

PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN CAMEROON

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This paper addresses the extent to which the Government of Cameroon is progressively transforming teacher education so that it responds to providing an education for sustainable development. Transformative teacher education presupposes the preparation of teachers who can in their practices ensure transformative learning, where teacher and learner, learner and learner are co-constructors of knowledge. Education during the colonial era had its specific mission and teachers were trained to respond to that mission. Today there are new expectations for education where the focus is on having teachers be visionary leaders to ensure sustainable education. The paradigm shift is from teacher dominated classroom practices to that of partnership between the teacher and the learners and their peers. The shift takes its conceptual cues from constructivism and social constructivism that address participatory pedagogy. Although the new law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 addressed models, patterns, duration and programmes in the training of teachers, much is still to be done to effectively train and retrain teachers so that they take their places in the new social order and market economy.

INTRODUCTION

In the last ten decades there have been competing conceptual views on teacher education in Cameroon and Africa as a whole. These views have pitted against mechanistic, organic, constructive and co-constructive perspectives for quality teacher education and training. The differing opinion has ignited reflections on a progressive transformative pattern for teacher education and training. For example today value judgments about the standards of education are rather mechanistic, quantitative than constructive and qualitative. From the mechanistic perspective, teachers are expected to be subject specialists, capable of matching their teaching to particular age and are held accountable for the success of their pupils' learning. Performance in examination is the major determinant of teacher quality. From this mechanistic perspective, the scope of teacher education and training is limited as it only provides teachers with survival skills to handle and cope with classroom routines and rituals. Focus on their classroom activities is responding to prescriptions such as completing the schemes of work for the term or the syllabus for the year with no attention to quality learning outcomes. There is yet the organic perspective where value judgments are based on successful teaching and educating in order to enrich learners cognitively and affectively. This approach also narrows the scope of teacher education and training. With these limitations in early teacher training approaches, the trend today emphasizes constructive and co-constructive approaches, where teacher education take training cues by focusing on quality teaching that addresses the active involvement and engagement of learners for quality outcomes. This paradigm shift in training will also facilitate and enhance practice that move from teachability to learnability (Tchombe 2001). The challenge is for teachers to be able to grasp the broader issues of knowledge and professional skills. With this, teachers can create and re-create knowledge, understand their learners and how to effectively deal and interact with them. Also, the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education drives home a new philosophy of how to teach, maintain positive teacher-pupils' relationships, partnerships and better classroom structure (Tchombe 2006). The rapidly changing social and technological events of our time constitute the pursuit of higher life goals beyond mere survival. New political patterns and alliances are being forged. The strand of transcendental events is symbolic of the advances in science and technology. This resulted to knowledge explosion, shrinking communication and rapid renewal of technological devices. Yet it is the responsibility of the education system to train new citizens, men and women prepared to face up with courage and decisiveness to this task of survival and self-transcendence. Evolving social realities and changing enrolment patterns have in many cases overtaken the reforms of educational curricula. Teacher education becomes crucial to this restructuring, renewal and reactivating process. This justifies the progressive transformations especially in the area of teacher education in Cameroon to meet the challenges of globalisation. Again, in quantitative terms, there has been very significant expansion in schools enrolment in Cameroon at all levels, necessitating the need for increase in the number of teacher education and training institutions and practicing teachers. This paper examines from a conceptual base, aspects of teacher education, including policy, training and research which have

yielded to sustainable education and have succinctly endorsed a progressive transformative teacher education in Cameroon. This is in response to the rapidly changing social and technological events of the 21st century. In this respect, teacher education goes beyond producing people who can teach and who are intellectually equipped to develop their professional competence further (McNamara & Desforges 1979) to training for a clear knowledge of situational understanding of the context of the education process (Tchombe 2006). These new progressive and transformative perspectives in teacher education are embedded in state policies for education, training programmes and research networks for sustainable education. The rest of the paper develops and raises issues and perspectives to underscore variables of progressive transformative teacher education, with emphasis on policy, training and research issues and raise some critical concerns.

BACKGROUND

Cameroon Education System

In the years 1960, 1961 moving towards independence and the unitary era 1972, the trend in education was first to protect inherited values from the colonial masters(British and French). With time, increasing consciousness of Africanisation led to attitude change in order to make education content and its practices respond to contextual expectations. Major issues necessitating a review of teacher education were: the ruralisation of Cameroon education because about 85% of the population of Cameroon live and work in rural areas, re-unification of the two sections with the emerging issue of harmonization of the two systems of education and the introduction of bilingualism. This means that new teachers have to be trained and the old reoriented to meet with new emphasis and challenges in teaching. Bilingualism generated a new kind of curriculum organization, representing a new approach to education reflecting a complex process of social change. The introduction of bilingualism put pressure on the teacher factor because of lack of teacher preparedness for this new task. The structure of the education system has undergone many changes but what obtains today is 2 years nursery, 6 years Primary, 5 years Secondary - first cycle, and 2 years secondary - second cycle. For Higher Education with the BMD/LMP system, the structure is 3 years First Degree; 2 years Master and 3 years Ph.D. The country now strives to put in place a national curriculum in the country. At the primary level the school year is divided into six sequences with specific competence, to be acquired before moving on to the next level. With increase in school enrolment because of the demand for education at all levels, specific skills are needed to cope with large class size and multi-grade teaching which teacher training never addresses. Characteristics of effective schools are level of performance, infrastructure, teacher/pupils ratio, community involvement, financial autonomy, progress rate of students, healthy competition between male and female students and attendance. While, government tries to ensure access, its policy recognizes and protects the diverse educational heritage from the different colonial culture and educational values. It attempts to make the beneficiaries of education to be more involved in the management of education and reduce cost, encourage efficiency, transparency and quality education.

School Statistics

2003/2004 statistics for teaching staff at all levels of the school system from nursery, primary, secondary and teacher education stand at 89,213. Since initial training, many of these teachers have not had access to in-service training opportunities. Nor are teachers in higher education equipped with relevant university pedagogic skills through such in-service opportunities. Teachers needing in-service training at all levels are: Nursery (8,882), Primary (55,266), Secondary (23,682) and Teachers Educators (1,383). A total of about 87,730 teachers require continuing in-service training. For 2006-2007, the statistics illustrate enrolment in nursery government schools to be 81,931 and 135,353 for private Schools with a disaggregate statistics stating females to be 108,427 and males 1,088. There are 5,620 teachers in government schools and 6,729 in private schools. The enrolment in government primary schools is 2,430,020 and for private schools are 690,337, with 1,698,733 boys and 1,421,624 girls. Number of teachers stands at 50,742 for government and 22,115 for private schools. In the case of general secondary and technical and vocational education, the statistics are as follows: government general secondary

education 1,284, 800 students and 16,280 teachers while for technical there are 8,700 teachers and 19,742 students. As regards private schools for both general and technical secondary education, there are 1,416, 440 students and 7,503 teachers. Also for the first cycle there are 2,820,182 students and 32,483 teachers. Education decentralisation in Cameroon has been under three sub-systems, that is, the Islamic, Anglophone and Francophone sub systems but the Islamic sub-System is not yet very official. Four tutelage ministries manage educational affairs in terms of educating, training and research: Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation. The Ministries of Basic and Secondary education have decentralised services at the Provincial, Divisional and even District levels. These ministries also have decentralised services for public, lay private and denominational institutions.

Evolution of Teacher Education

The formal training of teachers in Cameroon is a relatively new phenomenon that dates back to about 70 years. Schools in Cameroon during the pre-colonial and colonial eras were responding only to the needs of evangelisation and colonialism rather than education for national development. By the late 19th century therefore, the earliest kind of teacher education appeared in the training of men to teach the doctrines of various religions. Alfred Saker (1885) and the Roman Catholic Mission (1907) respectively provided such training in Douala. In these early days in French Cameroon, teacher education was carried out in the senior primary school in Yaoundé, which trained elementary school teachers. Early attempts to provide teacher education were by private endeavour. The first training college; Foullassi, was opened in 1925 near Sangmelima in the Dja-et Lobo by the Presbyterian American Mission with the objective to train teachers for the primary schools and for evangelisation. These teachers also served as community and religious leaders. The duration of the training was two and half years with one year spent for pedagogical activities and the rest for content, general culture and the bible. With a high demand for teachers, professional regional schools were opened in Ebolowa, Dschang, Ngaoundere, Garoua and Maroua, with an autonomous professional training centre in Douala (Fonkeng 2007). From the aforementioned during this early beginning, the aims of teacher education and training were limited, reflecting the narrow aims of the schools for which they were trained. Schools were to provide basic skills in the 3Rs and other useful information. Since the colonial masters' main objective was to spread their culture and civilizations, teaching methods encouraged, lacked a scientific base, and this had implications for all training and teaching endeavours. In the British part of Cameroon, the first school for the training of teachers was opened in Victoria in 1922 but was later moved to Buea and renamed the Normal College. Between 1927 and 1931 four batches of students were admitted in the Normal College in Buea for a two year course. In 1932, the student teachers who had completed the first year in the Buea Normal College were transferred to Kake in Kumba. The implications here were two-fold: (1) the need for more trained teachers and (2) the need for a new and polyvalent teacher for a rural society whose role would be diverse and multifarious. These teachers were prepared for teaching in the lower primary classes.

The three-year Teacher's Grade III was not terminal as it provided grounds for continuous development. Successful Grade III teachers taught for a year and qualify for admission into a two-year higher elementary Training Course (Grade II) some of whom went to Nigeria. In some cases they did a straight four-year course. Further growth of teacher education was the institution of the Grade II course in Cameroon in 1945 at the Government Teacher Training College (GTTC) Kumba. From then onwards, more training colleges were opened by both the state and private initiatives for the training of Grade III, Grade II and even Grade I Teachers. The curriculum included courses for the professional development of the teachers, primary school subjects and subjects for specialist teachers such as manual arts, rural science, home economics, handicraft and woodwork. Grade I certificates were also awarded to candidates who after their courses obtained both "O" and "A" Level papers in the General Certificate of Education examination and passed in the practical teaching examination in either a secondary or teacher training classroom. More transformations in teacher education were precipitated in the 1960s with the clearing off of pupil-teachers from the field. This was to ensure quality and also maintain job security for existing

trained teachers. This led to the introduction of a five-year course leading to the award of a Grade II Teacher Certificate. Entry qualification was Primary School Leaving Certificate with a pass in the Common Entrance Examination. The first three years were for personal development of the student teacher in secondary school subjects. The last two years were for professional development. The importance given to education and training of teacher was emphasized by the pioneer President Ahmadu Ahidjo of Cameroon in 1966 who reiterated in the statement; "Cameroon must undertake the training en masse of teachers who are worthy of their vocation; such masters must be supplied both in the particular subject given and where they are wanted, in whatever part of the country that may be".

PRIVATE INITIATIVES

Denominational Training Colleges and Non Governmental Support

For the English Speaking Cameroon, a Teacher training college for girls was opened in Kumba by the St Franciscan Missionaries in 1949, awarding a Grade III and later Grade II certificates. In addition, another training college was opened in Mutengene for both men and women. Today what remains of these efforts is the training college in Tatum in the North West province. The Presbyterian Church had three teacher training colleges opened since 1966, only Presbyterian Teacher Training College (PTTC) Mbengwi opened in 1981 for the training of Grade II teachers now exists. The Baptist Mission through the support of the German Development Service (DED) opened a teacher training college for Grade I and II Teacher Certificates with boarding facilities in Ndop in 1985. Other than these, DED through the financial support of the Protestant Association for Cooperation and Development (EZE) initiated in-service training programmes for academically qualified, but pedagogically untrained teachers in the Presbyterian and Baptist secondary schools in the North West and South West provinces as from 1994/1995 academic year. The programme was to improve skills in the teaching of Mathematics, the Pure Sciences and Food and Nutrition. This initiative provides school-based in-service training opportunities for their teachers.

For the French Speaking Cameroon, by 1956 there were only four private teacher training colleges in the whole territory, the first of which had been opened at Nkongsamba. Between 1957 /1958 the Lutheran Evangelical Church opened a college whose objective was to train teachers. Other strategies for training were adopted by the mission, leading since 1975 to the opening of a center in Ngaoundere for the retraining of teachers. Other prospective teachers of the Lutheran schools were trained as private teachers in the then Government Teacher Training Colleges for all levels of the school systems as far back as 1972. Some of the teachers were trained in Senegal and France. The essence was to improve the quality of teachers at both the primary and secondary levels. In 1988 the leaders of Protestant education in Francophone Africa created a group to reflect on pedagogic reforms for the purpose of ensuring more active participation of pupils in the learning process and relevant programmes that would facilitate the integration of pupils in their environment. The reflection led to the creation in 1989, of a school development net work (Reseau Ecole et Development) known by the acronym, RED. The pedagogic reform to improve teacher's skills focuses on the development of teaching methods that encourage independence and initiatives. In addition to institutional offerings, the Catholic mission organizes more school-base teacher training at diocesan level with the support of pedagogic animators. Teachers must participate in a number of sessions to qualify as teachers.

Other Approaches

Teachers who could not be admitted into training institutions were encouraged to enroll for the external examinations. The external system also included competitive examinations. These examinations were taken by professionally trained teachers in order to improve on their civil service status and thus obtained financial benefits. Persons who had never been trained professionally also took these competitive examinations with a view to becoming teachers.

NEW INITIATIVES: POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR STRENGTHENING TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education and training in Cameroon provides initial and in-service at all the levels in compliance with the presidential decree of 19th June 1980, structuring teacher education institutions and courses (Tchombe, 2000). This was the first policy stipulating the duration of basic teacher education and training. Efforts to democratize teacher education programmes and make them more effective were primary in government's venture in the 1980s and 1990s with focus on ensuring quality and excellence. Trailing government efforts were those of the private sector which did not lag behind. The strength of teacher education in Cameroon today is on government and private sectors.

Change however, can be brought about when people begin to want to reformulate their own purposes, organize their own means to ensure growth and development. African knowledge and systems of organization and management, including their social support systems are gradually being inculcated as content and pedagogical practices. Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon saw teacher education from different perspectives. Anglophone teacher education laid great emphasis on the professional training of teachers institutionally, whereas its Francophone counterpart believed more in training on the job and becoming professional teachers through competitive examination. The two colonial cultures did pose challenge for educational reforms in teacher education and for practicing teachers, which led to policy structuring teacher education following levels and types of education: nursery, primary, secondary general and secondary technical and vocational. The Higher Teacher Training College or ENS was organised by decree no. 88/1328 of 28th September 1988 with novel initiatives and policies that had perspectives for updating and strengthening teacher education in the country. Teacher education now had to go beyond training the teacher for the classroom or only with survival value to global development. For example, new initiatives by this policy highlighted the potentials for quality and research to address core educational issues for decision making. Higher Teacher Education and Training college is now designed to respond to needs of training, retraining, research and pedagogic interventions and innovations. Didactics of disciplines even Guidance Counseling were added with emphasis on innovations in education through pedagogical animation and research and teacher educators. Although teacher training colleges were temporarily closed down in 1987/88 as a result of structural adjustment and recommendations from the World Bank, they were reopened in 1995 for the training of Grade One teachers for the primary schools. Today, state-owned teacher training colleges are found in nearly all of the 58 Divisions that make up the country, alongside 5 privately-owned institutes. Despite the existence of the 2 Higher Teachers Training College in Yaounde and Bambili, government has created yet another in Maroua, which goes operational in October 2008. There are also teacher training institutions for the training of teachers for technical vocational education at the secondary level at INSET in Douala. There is also a faculty of education at the University of Buea offering dual mode training. Current initiatives, policies and patterns for strengthening teacher education in Cameroon are drawn from the 1995 National Education Forum; and the 1998 education law in Cameroon. On the training of teachers, the Education Forum (1995) redefined the profile of the teacher in the following statements: "Teachers in both government and private schools must be physically fit; show proof of sound general, professional and civic training; cultured and good at communication and leadership; of good conduct and in a bit to ensure quality education; and well catered for with at least all his basic needs entirely satisfied". These new conceptions of the teacher provided new ways and perspectives for teacher preparation in the country stipulating the new orientations for the training in terms of number of years of training, entry characteristics and specific levels. Entry into any training programme was only through a competitive entrance examination. These orientations were promulgated into law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 providing new policy defining legislation in the education and training of teachers in both its initial and in-service training programmes.

Based on law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, basic teacher education in nursery and primary teacher training colleges trained only for the Grade I teacher certificate. The new initiatives have sealed off courses leading to Grade II and Grade III certification. This policy provides three types of entry characteristics required and defines the duration of training as follows: Students with five "O" Levels or

above or its equivalents, spend three academic years. Students in the second type of Grade I course enter with one “A” level and five “O” levels or their equivalent. Those in these categories are trained for two years. The students who enter with two “A” levels or a first degree spend only one year. As evident, these specifications have implications for entry qualifications, duration, and salary category for each programme. Evolutionary trends with new policies for teacher education have also been experienced in secondary and technical and vocational teacher training colleges. Basically, the 1998 education law maintained that qualification for entry into secondary and technical and vocational teacher training institutions was and remains G.C.E. “A” Level or its equivalent. The duration of training is three years, depending on the student’s entry qualification for the first cycle and two years for the second cycle with different specifications. Three sections existed in the first cycle and the duration of the courses varied from two to three years and four years for those in the bilingual series with two or more “A” levels or its equivalent. These orientations simplified the training process as Tambo and Tchombe (1997) in a World Bank study identified eleven training models for teacher education in Cameroon; six of the models were evident in primary teacher education and five models were identified for secondary teacher training programmes.

Programme Structure

Tambo & Tchombe (1997) identified five main components of initial teacher training programmes. These include general education, specialized subjects, professional studies, practicum and socio-cultural context knowledge. Training focuses on educational theory and principles for practice. Theoretical training also involves studying the academic disciplines. Bilingual training is also emphasized since Cameroon is a bilingual country (in English and French) and teachers have the responsibility to serve in any part of the country. Practicum constitutes a major component of teacher training programme, although the duration is inadequate. Across the training programmes offered, three programme patterns are evident (Tambo and Tchombe 1997) that includes comprehensive, professional and disciplines or academic focused. But today, teacher education and training lacks depth and so there is need for continuous restructuring of teacher training programmes, with considerations to student teacher’s personal education, his more immediate and long term needs, and the structure and content of courses offered.

Certification

Each teacher training programme ends with an end of course examination that permits the student teacher to graduate. At the primary teacher training level, successful candidates obtain the Teacher Grade I certificate or the Certificat d’Aptitude Pedagogue de l’Enseignement Maternel et Primaire. With respect to secondary teacher education, four types of certificates are offered. There is DIPES I and II for first and second cycles secondary teaching and DIPEN I and II for first and second cycle teacher education. Although structured as the certificates are, the hierarchical relationship between levels is direct. The certificates are independent of each other and attract different scales of remuneration.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION Government policy has advanced, for in January 1994/1995, a faculty of education was opened at the University of Buea with the Department of Curriculum Studies and Teaching, Department of Educational Administration and Department of Educational Psychology. Still on strengthening teacher education in the country, distance education degree course started in December 2006 at the Faculty of Education in the University of Buea to provide opportunities for continuing education for teachers of Basic Education. Among entry requirements into B.Ed. in Nursery and Primary Education programme, is the fact that students must be practicing teachers in nursery and primary schools. New trends in the education arena emerging from the different international declarations including the Millennium Development Goals, EFA goals and educating in ways that respond to market forces are making great demands on education offerings for which the teaching core is not adequately prepared, which are:

Concerns for quality, relevance, equity in access, all of which are geared towards resolving the issue of poverty reduction.

Opportunities for teachers to study at their convenience without compromising quality.

Respond to the second decade of Education for Africa's (2006 – 2015) draft plan of action in June 2006 that addresses the issue of teacher shortage, improving the competence of teachers and school leadership.

New emphasis on the training of teachers for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Developing teachers' competence in inclusive education.

Policy Issues

The revised constitution of 1996, in its articles. 55 & 56 recognizes the need for decentralization in the administration generally and education administration. Implementation of the above articles led to current Policy as evident in Law N° 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Article 2, and sub paragraph 3 recognizing the role of private partners in educational provision in Cameroon. It further stipulated that the state shall ensure the elaboration and the putting into action the educational policy which shall include decentralized local councils, families, public and private institutions. Educational financing shall be done by the state and decentralized local councils. The responsibility of local decentralized councils in putting in action education policy and financing shall be fixed by a special order.

Law N° 17 of 22 July 2004 on the orientation of decentralisation states in part:

“Regions shall devolve the powers to create, equip and maintain government schools... recruit and pay staff”. This falls within the Sectoral Conferences organised by the various education ministries at the National and Provincial levels to ensure direct management of teachers by the various councils.

Effective Involvement of P.T.A.

Pedagogic and Management Capacity.

Availability of ICT Resource Centres at Provincial Levels.

Presidential decree of 2004/320 of 8th December 2004 split the then Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) into 3 ministries as follows: MINEDUB, MINESEC, MINEFOP. Organization charts of the above ministries accord special powers to deconcentrated authorities with regards to personnel management and appointment of Headmasters and transfer of teachers, planning and implementation of in-service training by provincial delegations and choice of textbooks by schools on a proposed national book list.

There are the National and Provincial Pedagogic Inspectors who supervise and inspect teachers in schools. In addition there are the provincial delegates who are responsible for ensuring a balance between supply and demand through:

Recruitment of teachers at provincial level

Community based recruitment of teachers under the supervision of the delegates.

Priorities for Policy for Teacher Education and Practising Teachers

Increasing Decentralization of Teacher Training Colleges at the Provincial and Divisional Levels;

Appropriate compensation for teachers serving in rural areas;

By 2011; 40,000 teachers will be recruited;

Presently 18,800 have been recruited and deployed;

Creation and use of locally produced didactic material;

Institution of a National Day for didactic materials on 4th October yearly;

Improving teacher's morale by celebrating the International Day for Teachers on the 5th of November each year.

Legislation for the creation of Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA) and School Management Councils were established. By the Law of 19th December 1990 on the Freedom of Associations, teachers'

syndicates went operational. Teacher management in public and private schools moved from more central administration to school base with decisions taken at provincial, sub-divisional and school levels. Decisions on the management of teachers in private schools are undertaken at the school level. Some issues were based on the following:

- Bottom-Up approach to make schools to become more effective;
- Instituting school good governance with increasing pupils' effective participation, well disciplined schools, reduced dropout and absenteeism;
- Provision of aggregate statistics for all levels of education on enrolment, number of teachers, gender and schools classrooms.

Indicators of Quality for Teacher Education

- Pedagogic practices and existence of quality assurance mechanism;
- Professional preparation;
- Research activities and dissemination;
- Degree of autonomy;
- Teacher commitment;
- Libraries;
- Infrastructure;
- Connectedness (ICTs & Internet).

New Capacity Needed to Facilitate Education Quality to be Inculcated in Teacher Education

- Strategies and techniques of handling overcrowded classrooms;
- Use of ICT in teaching / learning and follow up strategies of inspection;
- Multiple grade teaching techniques;
- Pedagogic accountability skills;
- New techniques for enhancing reformative learning strategies;

Constraints on Teacher Development.

Inadequate Access to Seminars & Workshops and no Follow up for Capacity Building

Training programme for initial and in-service need to reflect the needs of the school system. At present the programmes are inadequate for effective teacher preparation as concern the development of skills in ICT, Human rights, and HIV/AIDS. There is no career growth profile within or between levels.

Public Service employs teachers based on prescribed categories for teachers and their qualifications.

Teachers from rural areas never want to service in these areas.

Teachers in most of our institutions are not trained and those who are trained are not well trained. In-service provisions whenever such is provided do not pay particular attention to teachers' immediate needs. Organizers of in-service training ought to have an operational rationale focused primarily on identifying practicing teachers' needs. Teacher education should provide student teachers with skills for research so that they can be critical of their own teaching and be self-evaluative. Because the programmes are over crowded with student-teachers being expected to attend lectures, be on the field for practicum or teaching practice, and at the same time do a long essay, dissertation and produce field report. The essential courses for professional training are treated in a very shallow manner. There much emphasis the teaching disciplines than on the education courses. Out of the 32 hours to 36 hours a week course offerings in all the levels of teacher education only an average of 6 hours are devoted to education courses. Students feel they are not adequately prepared for the profession.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATIONS IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN CAMEROON

19th century focus on teacher education was preparing teachers for evangelisation and colonisation

First half of the 20th century beginning phase of transformation of teacher education making it formal in terms of structure, content and certification to respond to new political and social awareness and

needs. Middle part of the century saw the need for training a polyvalent teacher to address the diverse needs of the education system e.g., ruralisation, and bilingualism.

Presidential decree of 19th June 1980, structuring teacher education institutions and courses: the first policy stipulating the duration of basic teacher education and training.

Government's effort to democratize teacher education in the 1980s and 1990s was with focus on ensuring quality and excellence. The Higher Teacher Training College or ENS was organised by decree no. 88/1328 of 28th September 1988 with novel initiatives and policies that had perspectives for updating and strengthening teacher education in the country.

Redefining teacher education programmes at the different levels with the education forum of 1995, the New Constitution of 1996, the 1998 law to lay down guide lines on education. Current Policy as evident in Law N° 98/004 of 14 April 1998, Article 2, and sub paragraph 3 recognizes the role of private partners in educational provision in Cameroon. Law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 necessitated new policy defining legislation in the education and training of teachers in both its initial and in-service training programmes.

Based on law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, basic teacher education in nursery and primary teacher training colleges was reviewed so that teachers are trained only for the Grade I courses.

Putting in place decentralized structure to give schools and teacher more autonomy: Law N° 17 of 22 July 2004 on the orientation of decentralisation was established.

CONCLUSION

Teacher Education and Training in Cameroon have come a long way through constant transformations to respond to the specific needs of the changing Cameroonian society including the realities of her colonial heritage. Inclusion of indigenous perspectives in Cameroon's education and its practices requires a new breed of teachers who can be creative and innovative in their teaching, making the children more active learners. Government's policy on Teacher education must as of necessity put in place structures and mechanism to improve on teacher quality. Such policy should be able to ensure that teachers are connected and have all possibilities to access alternative delivery systems. Models, content, structure of teacher education needs strengthening by a strong policy that addresses both global and context specific concerns. The need for structural changes to meet up with the required skills and standards is evident. Such structure should show clearly the different training options, pre-service training, initial training and subsequently in-service training patterns to enable teachers at all levels be sure of access for professional growth and development. Such a change in structure would help to delineate and clarify the objective of the different phases of teacher education. Wastage in training would be reduced. Increased and improved mobility and communication between the various parts of the courses would be ensured. Firstly, school-based in-service should be encouraged within a well-structured framework. Secondly, teacher education programmes should be structured with a goal of creating a faculty of education with affiliated or constituent colleges. In-service courses should be provided for updating practicing teachers with current trends in educational growth and research. Opportunities for access to Distance education should be multiplied. Students attend classes for approximately 35 to 40 weeks each year, indicating that there are about nine to thirteen weeks a term. The school week varies from 26 to 36 hours teaching, with not enough time for private study. The school days are too long. There is little or no time for research and individual study. If societies hope to truly develop, teacher education must be transformed to be more responsive to the needs of the people, circumstances of the time and the aspirations of the nation. Improvement in the quality of education is crucially dependent on the inputs of teachers who must develop and nurture a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours and values. Teachers translate policies into programmes, principles or theories into actions. The new strides taken by government for teacher education and training underscore progressive structural transformations with practical innovations in the areas of training, research and sustainable education. The way forward highlights four issues:

Create opportunities for capacity building for teacher educators through exchange;

Provide institutions with information communication technological (ICT) tools to enhance the development of new pedagogical skills for sustainable teaching and learning;
Help with the equipping (ICT materials) of the ten focal centers in the ten regions of Cameroon for contact with distance education in-service teachers;
Support the strengthening of institutional capacity for caring and managing vulnerable and disabled students.

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ABREVIATIONS

- DIPENIA I : Diplôme de Professeur des Ecole Normal d'Instituteurs Adjoints (Diploma for Assistant Teachers of Training Colleges).
- DIPENIA II : Post graduate Diploma for Teacher Trainers
- DIPES I: Diploma for Teaching in First Cycle Secondary Ed.
- DIPES II: Post graduate Diploma for Teaching in Second Cycle Secondary Ed.
- E.N.I.: Ecole Normal Instituteur (Grade I Teachers' College).
- E.N.I.A: Ecole Normale Instituteurs Adjoints (Grade II Teachers' College).
- E.N.I.E.T.: Ecole Normal Instituteur Enseignement Technique (Grade I Technical Teachers' College).
- ENIEAT: Ecole Normale Instituteur Enseignement Technique (Grade II Technical Teachers' College).
- E.N.S.E.T.: Ecole Normale Supérieur Enseignement Technique (Advanced Technical Teachers' College).
- E.N.S.: Ecole Normale Supérieure (Higher Teachers' College).