The *Doctorat Unique* or PhD, conferred four years after the *Maîtrise*, is replacing it. Anglophone universities award a Doctor's Degree (MINESUP, 2003).

From the above, it is clear that the Cameroon higher education system is deeply rooted in her colonial history. Thus, the many appellations and controversies. But one thing is certain, most of its higher education achievements fall under the category of non-university higher education since they are not the traditional/conventional degrees awarded by traditional university systems (BA, MA and PhD). The Cameroonian case confirms the notion that traditional universities can also offer non-university higher education (an opinion held by higher education authorities like Prof. Teichler). Again, most of the intermediary achievements (*Diplômes*, Certificates, etc.) are vocational/professional. These *Diplômes* are the appellations of the achievements also conferred on graduates of the *Grand Ecoles*.

### ***PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS (GRAND ECOLES)***

The creation of the University of Yaoundé in 1961 marked the birth of a higher education sector in Cameroon. From the beginning it focused on the traditional university objectives of teaching and research with little attention on the job market because the original aim of the university was to provide workers who will take-over the civil service. But it started dawning on policymakers, students, teachers and other stakeholders that there was need for professionals and specialists who are different from the generalists that came out of the university. Thus, the government embarked on the establishment of special institutions for the training of individuals who are absorbed directly into the civil service. These institutions are tailored like the French *Grand Ecole* (provision of workers for the civil service).

Higher professional trainings first started through the School of Administration (ENAM), the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS), School of Agriculture and the Military Academy in the 1960s. By 1970 other institutions were created and attached to the University of Yaoundé (renamed after 1967). Worth mentioning are; University Centre for Health Sciences (CUSS), International School of Journalism (ESILY), Institute of Management (IAE). In 1971, the Institute of International Relations (IRIC) and the National Advanced School of Engineering (ENSP) became operational. With the creation of these training institutions, Cameroon was bound to tackle the broad strategic problems of development.

These moves were to prepare graduates for immediate integration into the public service and or government corporations. By 1974 Cameroon therefore possessed at the structural level its two principal types of higher education establishments: fundamental education and technical and professional education. University Centres

with specific educational mandates were created in 1977 to train and award diplomas to graduates:

- Buea University Centre for languages, translation/interpretation, and the arts;
- Douala University Centre for Business Studies and the Training for technical education teachers;
- Dschang University Centre for Agricultural Sciences;
- Ngaoundere University Centre for Food Science and Food Technology.

Pre-primary and primary school teachers are trained at Government Teachers' Training Colleges (GTTC). Holders of a General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Advanced Level are trained for one year while holders of at least five papers in the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary Level are trained for three years. Secondary school teachers are trained in three years following success in the G.C.E. Advanced Level and have passed both the written and oral parts of an entrance exam. This is for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle and graduates are automatically absorbed into the public service to teach in the secondary schools. Graduates with Bachelor's/Licence, who passes both the written and oral parts of an entrance exam, and are not more than 32 years old are trained for a two period to become High School teachers (MINESUP, 2003).

With respect to the non-university higher education that are mostly professional schools aimed at training middle and senior level personnel, admission to the upper divisions (Cycle A) are opened to all those with at least a first degree, who succeeds in a written nationwide competitive exams and passes an oral interview and are not more than 32 years of age. Entry into the lower divisions (Cycle B) are for candidates with at least a General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Advanced Level, succeeds in the written part of a national competitive exams and passes an oral interview. Entrance into these government owned specialized institutions is very competitive and based on the actual openings available in the public service for recruits.

Until the 1993 reforms, all students were entitled to bursaries and paid no tuition fees. Today, only students of the most elite (*primus inter pares*) institutions still receive monthly allowances. But one thing is sure; admission into any of these institutions is a guarantee for a well-paid government job. This selective admission is linked with egregious breach of universalism (age discrimination) and this has made the schools very elitist. The selection procedures therefore not only shape the peer society and collegiate environment but also exclude the supposedly 'older' graduates. Their social exclusiveness increased especially after the end of the 'direct' annual

recruitment of university graduates into the civil service in 1986. The inability of the government to enlarge the public service has made entrance into this sector to be Herculean-task. Hence, bribery, corruption, fraud, politics, nepotism, and other vices are associated with these institutions. The system is weakly meritocratic and largely mirrored the socio-economic and political bias of government employment systems in Cameroon.

Though learning is intense as attendance to class is compulsory, research activities are minimal. Some research is done by students in the form end of course thesis though the government hardly reacts on them. For the most part, the curriculum is dominated with aspects of public administration and ethical deontology. These institutions therefore contribute little or nothing to research output in the country. All students have to undertake an internship for at least a semester before graduation. Graduates are conferred professional diplomas of all sought and levels as mentioned above.

### ***PRIVATE NON-UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAMEROON***

Another landmark innovation of the 1993 reforms on higher education was the liberty created for private institutions of higher learning, hence, the liberalisation of the sector. The state's universities and other institutions do not meet the number of qualified high school leavers and adults seeking further professionalisation through continuing education. Some religious bodies and entrepreneurs have got involved. Since the 1990s, there have been efforts in Cameroon to set up institutions that offer tertiary education. Some of them include: International University, Bamenda; Catholic University, Yaoundé; British College of Professional Management, Douala; Bamenda University of Science and Technology, Bamenda; Adventist University, Nanga Eboko; Nacho university, Bamenda; PONAB Polytechnic, Bamenda; Samba Advanced Institute (Institut Samba Supérieur), Yaoundé; Siantou Advanced Institute (Institut Siantou Supérieur), Yaoundé; Institute of Information Technology, Douala; etc. Some of these private facilities are local branches of foreign colleges in France, the United States, Britain, Belgium, Canada, South Africa, etc which awards diplomas and degrees at the end of their programmes.

The process of authorizations of private institutions of higher education is a two-step procedure. In the first step, the institution must gain a "creation agreement", which provide access to bank loans and grant; and the second step is the "authorization to open" agreement, which allows an institution to enroll students. On the strength of these laws, there are only 11 that have received official authorization to open while 7

others have gained the creation agreement but have not yet satisfied the conditions to gain authorization to open (MINESUP, 2003).

A good number of these private institutes are unauthorised because they do not meet minimum requirements of staffing, equipment and infrastructure. The situation of private higher education in Cameroon can be described as ‘worrying’. It has remained a problem for the state bureaucracy to enact a detailed policy for the regulation of these institutions to ensure quality. They charge fees at the rate between 5-10 times those of state institutions. Many of them do not have teaching staff of their own and rely mainly of lecturers of state institutions. Their attraction lies in the short courses they offer in areas of secretariat studies, insurance, accounting, banking, finance, commerce, management, journalism, hotel management, technology, electronics, telecommunication, business administration, computer sciences, marketing, economics, the media and health services, cookery, etc. They prepare students for the *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* (Vocational Training Certificates) organized by the Ministry of Higher Education, as well as other foreign diplomas. At infancy, their impact in the Cameroonian higher education landscape is yet to be felt.

One of the main features of private higher education in Cameroon is the presence of the non-university sector in higher education. The professional and vocational courses are very popular in this sector. They offer selected courses and they are better understood as ‘boutique’ institutions (Thaver, 2003) as against the ‘super market’ model of public universities. Companies offering services often recruit graduates from these private institutions. Worth noting is the fact that these institutions offers but courses that require less investment in terms of infrastructure and equipment. All the private institutions of higher learning are involve in areas that seems to be lucrative. This explains the reason behind their enrolments. Prof. Beban Chumbow, Rector of the University of Yaoundé II commenting on the private institutions said that some of them “present distinct threat to public universities”. “They concentrate on special and lucrative areas such as computer science, management, international trade and medicine...” (Tetchiada, 2005). About 15,000 students are enrolled at the 18 private institutions in Cameroon as against the 75,000 that attend state run ones. This number for so short a time has been possible thanks to the programmes and nature of studies.

A decade after the comprehensive reforms on the Cameroon higher education sector, the private institutions are plagued with real problems. The Ministry of Higher Education (2003) acknowledged this. A good number of them are not registered and

recognized but still attract students (Varghese, 2004). They admit students and teach courses without a right to offer diplomas and degrees that are recognized neither by the government nor by the accreditation agencies (Levy, 2002). Again, all these private institutions operate with a limited number of staff members. They generally have very few regular staff. The general trend is that of a large number of part-time teachers and a limited number of full-time teachers. These staffing difficulties, coupled with lack of infrastructure and funding, low quality teachers and teaching techniques, etc, gravely affects the quality of graduates.

### ***DISTANCE LEARNING***

There are two approaches of this form of education: first, the *intranational distance education*- where both the teachers and the students reside in the country, with the student learning remotely at a distance- is pursued as a means of making opportunities for higher education accessible to certain groups in the society. Private and public sector workers, who usually find it difficult to be absent from their places of work for long period to attend regular classes, prefer this type. This is often called “*open universities*” and there are certain dedicated institutions for this purpose. In the second approach, special outfits are created within existing universities to handle distance learning as an “*external studies programme*”, and tuition would then be provided, in general, by correspondence. In this vein, there is also the use of *telematics* in the realization of distance learning that is aimed at developing internet-based courseware, a web-based student-teacher interaction system and a series of local Internet access point for students (Naidoo, V. and Schutte, C.1999). Cameroonians are engaged in both forms and particular attention is being given to distance learning in its diverse forms.

Between 1967-1994, the Ministry of National Education encouraged distance learning that targeted both qualified and unqualified teachers and it is sought to upgrade the qualifications of professional teachers and provide non-professional teachers with basic professional training. But the programme failed for lack of funding and non-availability of appropriate learning materials. The earliest attempt at using distance education was through the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS), which aimed at improving the competence of teachers to teach French as a second language. The most efficient distance education programme in the country is that of the University of Dschang in agriculture (Pecku, 1998).

## ***CONCLUSION***

Increased inclusion and enrolment of students have been one of the benefits of this institutional diversification. Michel Jouve (2001, p. 62) has spoken of ‘the need to render traditional systems more accessible and less rigid so that learners of all ages can embark on reasonable individual study programmes’ when formulating strategies for lifelong learning. The interpretation of such a statement is that the supply of higher education and training should be led by the demands and the needs of the learners and society rather than by traditional patterns of organizational supply. However, a number of commentators like (Schuetze and Slowey, 2000; Murphy et al., 2002) hold the opinion that quantitative expansion of higher education has not necessarily been accompanied by a system-wide improvement in the access of those groups in the society who have historically not participated. In Spain for example, the 1987 reforms of the curricula were introduced to both update their content and provide greater flexibility within the system. This brought about the expansion of 3-years short cycle programmes, creating greater possibilities of access for young people from lower socio-economic groups (San Sagunda, 2002). Even so, recent analyses would suggest that inequality of opportunities by socio-economic status still remain a major problem (Albert, 2002).

If one of the reasons behind the creation of these non-university institutions is to widen participation then attention should be made to reduce or end elitism that have developed in some of them. In France for example, there are laws and complementary decrees with respect to access to higher education that mandates the implementation of mechanism to allow entry by those without traditional school-leaving qualifications, and most radically through systematic use of accreditation of prior experiential learning (Jallade, 2000). The French *Validation d' Acquis de l' Experience* (VAE) legislation in the area of accreditation now binds all institutions, including the *Grandes Ecoles*. This will not be the case with the elite state institutions in Cameroon in the foreseeable future. This is because of the government lacks the resource to recruit new personnel into the public service and secondly, the lack of political will to change the status quo that perpetrate the continuity of discrimination and segregation.

It would appear as though Cameroon has at least two types of non-university higher education approaches. One is state-run institutions (*Grand Ecoles*) where the students are trained for specific ministries and are absorbed immediately into the public service. With this, there is a natural stratification between these students and those that are attending other similar but private institutions since they must hunt of

employment upon leaving school. This is similar to what is obtained in the *Grand Ecoles* in France. On the other hand, the private institutions offer something very different. They train students for the private sector and who thereafter hunt for employment. They too face the same or even worse unemployment problems than graduates from traditional universities. These institutions are similar to the Finish polytechnics and the German *Fachhochschulen* in structure and graduate employment. With the qualifications from a private institution, many students will have great difficulty finding their niche in the market place. The economy can only absorb 40% of graduates coming out of the best universities and 25% of those who attend second-tier schools, according to the National Employment Fund (Tetchiada, 2005), the government's official employment outlet/company.

Despite the widening of participation, the relative gains of the under-represented might be limited, as elite institutions preserve their traditional boundaries. They may be merits, but also dangers that, in many higher education systems, whether they be dual, binary, stratified or unified, one part of the system only takes on the bulk of the widening participation remit, Halsey, (Halsey, 1992) have observed. Progression routes to other arms of these systems and to certain parts of the labour market may as a consequence be limited. An alternative argument, however, is that certain forms of offer, particularly short-cycle vocational higher education, perhaps combined with employment, present the most viable option for many traditionally non-participants (Osborne, 2003). For example, for mature entrants whose labour market opportunities are likely to be relatively poor even after tertiary level A study, and whose lifelong economic position may have worsen as a result of the costs of study (OECD, 2001b), the choice of a *Hogescholen, Fachhochschule* may be an exceedingly rational choice and indeed in labour market terms very successful.

Certain forms of accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) and work-based learning such as *la Validation D' Acquis de l' Experience* (VAE) in France presents fundamental challenges to the structure of traditional higher education qualifications such as the *diplôme* (Davies, 1999). However, as Feutrie and Gallacher argue, APEL schemes have largely failed in their assault on traditional structures and there have been many disappointments in the success of work-based schemes, with considerable lack of commitment from companies (Osborne, M. 2003) and other employers.

In the current climate of market-oriented globalization, non-university higher education especially private institutions that enhance the employability of their graduates are attracting students, despite the high tuition. As the employment rate among traditional arts and sciences graduates continue to climb, it is not surprising

that private non-universities that promise jobs are becoming increasingly popular accounting for about 15,000 as against 75,000 students in state institutions in Cameroon. A remarkable success for their existence is slightly above a decade since the reforms on higher education came into being in 1993.

The problems notwithstanding, non-university higher education has come to stay as a viable alternative to universities. For developing economies like Cameroon, there is the need for the state to further encourage the sector with financial and other institutional frameworks. This will in no long distance time reactivate its crippling economy because graduates from the sector may not apply for jobs but create thousands of opportunities of job seekers from traditional universities. But the fear is that most of these private institutions have from the very start put money in front of quality. The government also needs to work on destroying the exclusivity of the *grand ecoles* that does not reverend meritocracy but represents a mark segregation among higher education graduates. If Cameroon is to precipitate its development, there is an urgent need to refocus its non-university higher education sector.

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