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POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR  
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**Doctorate/Ph.D Thesis**  
**Specialty: Educational Planning**

**PROFESSIONALIZATION OF BACHELOR MASTER DOCTORATE  
(BMD) COURSES AND GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY IN CAMEROON**

by

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**CERTIFICATION**

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## DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated to my parents:  
Ndongnyam Martin Sango and Nati Grace.*

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the impact of professionalization of Bachelor Master Doctorate (BMD) courses in Higher Education on graduate employability in Cameroon. Lack of skills that can be marketed and work experience were seen as challenges to locating salary paying jobs. The general hypothesis was that: Professionalization of BMD Courses in HE has a major impact on graduate employability. Professionalization was operationalized thus: Government policy in HE under the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate (BMD) system significantly influences graduate employability the, Content of HE curricula under the BMD system influences graduate employability, teaching methods in HE under the BMD system influence graduate employability, evaluation processes in HE under the BMD system influence graduate employability. The research design adopted in this study was the mixed methods approach and the sampling technique was purposive sampling. Data was collected using a questionnaire and structured interview guide questions. The population of the study was made up of 532 graduates from different Cameroonian universities who had registered with The National Employment Fund Yaounde. Among these graduates, 143 had had their first employment with The Graduate Employment Programme (PED). Quantitative information was analysed with SPSS. For all the hypotheses, alpha was 0.05, and the level of significance was 0.000. Using the Spearman rank correlation, correlation analyses were carried out at four different levels and the following results were obtained: The P value for hypotheses one, two, three and four stood at 0.721; 0.8; 0.931, 0.938 respectively. Alternatively, the level of significance for each variable is 0.00 with alpha at 0.05. Based on these, all null hypotheses were rejected and all the alternative hypotheses accepted. In a nutshell, The Professionalization of BMD Courses has a significantly high and positive influence on graduate employability. The following recommendations were made: Policy implementation should be reinforced in HE with commensurate quality control measures by putting in place a HE Planning Team (HEPT) who should have a clear understanding of the needs of all stakeholders in the HE domain. All stakeholders (Higher Education Administrator, companies, programme developers, and learners) have to be actively involved before any programme of study is designed. As such, their needs will be included in the programme There should be a constant training and retraining of HE lecturers on the constantly evolving demands of the 21st century knowledge economy and modern methods of teaching and evaluating in HE that can influence graduate employability.

**Key words: Professionalization, higher education, graduate, employability**

## RESUME

Cette étude a pour but d'évaluer l'influence de la professionnalisation du cursus LMD dans l'enseignement supérieur sur l'employabilité des diplômés au Cameroun. Le manque de compétences commercialisables et d'expérience professionnelle a été considéré comme un obstacle à la recherche d'emplois rémunérés et à l'amélioration de l'employabilité des carrières individuelles. Une formation axée sur l'employabilité dans l'enseignement supérieur, avec une orientation vers l'acquisition de compétences commercialisables grâce à un programme d'études plus adapté au marché, pourrait devenir le moyen le plus sûr pour éviter le piège du chômage des diplômés et contribuer au développement de l'employabilité de chaque individu. L'hypothèse générale était la suivante : La professionnalisation du cursus LMD dans l'enseignement supérieur a une influence significative sur l'employabilité des diplômés. La professionnalisation a été opérationnalisée de la manière suivante : La politique gouvernementale de l'enseignement supérieur dans le cadre du système Licence, Master et Doctorat (LMD) influence de manière significative l'employabilité des diplômés, le contenu des programmes d'enseignement supérieur dans le cadre du système LMD a une influence sur l'employabilité des diplômés, les méthodes d'enseignement dans l'enseignement supérieur dans le cadre du système LMD ont une influence sur l'employabilité des diplômés, les processus d'évaluation dans l'enseignement supérieur dans le cadre du système LMD ont une influence sur l'employabilité des diplômés. Le plan de recherche adopté dans cette étude était l'approche des méthodes mixtes et la technique d'échantillonnage était l'échantillonnage raisonné. Les données ont été collectées à l'aide d'un questionnaire et d'un guide d'entretien structuré. La population était composée de 532 diplômés universitaires de premier cycle à la recherche d'un emploi, issus d'un échantillon représentatif des universités camerounaises et inscrits au Fonds national pour l'emploi, antenne de Yaoundé, dont 143 ont obtenu leur premier emploi grâce au Programme d'emploi des diplômés (PED). Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide du logiciel SPSS. Pour toutes les hypothèses, l'alpha était de 0,05 et le niveau de signification de 0,000. En utilisant la corrélation de rang de Spearman, des analyses de corrélation ont été effectuées à quatre niveaux différents et les résultats suivants ont été obtenus : La valeur P pour les hypothèses un, deux, trois et quatre était de 0,721 ; 0,8 ; 0,931, 0,938 respectivement. Par ailleurs, le niveau de signification pour chaque variable est de 0,00 avec un alpha de 0,05. Sur cette base, toutes les hypothèses nulles ont été rejetées et toutes les hypothèses alternatives ont été acceptées. En résumé, la professionnalisation des formations LMD a une influence significative et positive sur l'employabilité des diplômés. Les recommandations suivantes ont été formulées : La mise en œuvre des politiques devrait être renforcée dans l'enseignement supérieur avec des mesures de contrôle de la qualité proportionnelles en mettant en place une équipe de planification de l'enseignement supérieur (HEPT) qui devrait avoir une compréhension claire des besoins de toutes les parties prenantes dans le domaine de l'enseignement supérieur. Toutes les parties prenantes (administration de l'enseignement supérieur, industrie, concepteurs de programmes d'études et étudiants) devraient être consultées avant de concevoir les programmes d'études, afin d'intégrer leurs besoins dans les programmes d'études, tout en surveillant l'évolution des attributs de l'employabilité, dictée par l'évolution des besoins et des tendances des entreprises, afin de les aligner périodiquement sur les programmes d'études de l'enseignement supérieur. Les enseignants de l'enseignement supérieur devraient être formés et recyclés en permanence sur les exigences en constante évolution de l'économie de la connaissance du 21e siècle et sur les méthodes modernes d'enseignement et d'évaluation de l'enseignement supérieur qui peuvent influencer l'employabilité des diplômés.

**Mots clés : Professionnalisation, enseignement supérieur, diplômés, employabilité**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC :	Abstract Conceptualisation
AE :	Active Experimentation
AGIR :	Appui à la Gestion des Initiatives Rentable
ASTD:	American Society for Training and Development
CE:	Concrete Experience
CID:	Centre for Institutional Development
CIGs:	Common Initiative Groups
DESD:	Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
DUT :	Diplôme D'université de Technologie
ECTS :	Européen Crédit Transfer System
EHEA:	European Higher Education Area
EIGS:	Economic Interest Groups
ELT:	Experiential Learning Theory
ENSECT:	Enhancing Employability Coordination Team
EQAR:	European Quality Assurance Register
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GICAM :	Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun
HEIs:	Higher Education Institutes
HEPT:	Higher Education Planning Team
HICM:	Higher Institute of Commerce and Management
HND:	Higher National Diploma
HTTC:	Higher Teacher's Training College
IFORD :	Institut de Formation et de Recherche Démographiques
IUCEA:	Interuniversity Council for East Africa.
IUT:	Institute d'Université de Technologie
KEI:	Knowledge Economy Index
LSI:	Learning Style Inventory
NEF:	National Employment Fund
NWCET:	North West Centre for Emerging Technologies
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of Higher Education

PADER :	Programme d'Appui au Développement des Emploi Ruraux
PAJER-U:	Projet d'Appui à la Jeunesse Rurale et Urbaine
PDP :	Professional Development Programm
PED :	Programme Emploi Diplomé
PEJ :	Pacte pour l'Emploi des Jeunes
PIASSI :	Projet Intégré d'Appui aux Acteurs du Secteur Informel
PIFMAS :	Programme d'Insertion des jeunes par la fabrication du Matériel Sportif
PRAIDES :	Programme d'Appui à l'Insertion des Diplômés de l'Enseignement
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RO:	Reflective Observation
SCANS:	Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
SMES:	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPTPCHE:	Support Progrmme for the Technological and Professional Component
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa Supérieur
SUPINFOS:	Bilingual Quarterly Review of Higher Education in Cameroon
TD:	Travaux Dirigées
TRE:	Techniques de Recherche d'Emploi
UBUNTU:	Respect for the Wellbeing and Dignity of fellow human beings.
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
UNFPA:	United Nations Populations Fund
USEM:	Understanding skilful efficacy Meta-cognition.
WBL:	Work Based Learning
WDHE:	World Declaration on Higher Education
WRL:	Work Related Learning

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

According to Asongwe.C (2021), “Higher education (HE) plays an important role in the development of most nations. Developing nations have been working to uplift their standards since the last two decades by initiating a series of institutional reforms in Universities, as is the case in Cameroon with the 2007 Bachelor –Masters Doctorate (BMD) and the 2008 New University Governance Program on the professionalization of Higher Education in the country”.

Asongwe (2021) goes ahead to state that “The Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctorate (BMD) is a reform in Higher Education (HE) which has as one of its goals, the professionalization of education. The main aim of professionalizing programs in HE is to train qualified national human resources. Professionalization in HE came up because graduates from the University of Yaoundé did not receive the type of education required by a demanding private sector. When public sector employment became saturated, Graduates found themselves ill-equipped for employment in the private sector or for self-employment. Consequently, one of the key goals of the 1993 reforms was professionalization of the teaching programmes”. In order to achieve this objective, universities were required to define, in consultation with other stake holders, the local market needs, involve professionals in the conception of programmes, define the prerequisites for admission into the different professional programmes, and draw up the profiles of teaching staff to be recruited (Njeuma, Endeley, Mbuntum, Lyonga and Nkweteyim, 1999). In drawing attention to the nature of system change, Coburn (2003) observed that reforms must affect deep and consequential change in classroom practice. He says “Such change needs include changes in materials, classroom organization, or the addition of specific activities, interaction, and pedagogical principles as enacted in the curriculum”.

Asongwe (ibid) opines that “for professionalization to be successful, the teaching-learning process is critical because it is a key factor in educational outcomes. Professionalization demands that students be active in the teaching-learning process so that they can acquire critical thinking/problem-solving skills and be able to effectively take part in societal development”. Attendant recommendations for professionalization have focused on reestablishing an education community, developing programs for role modeling and

mentoring, establishing a structured curriculum dealing with professionalism, and attention to the evaluation of professional conduct (Hatem, 2010).

According to Nyenty (2023), “employability of graduates has been taken as a key performance indicator in many countries to measure University quality and their programme performance”. Universities have to design programmes while ensuring that adequate educational infrastructure, human resource and relevant curriculum are put in place to enable students experience quality education/training (Mavrino & Mingaleva, 2017). Nyenty(2023) says “quality education is one of the most crucial requirements for developing and sustaining careers and escaping from poverty. According to the Sector Wide Approach (2006), the Higher Education system in Cameroon is suffering from inadequacy in teaching programmes, infrastructural resources, funding and teacher quality”. According to UNESCO (2005), one of the objectives of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is to educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity. Maharasoa and Driekie (2001) have stated that Universities that do not contribute to graduate employability are wasting government resources and students’ time and energy. Maharasoa and Driekie further stated that “their view was confirmed by the students they interviewed and the findings revealed that employability was one of the main factors influencing their choice of programme to study”. Singh (2019) stated that Higher Education (HE) plays an important role in terms of economic development of the country; and that “it supplies trained and skilled manpower to the different sectors of the economy. But, for this to effectively occur, high quality training in the presence of sufficient resources, relevant curriculum and adequate educational infrastructural resources are needed”.

This thesis is therefore an utmost attempt to critically examine the professionalisation of BMD Courses and the role it plays in graduates’ employability in Cameroon.

### **Historical Background**

This section enables us to identify and analyse patterns, trends and influences that have shaped the present study. It equally allows us to draw meaningful connection between the past and present, establishing the significance of this study within a broader historical framework. All of these are examined in the following sub headings.

### **Evolution of Education in Cameroon**

The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) established formal education in Cameroon as Shu (2000, p. 1) and Ihims (2003, p. 2) indicated. The first primary school in Bimbia was established in 1844 by the Reverend Joseph Merrick of the Jamaican-supported London Baptist Missionary Society, according to Rudin (1968, p. 121) and Tamanji (2011, p. 41). At the time, there were 62 students enrolled. Since then, the Cameroonian educational system has steadily expanded into a complex network that is overseen by the government, churches, and private citizens. Alfred Saker who came after Merrick (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 45), began erecting churches and schools in Douala in 1845, a year after the Reverend Joseph Merrick. According to Tamanji (2011, p. 41), the Bethel formal school in Douala, which was established in 1845 along with a Mission Station by the Reverend Alfred Saker, was the second formal school in Cameroon. Only Victoria (Limbe) and Douala had schools during that period, which were both seaside regions. The missionaries concentrated in primary education. It was therefore not thought to include secondary schooling. Drawing, singing, reading, writing, arithmetic, and the study of The Bible were all highly emphasized in the curriculum. They understood the value of resources like The Bible in instruction, as seen by their curriculum. Unfortunately, the natives were not given access to these Bibles (Ardener, 1968, p. 10). Teaching was done in the vernacular. The primary goal of education was evangelization. Without giving any thought to the needs and interests of the populace or taking into account what had already existed, the educational techniques, structures, and curricula were developed to fulfill the evangelical mission. The missionaries' only goal was to win souls for Christ.

The colonial era in Cameroon began in the year 1884. According to Ardener (1968, p. 1), the Basel Mission, a German-speaking missionary organization, continued the work that the London-based BMS had started in 1886. However, on July 12, 1884, the Germans surpassed the British in the race to acquire Cameroon (Tamanji, 2011, p. 35 and Ihims, 2003, p. 7). Ngoh (1996, p. 74) notes that the Germans employed the "divide and rule" strategy. He goes on to say that the Germans divided the Chiefs in order to instill German culture in Cameroon. The master race idea claimed that the German masters were superior as well. The London-based Baptist Missionary Society was forced to turn over its schools to the Germans after Cameroon was annexed. Technical and vocational education made up the majority of

the new forms of education. This form of education suggested that instruments were used in the classroom to assist students in the development of skills. This implies that using educational resources to learn is not a brand-new occurrence in Cameroon. Germanic studies were prioritized in the curriculum that resulted. After Cameroon was annexed; education was not given the attention it deserved for more than ten years. The German Baptist Mission, the American Presbyterian Mission, and the Pallotine Mission were in addition to the Basel Mission. It is important to highlight that the Mission has remained more active in the area of education than the Government. German authorities established a system of financial aid awards for mission schools that used the official mandated curriculum and taught in German (Ihims, 2003, p. 10).

The Basel Mission replaced the English-speaking Baptist Missionary Society during this time because it spoke German. Education no longer belonged to just one organization. More religious bodies entered. The government started participating in the provision of education. Schools were further established inland as a result of German exploration and demarcation of the nation. These are just a few of the major changes that occurred in education during this time. German was used as the primary teaching language in place of English, notably in the upper grades of elementary school; the government assumed ultimate responsibility for the management of education; Mission schools started using government-designed curricula, and there was limited teacher and vocational training. However, the years between 1914 and 1922 saw the end of the First World War and the establishment of peace in Cameroon. After the war, Cameroon was divided between The French and The British after The Germans were defeated. The gloomy years in Cameroon's educational growth can be characterized by this time period.

In the British-occupied territory, it was difficult to transfer from German to English, while in the French-occupied area, it was difficult to switch from German to French. Education either came to a complete halt or was merely reorganized by the new government and missionary authority.

During this time, the League of Nations oversaw the governance of the British and the French in their respective regions of Cameroon. Within its colonial empire known as French Equatorial Africa, France governed French Cameroon as an independent nation. British Southern Cameroon was governed by Britain when it was a part of Nigeria. From 1916 to 1954, British Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria were governed as a single entity. Eric Len (2014) further states that “by 1916, Britain already had a colony - Nigeria). When German

Kamerun was divided in 1916, the British received one-fifth (1/5), and the French received four-fifths (4/5” (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 83).

According to Tamanji (2011, p. 195), the French, like the British and the Germans, were focused on international colonization plans that would boost their colonial economies. He goes on to say that assimilation, which aimed to replace African culture, language, and civilization with French culture, language, and civilization as well as other French colonial education practices from French Gabon, was the main tenet of the French educational policy for her African colonies, including Cameroon (Tamanji, 2011, p. 209). The French saw their culture as being superior to all others. Additionally, they believed that their language was superior and that it was their duty to bring civilization to the rest of the world. They held that African languages were extremely underdeveloped and incapable of assisting people in handling certain logical concepts. The educational system was designed to identify individuals who had learned French culture, or those who had “evolved” from their basic civilization. This was accomplished by introducing the French educational system into their territories (Orosz, 2008, p. 190). The colonies followed the same schedules, texts, and programs like the French schools.

It is noteworthy that the French were overly involved in managing education, including the establishment of schools and the supply of teachers. The higher primary school in Yaoundé was where local professionals were trained in the early years of the French rule, according to Fonkeng (2007, p. 93). Between 1921 and 1938, this institution was the only one offering post-primary education in Cameroon. According to (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 93), this school's primary goal was to prepare instructors for elementary schools. One of the provisions of the Government Order of 1920 was that the government would only recognize and provide financial assistance to schools that taught only in French and adhered to the government's established curriculum. Schools were divided into five groups by the Order of 1921, which governed public schools (Ihims, 2003, p. 98). The village, regional, upper primary, domestic science, and vocational schools are included in this. While the secondary school system prepared students for the Baccalaureate (Advanced Level) exams that were introduced at the University of Bordeaux in France, the primary school system culminated with the CEPE (the First School Leaving Certificate). On his part, Ngoh (1996, p. 136) points out that in 1937; there were 85000 kids in Mission elementary schools under the Catholic Mission, the French Protestant Mission, the American Protestant Mission, and American Adventist Mission.

During this time, British Cameroon's system of education got off to a slower start than the one run by the French. Compared to French Missionary Societies, which arrived extremely early, the British Missionary Societies arrived relatively late. Second, unlike French Cameroon, whose educational policy was started in Yaoundé, British Cameroon's strategy was started in Lagos, Nigeria, not Buea. As a result, British Cameroon was considered a colony within a colony. Ngoh (1996, p. 168) claims that the British pursued a strategy of "indirect dominance," employing the chiefs to instill French culture in Cameroon. They believed that the regional languages were unsuitable for education or learning and, as a result, were not effective tools for fostering intellectual growth. Government schools (placed at divisional headquarters), Native Authority (NA) schools, Assisted Mission Schools, Unassisted Mission Schools, and Post-Primary Schools are some of the educational institutions that have sprung up in British Cameroon. According to Ngoh (1996, p. 174), government rules made education consistent and gave newborns free schooling in 1924.

Furthermore, according to Tamanji (2011, p. 192), there were only six public schools that were used as models, including Government Schools in Buea, Mamfe, Kumba, Bamenda, and Victoria. The British government established a policy known as the "indirect rule" that stated they would not actively participate in schooling. According to Fonkeng (2007, p. 133), indirect rule refers to a type of colonial governance in which native people were governed by the use of their tribal structures and natural or traditional leaders. At the divisional headquarters, Native Authority Schools served as feeder schools for the public schools.

They might be contrasted with the Village schools of the French administration. The mission schools with assistance were those that adhered to government norms. Mission schools that were not supported by the government failed to meet the requirements. The majority of the schools in the educational system were primary schools prior to the start of World War II.

According to Tamanji (2011, p. 188) and Ihims (2003, p. 68), the government established an elementary teacher training center at Kake towards the end of the mandate period (1932), which was followed by the establishment of the government teacher training center at Kumba in 1946. These centers were used to train teachers for grades II and III, respectively. In 1944, the Basel Mission established a Teacher Training College in Nyassoso (Tamanji, 2011, p. 187). In 1944, the Catholic Mission established two teacher training

institutions, one in Baseng and the other in Njinikom. In 1950, the Baptists established a teacher training facility in Great Soppo (Ihims, 2003:70; Tamanji, 2011:194).

Additionally, the secondary school level was added to the educational system during this time. In 1939, the Catholic Mission opened St. Joseph College SASSE, the first secondary grammar school. Ten (10) years later, in 1949, Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali was established. The SASSE and CPC Bali curricula were heavily focused on the Cambridge School diploma tests (Tamanji, 2011, p. 194). The language of instruction was English.

According to Tamanji (2011, p. 186), the Catholic, Presbyterian, and Baptist Missions ran the majority of the schools during this time. The majority of the Dutch and Cameroonian Grade II teachers who taught the lower courses at St. Joseph College SASSE were MilHil Fathers. French was required in CPC Bali while Latin was required at St. Joseph College SASSE. At Okoyong in Mamfe, the first girls' school, Queen of the Rosary College, was inaugurated in 1956. Both the West African school certificate examination syllabus and the University of Cambridge School Certificate Examination syllabus were accepted by these secondary institutions.

Students chose their courses from four fundamental categories for the exam: language, math, social studies, and science. It was a group certificate exam. You had to pass a number of subjects chosen from each of the four categories in order to receive the certificate. Based on the final score, the pass mark was determined. Your classification as a Grade II or III teacher was determined by your overall score. Up until 1955, this system was in use. The University of London General Certificate Examination replaced the Cambridge and West African School Examinations after the country gained its independence.

The British sought to lay the foundation for higher education by educating Cameroonians to be responsible citizens. First, the British brought their educational system to Cameroon and turned it over to the Mission. It is ironic because missions solely cared about operating schools for evangelization purposes.

The League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations Organization (UNO) at the end of the Second World War (1939–1945) (Ihims, 2003, p. 55). One of the six UNO entities designated to oversee the old League of Nations declared territory is the trusteeship. In both the Cameroonian regions that were under French and British administration at the time, a focus was placed on post-primary and professional education. British Southern

Cameroon was given autonomy beginning in 1954 as part of the new Nigerian governmental structures brought forth by the McPherson constitution. In Buea, a self-governing educational board was established for Southern Cameroon. Similar to French Cameroon, primary enrollment increased, although secondary and professional education received some attention. Giving school graduates the ability to manage the affairs of the nation was the key goal. In order to train middle- and upper-level manpower, there was hence intense demand for educational institutions to grow and for higher education institutions to be established. The University of Yaoundé, Cameroon's first university was founded in 1962 because scholarships were expensive. Additionally, with the establishment of the Advanced Teacher Training College in Yaoundé in 1961 and an annex in Bambili in 1967, the situation for general secondary schools changed.

The independence and unification of French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon between 1960 and 1961 marked the beginning of the actual Cameroon education. While the districts under British rule achieved independence in 1961 and joined with Francophone Cameroon, French Cameroon earned independence from the French in 1960. (Ngoh, 2006, p. 243; Fonkeng, 2007, p. 17). Due to the dual colonial origins of the nation, French and English have been designated as the two official languages with equal status (The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 1996). As a result, bilingual primary, secondary, higher education, and teacher preparation institutions have emerged in the nation. It's important to remember that “the period after independence was divided into three different eras time periods, commencing with the Federal period from 1961 to 1972, followed by the Unitary period from 1972 to 1982, and finally the Republic from 1982 to the present”. Ahmadou Ahidjo served as president of Cameroon from 1961 to 1982 (Ngoh, 2006, p. 243).

In 1982, President Ahidjo was succeeded by President Paul Biya (Ngoh, 2006, p. 328). The programs of Harmonization, Ruralization, and Bilingualism were among the key educational initiatives throughout the Federal era. In the 1970s and 1980s, Cameroon had one of the most effective education systems in Africa, according to a World Bank Report (2012, p. 11) (the unitary period). Similar to the economy, education development had ups and downs as a result of the fall in national revenue. According to this data, the primary completion rate rose from 59 to 72 percent in 2008 and the repetition rate dropped from 22 to roughly 18 percent, respectively.

Since the unification in 1961, Cameroon has maintained its stability. The pedagogical tools used in education during the colonial era were created with colonial interests in mind. It

had to be focused on addressing the demands of national independence and development in all spheres of national life in the years that followed the victory of independence. Since the country's independence, its educational strategy has placed a strong emphasis on providing all citizens with access to education, fostering national cohesion, and developing the human resources necessary to meet the nation's economic, social, and political needs. During this time, the government started getting more involved in education. The Ministry of Education played a supervisory role as primary and secondary schools grew, ensuring that there was a unified, high-quality curriculum as seen by the various curriculum policies that were put into place.

Additionally, institutes of higher learning that did not exist during the colonial era were emerging. In 1961, the Higher Teacher Training College Yaoundé became the first institution of higher teacher education. Government and nonprofit organizations worked together more frequently. Through the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), parents started taking an active part in education. Since 1995, two new laws outlining higher education policy, Law No. 005 of April 16, 2001, and Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, have been passed. Cameroon has put a lot of work into adhering to these laws in order to meet the demands of globalization, information and communication technology, and the requirement for quality.

### **Higher Education System in Cameroon from Independence to Present**

According to Theresia (2016), “Higher education (HE) in Cameroon began with the Federal university in 1962 to the University of Yaounde in 1974. For many years, the university was not directly involved in professional training despite the articulation in policy papers. This was due to the French styled (Leroux, 2014: p.91; Ngwana, 2001: p.2) higher education where universities focused on classic disciplines while professional, HE is predominantly the premise of specialised institutions or grandes ecoles (Tambo, 2003: p. 18; Ngwana, 2001: p. 2). The pre-1993 Cameroonian university could be more likened to the New Manian and Humboldtian models. Training was focused on obtaining a higher education degree for its own sake because employment was guaranteed.

According to Njeuma et al. (Njeuma, D., 1999: p. 2) and corroborated by the interviews, “the period from 1962-1967 was for creation of general education structures, and the building of professional and technological schools happened after 1967. The saturation of the public service, increasing graduate unemployment and exponential growth in student

enrolment necessitated attention to the professionalization embodied in the 1993 reforms and subsequent policy reforms. Policy documents, public speeches and most respondents for this research hold that professionalization is new or recent in Cameroon higher education. For instance, addressing the youths on the 49<sup>th</sup> youth day, the Cameroonian president alluded to the relatively recent adoption of professionalization of education in Cameroon". The idea of professionalization in higher education is not new; it was first put forth a few years after independence. It was decided that university studies should be restructured to better meet the demands of the nation as early as 1974, when the National Council for Higher Education and Scientific Research session suggested increasing professionalization (SupInfosSeptember, 2011:p. 38).In order to promote the country's economic development, a university of technology was established to teach technicians, and selective post-graduate programs were established to conduct research to address national issues (Njeuma et al., 1999:p.4).Higher education's increasing involvement in professional and technological training defined the 1962–1992 period (Sup Infos, 2011: p. 9). The initiatives to address the demands of the labor market and the country are in line with keeping an eye on market signals and incorporating them into new programs and curriculumSince 1993, when extensive changes were implemented, the university has placed a special emphasis on producing highly qualified professionals. There are many pledges to professionalizing activities, and new methods of doing things have been implemented to meet the professionalization goal. For example, the 2008 Bologna Process sought to make degrees both domestically and internationally attainable.

Additionally, updated curricula and new programs have been launched. According to GESP (GESP, 2010: p. 76), professionalization will become more sophisticated. One strategic goal of Cameroonian higher education in the 2000s is "to professionalize and strengthen employability of graduates" (Samfoga Doh, 2015). This objective is being pursued by increasing the professional content of traditional programs, increasing the professional and technical study options, revising or renewing curricula and linking university education to the professional world (Samfoga Doh, 2015).

Ten (10) state-sponsored universities (which are owned and mostly funded by the state) and more than 164 private institutions (as of January 2015; portal of private higher education) make up Cameroon's higher education system today. Cameroonian institutions. Additionally, one national virtual university and a sub-regional virtual university are housed

there. The ministry of higher education sets and implements policy. The last European colonial history as a former French and British colony is where the educational system got its start.

Consequently, the system is dominantly a hybrid of the French (80%) and British (20%) educational systems and thus, a “bicultural” system of education (Doh,2007). The predominantly French model higher education (Leroux, 2014: p.91) implies that professional higher education was seen as the domain of highly selective independent and specialized institutions.

Following independence, these establishments prioritized instruction, health, foreign relations, and magistracy. The admissions procedure is a significant distinction between these institutions and actual universities. While university admission was comparatively open, particularly when there was only one university and the state had to encourage students to join, admission to specialized schools is extremely difficult and determined by entrance examinations (Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 2). One of the reasons why the growing emphasis on university professionalization is perceived as "new" is the idea that universities are for traditional fields and grandes ecoles are for professional programs. Apart from universities and specialized schools, the majority of private universities focus more on professional and vocational training than on traditional academic subjects.

### **The Development of Professionalization in Higher Education in Cameroon**

The goals of Cameroon's higher education system were initially connected to the idea of a recently independent nation looking to produce locally educated human resources capable of running its own affairs (Njeuma et al., 1999: p.20). All efforts were to prepare graduates for immediate integration into the public service or government-owned corporations like the national radio and television corporation (Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 9).

Health, literary studies, agriculture, and management were the main fields of study for university professionals in the 1960s and 1970s (Sup Infos September, 2011: p.33). Professional programs were developed through the military academy, administrative schools, and agricultural schools in addition to the National Institute for University Studies, which was established in 1961 (Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 2).

The establishment of the Institute of International Relations and the Yaounde International School of Journalism in 1970 and 1971, respectively, gave the University of

Yaounde an international (inter-African) character. According to Njeuma et al. (ibid), general education was established between 1962 and 1967, and professional and technical institutions were established after 1967. Cameroon's higher education system was divided into two categories: professional/technical education provided by specialized institutions or schools, and basic education provided by the university (Njeuma et al., 1993: page 2.) While they still function independently, several of these schools are part of the universities. According to the respondents surveyed for this study, there was little incentive to prepare students for employment outside of the public sector in the years immediately following autonomy. Much of the emphasis on public service was overstated, which negatively impacted the development of a higher education system capable of preparing students for employment beyond the public sector or for entrepreneurship.

The absence of free tuition, room and board, and bursaries for college students who expected to find employment immediately upon graduation was blatantly exaggerated. According to several academics (Njeuma et al., 1999; Ngwana, 1993; Doh, 2012), this was a mistake made when Cameroon's higher education system was first established, and the majority of the reforms that followed were aimed at fixing it. Professional education initiatives were failing to produce enough graduates for government jobs because of universities' open admission policies and professional schools' more stringent admissions standards.

It was evident that increasing the number of students receiving professional and technology training was difficult. Without a commensurate increase in facilities or faculty, the incentive of the rich student welfare system led to an unparalleled increase in the number of students. By 1970, the University of Yaoundé had grown from 529 students and 22 faculty members in 1962 to 2500 students and 200 faculty members (Njeuma et al., 1999: p.3).

Even though it was built for 5000 students, the university enrolled 7091 students by 1976, 45,000 students in 1991 (Njeuma et al., 1999: p.5) and approximately 166,000 students in 2010 (Sup Infos September, 2011: p.9). As at 2011, the early increase in enrolment into state universities was estimated at 11 percent (Sup Infos, 2011: p.11). However, the number of firms who could hire people with degrees did not increase at a rate that matched the number of university graduates.

According to the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP, 2006: p.58), only 37 percent of these higher education graduates are conveniently integrated into the labour

market. The stage was laid for reforms in the 1990s. A select few had access to professional schools and a single university that focused on traditional subjects. It quickly became apparent that Yaounde's sole university was unable to handle the exponential number of students who annually knock on the doors of higher education. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning conditions was deteriorating with success rates as low as 30 percent (Njeuma et al., 1999: p.5; Konings, 2004: p. 290).

It became clear that the government could not keep funding the essential infrastructure required to accommodate the enormous increase in the number of students. As a result, educational standards quickly declined. norms (Konings, 2002; Ndongko, Tambo, 2000; Mbembe, 1985). According to Konings (Konings P., 2004: p. 289), the statement "there is a shortage of everything in our schools and universities except students" has become widespread in Cameroon.

This malaise was evident in the severe decrease and irregularity of state funding for higher education (Njeuma et al., 1999: p.5-8; Konings, 2004: p.290; SupInfos, 2011: p.10).

With severe pay cutbacks and a 50% depreciation of the national currency, the economy was struggling by the late 1980s and early 1990s. One respondent claimed that the first indications were in 1983–1984, when the rate of population growth surged. The government's answer was to hire 1000 recent college graduates and another 1500 a year later.

All graduates were supposed to be absorbed, but the population growth rate was too high for all the efforts, and the economic crisis started in 1984. Employment stagnated and some state enterprises were shut down. This made it necessary to ask whether graduates are still in demand in the job market. The 1993 changes were the result of the government's decision to implement a significant overhaul.

### **Reforms in 1993 that included professionalization**

In 1992, the Ministry of Higher Education was established by the Decree of November 27, 1992. A number of presidential decrees (Decree No. 93/026, Decree No. 93/027, Decree No. 93/034 and Decree N° 92/074) signed between April 1992 and January 1993 comprise the 1993 changes. The primary objectives of these changes, according to Njeuma et al. (Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 9), were to professionalize university education and decongest the University of Yaoundé in order to generate graduates who might benefit the nation and the business sector. The motivation addressed relevance and was blatantly

utilitarian. Education at universities for its own reason was no longer essential. It was no longer necessary to highlight the allure of the nearby colleges with substantial student assistance programs. There are already far too many applicants, aspirants, and graduates.

The state could not/cannot continue to spend money on higher education without seeing the contribution to socio-economic growth, according to some interviewees, who reiterated this position. Njeuma and associates the 1993 reforms were intended to "make programs professional, adapted and responsive to the needs of the job market provide programs that would enable graduates to find employment in the private sector as well as create employment," according to Njeuma et al. (1999: p. 9).

It was considered that graduates from the University of Yaounde did not receive the type of education required by a demanding private sector and professionalization became a key goal (Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 9).

The curriculum created in the 1960s was insufficient to meet the demands of the private sector, market forces, and the government's growing propensity to reduce public service personnel in order to retrench (Ngwana, 2001: page 3). Universities have to identify local market needs, include experts in program design, and specify entrance and instruction standards for professional programs after consulting with other stakeholders.

Before the changes, professional Agriculture, translation and interpretation, food technology, commerce, journalism, international relations, and medicine were among the fields with schools and centers. The introduction of professional programs within universities was a novel aspect of the reforms. For example, mass communication, medical laboratory science, nursing, accounting, banking and finance, women and gender studies, and journalism were all introduced at the Buea University. There appeared to be a decrease in the student-teacher ratio and an increase in infrastructure during the early years of the 1993 reforms. But a cursory examination of the figures obscures the reality that quickly ensued (Ngwana, 2001: p. 3; Njeuma et al., 1999: p. 17). The majority of recently established universities continue to encounter the same difficulties that made the revisions necessary. However, it is challenging to evaluate how professionalization affects graduates' employment. The interviewers' statements regarding university graduates' employment prospects were, at most, imprecise. Phrases such as "Our students do exceptionally well in the job market" and "I will not lie." What happens to them [university graduates] is unknown to us. It is not our responsibility; "We have an alumna who is succeeding, but there is no association or

concerted effort for them; if the majority of our pupils are hired, it indicates that the training was completed correctly.

### **Reforms After 1993: Professionalization Extensions and Consolidation**

Some of the major reform measures that influenced the professionalization of higher education after 1993 include the Bologna Process (BP), the New University Governance strategy, and the 2001 law on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon. The Reduction of Poverty The Education Sector Strategy and the Global Reform of Higher Education, which were introduced by the 1999 UNESCO Conference in Budapest, were transformed into Growth Employment Strategy Papers. Producing graduates who can thrive socially and economically in the worldwide, knowledge-based economy is the ultimate goal of these reforms, according to the BUN (December 2008: p. 4). In light of these reforms, this part addresses the professionalization of higher education. The New University Governance policy reiterates the importance of professionalism by extending professional and chances for technical education (Buea University). All major publications pertaining to higher education (HE) since 1993 have described professionalization, and officials of higher education and other government agencies regularly bring up the topic in public remarks.

As an example, the President stated in a 2007 address to the Youth that "a number of actions are planned or ongoing as part of a professionalization and diversification program"; 2012: "In fact, professionalization or training, as the case may be, is a prerequisite to resolving the problem of youth employment." 2011: "Professionalism remains the watchword in higher education, without neglecting the extension of the BMD system." 2014: Professionalization had already been chosen by our educational system at all levels. As said in 2015: "... given the relatively recent adoption of professionalization of education... its impact will definitely not be immediate." We shall soon witness its impact, which you will find extraordinary. As observed by some respondents at the University of Buea and corroborated by policy documents, the success of professionalization is mainly hampered by the inability of the industries and private sector to match the demands of the HE professional training. These needs include support through internships, consultancy services and involvement in teaching (BUN, 2008: p. 6). According to the University-Industry Partnership Charter (MINESUP, 2010: p. 5), "the universities are assigned two additional missions: counselling and professional integration of students". One respondent from the ministry stated that the Cameroon HE at that time (Cameroon Prime Ministry, 2011) was

approximately 250,000 students but the number of potential employers was very few. It was however asserted that the idea is not only to train the student to find a job but to be able to create a job(s). The interviewees also stressed the quest for quality as relevance embodied in the professionalization objective. As one interviewee holds, the perspective of the professional world is expressed as: Your theories at university are pretty good but we need someone who is ready for action-relevance with regards to the relation to professional practice. Behind all that there is employability because we realize that in reality professionalization by adapting to the socio-professional environment does not solve all the problems. The role of the knowledge economy was equally seen to be at the root of the professionalization efforts in Cameroon. Most of the interviewees alluded to the importance of higher education in the country's goal of becoming emergent by 2035. This is in line with Leroux's (Leroux J-Yves., 2014: p. 91) assertion that higher education is not seen as an end itself but as a channel for all aspects of socioeconomic development. It was stated that the very foundation of higher education objectives is the country's development objectives. Professionalization is expected to improve employment hence socio-economic development. In addressing the employability of Cameroon graduates the concern of policy makers is more about ability to tackle graduate jobs than about the ability of the graduate to get a (any) job (Yorke, 2001; Knight, Yorke, 2000). For instance, the president of the republic, states (in advocating professionalization) that many educated but unemployed youths resort to precarious options, unrelated to their training or qualification in order to eke out a living (PRC, 2015). Corroborating this assertion, some respondents hold that the attention to professionalization ensued from the increasing number of university graduates who resort to petty trading or street vending, discrediting all the investments in higher education (HE). One respondent related the employability by comparing the time it takes for graduates to get their first job: on average it takes 3-4 years for graduates from traditional/classic disciplines and 1-2 years for graduates from professional/technological disciplines. According to the respondent, HE needs to produce graduates who rapidly get employed

### **Higher Education and the National Employment Fund**

To sign international treaties, the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) also signs agreements at the national level in an effort to tackle the employment problem faced by its graduates. One of these agreements was made on July 5, 2000, with the National Employment Fund (NEF) and the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. The proposed agreement would allow higher education students to participate in internships in

order to learn how HE might work with other sectors of the government to combat the nation's rising rate of unemployment among HE graduates. Programs like the Graduate Employment Program (PED) and the Support Program for the Insertion of Higher Education Graduates were created as a result of this agreement (PRAIDES). The specific objectives of the partnership were:

- To acquire experience in the insertion and reinsertion of job seekers, holders of Higher Education Diplomas;
- To draw inspiration from the know-how of the National Employment Fund for a greater dynamic approach of the professional orientation in state Universities.
- To be armed with tools necessary for the real setting up of information and orientation centres in National Universities.

### **The Bologna Process**

Higher education has grown rapidly during the past few decades in practically all parts of the world (Crosier and Parveva, 2013). Higher education enrollment rose from 68 million in 1991 to 164,5 million in 2009. For instance, the gross enrollment rates in higher education in most of Europe in 2009 were greater than 50%. This rapid growth reflects the growing need for skilled workers in the producing sectors to satisfy the demands of an expanding knowledge economy in a globalized environment. Historically, higher education was provided through a single system of universities. Today, it is provided by a network of varied institutions, including both academic and nonacademic ones. The diversity of higher education can be viewed in terms of providers, programs, students, and funding sources. Higher education institutions offer a range of course levels. Courses offered by non-university schools are frequently vocationally oriented programs that are directly related to the needs of the job market. For instance, in Europe, some countries had bachelor-master programs that lasted four to six years, whereas other nations had degree structures with multiple levels that were incompatible with bachelor-master programs. Transparency and trust between higher education systems are thought to be essential for enhancing higher education's worldwide appeal and competitiveness. The Bologna Process is an effort to do this (Crosier and Parveva, 2013).

These authors claim that the Bologna Process was an effort by European nations to standardize educational practices in order to establish comparable, compatible, and cohesive higher education systems across the region. A common degree structure, a common credit system, a quality assurance mechanism, and the promotion of student and academic and

administrative staff mobility between institutions and countries were all envisioned in the Bologna Declaration, which the higher education ministers of 29 countries signed in 1999. In the Bologna Declaration, the ministers affirmed their intention to:

- adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- implement a system based essentially on two main cycles;
- establish a system of credits (such as ECTS);
- support the mobility of students, teachers, researchers, and administrative staff;
- promote European cooperation in quality assurance;
- promote the European dimensions in higher education (in terms of curricular development and inter-institutional cooperation).

More and more nations are signing on to the Bologna Process, demonstrating how appealing it is to them. The Bologna Process was implemented in 47 nations as of 2012. According to the report on the process execution at the ministerial conference in 2012 held in Bucharest (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012), one of the process' most important successes has been the adoption of the three-cycle degree structure by the majority of institutions and programs. Additionally, progress has been achieved in the creation of national qualification systems, the ECTS and Diploma Supplement, boosting student mobility, and other areas.

The development of systems for quality assurance and the founding of the European Quality Assurance Register represents another area of success (EQAR). In 2010, the Bologna Process's vision for the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) also came to fruition. Today, the Bologna Process is seen as a very important reform that started a domino effect of higher education reforms at the national level. Its implications are not limited to European nations or signatory nations because efforts to harmonize are being made in a number of nations that are not part of the Bologna Process. A program to establish a Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Area, for instance, was started in Latin America by the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development is taking steps to create a South-East Asian higher education space by developing a credit transfer system, a quality assurance framework, a diploma supplement, and research clusters (Muigai&Mungai, 2022). In a similar vein, 15 countries in West Africa signed an agreement to promote intraregional student mobility (Cotula, 2013). Many nations around the world are currently implementing harmonization

measures that are influenced by the Bologna Process in an effort to bring their universities into compliance with international standards and to create a similar structure for credit transfer systems between universities that are within their zone.

One instance of this is the situation of the nations in the CEMAC region, of which Cameroon is a part. These countless projects across the globe demonstrate how crucial the Bologna Process is to improving higher education not just in Europe but worldwide. The Bologna Process: Its impact on higher education development in Europe and beyond (Crosier and Parveva, 2013) provides a skilful analysis of the Bologna Process's beginnings, growth within the European higher education space, and implications outside the borders of the signatory countries. They provide deep insight into the efforts and process of harmonizing extremely disparate systems and their work may be a valuable resource for researchers and policy-makers.

### **Professionalization and Higher Education in Cameroon**

The politics of higher education in Cameroon incorporated the idea of professionalization fairly early on. Indeed, higher education in Cameroon was to supply the necessary professionals for the new administrations and important facets of national life and activity after the country gained its independence. In order to replace expatriates as instructors and administrators in public and parastatal institutions, the University of Yaoundé's primary goal when it was founded in 1962 was to train skilled national human resources. As a result, graduates from the University of Yaoundé did not receive the type of education required by a demanding private sector. When public sector employment became saturated, graduates found themselves ill-equipped for employment in the private sector or for self-employment. A plethora of graduates trained from the universities grow day-by-day with a number of them unemployed and without jobs. Faced with this, the government has been undertaking extensive reforms for a new policy based higher education, among others, on the professionalization and curriculum reform. The changing paradigm of the policy of professionalization occurred in 1993 (Fonkeng, 2004).

One of the main objectives of the 1993 reforms was the professionalization of the teaching programs, even though professional education already existed in the schools and centers of the university system before those reforms: agriculture in Dschang, translation and interpretation in Buea, food technology in Ngaoundere, commerce and technical education in Douala, schools of engineering, journalism, and international relations, as well as the Higher

Teacher Training College in Yaounde. Universities were required to define, in consultation with other stakeholders, the local market needs, involve professionals in the conception of programs, define prerequisites for admission into various professional programs, and develop teaching staff recruitment profiles in order to achieve this goal. A number of professional programs have been introduced within the universities as a result of the reforms. Women and Gender Studies, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Science, Chemical Processes Technology, Materials Science, and Journalism and Mass Communication are a few examples offered at the University of Buea (Njeuma, 1993).

### **Higher Education in Cameroon and Professionalization Policy Dimensions**

Professionalization policy in Cameroon higher education is based on five dimensions:

- Support program to the technological and professional components of Higher Education;
- Applied programs through professional schools; Creation of regionally-applied schools;
- Globalization and service-sector oriented programs;
- And a new sector of regionally-applied universities in the form of University Institutes of Technology.

The first dimension refers to programmes aimed at driving the government objectives to improve the capacities of the technological and professional fields of study and to respond to the country's urgent socio-economic development needs. Within this dimension, the most prioritized domains *are medical, teacher training, and technological education*. This is what brought about the creation of medical schools in Buea, Douala, and recently Bamenda. For teacher training the upgrading of Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Bambili to a full cycle, the creation of Higher Technical Teacher Training Bamenda (HTTTC) Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Maroua and Higher Technical Teacher Training Bambili (HTTTC) kumba. Technological section brought about the creation of University Institutes of Technology known as IUT in French such as: University institute of Technology Douala, University Institute of technology in Banjoun under the University of Dschang, University institute of Technology Ngaoundere, University institute of Technology Mbalmayo, under university of Yaounde 1. The selection of the above-stated priority programmes was driven by the necessity for the Higher Education System to address certain urgent social development needs of the country during the post economic crisis and Structural Adjustment Programs years.

The second dimension refers to applied programmes that existed in the Cameroon Higher Education System from its initial inception through professional schools and institutes which had been tailored to respond to specific development needs of the country. These are the cases of agriculture, public works, administration, and diplomacy, Journalism, Translation and Interpretation. This dimension of professionalization involved increasing capacities of these establishments and diversifying their programs offerings.

The third dimension follows the necessity to create higher education institutions with programs that provide value to an existing and dominant economic activity of a specific locality or addressing certain urgent problems. This includes the Institute of Fine Arts at Nkongsamba and Fumban, Institute of Sahel under University of Maroua. The rationale observed behind the creation of these institutes was that the education and training offered in the institutes be aligned to the rich cultural and artistic activities of the locality.

The fourth dimension is depicted by the explosion of so-called “market friendly” and business programmes such as Business Administration, Commerce, Accounting, Management, Banking and Finance (Buea, SOA all have specialized programmes. Also, private higher education as in their HND, BTS and degree programmes). The creation of the Higher Institute of Commerce and Management (HICM) in the University of Bamenda and the ESSEC Douala, takes control of these programs.

The fifth dimension is about a new sector of regionally-applied universities in the form of University Institutes of Technology. College of Technology in Bamenda, College of Technology Buea, each having specialized focus, these are the only institutes that exhibit programme differentiation which is that the one in Douala is about industrial engineering, Ngaoundere in food processing and the one in Mbalmayo is on wood Processing. Others suffer what we call programme ISOPHORMISM- that’s copying the programmes of others, for example, the college of technology in Bamenda is the same with that of Buea (Sup Infos, 2010).

Universities were required to define, in consultation with other stakeholders, the local market needs, involve professionals in the conception of programs, define prerequisites for admission into various professional programs, and develop teaching staff recruitment profiles in order to achieve this goal. A variety of professional programs have been introduced within the universities as a result of the reforms. Women and Gender Studies, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Science, Chemical Processes Technology,

Materials Science, and Journalism and Mass Communication are a few examples offered at the University of Buea (Njeuma, 1993).

The graduate of any African tertiary institution is therefore, in the words of Kassam (1988), be: (a) One who is significantly playing his/her full roles in the economic development of the immediate and external society; one who participates fully and meaningfully in the social, civil, political, and cultural activities of the community; (c) One who lives a self-fulfilling and optimal lifestyle; (d) One who is highly resistant to any form of oppression, exploitation. This can only be achieved through professionalization of programmes that will enable graduates to have specific skills. The BMD System calls on all programmes to involve the following elements: CM (Lectures) TD (Tutorials) TP (Travaux Pratique) and TPE (Travail personnel des Etudiant). Consequently, this brings about learners' autonomy and set the pace for professional insertion and self-employment. It is in this wise a Chinese adage holds: "You tell me I forget; you show me, I remember and you involve me, I learn". Thus, professionalization entails involving the students into programmes in such a way that they have work-place experience that enables them to be integrated into a profession.

### **Government Efforts to Solve Unemployment**

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education was established by the government on December 8, 2004, to take the position of the previous Ministry of Youth and Sports. This ministry focuses primarily on the difficulties and issues that young people in Cameroon experience. It is responsible for developing strategies and policies that encourage young people to contribute to Cameroon's growth. The Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative provides the majority of the funding for the targeted programs that the Ministry of Youth Affairs has developed to address the issue of youth unemployment. The Rural and Urban Youth Support Program, or PAJER-U in French, is the first program ever created by this ministry. This program's overall goal is to promote the socio-economic insertion of Cameroonian youths (both educated and uneducated) through social mobilization, training and financing so as to enable them to become veritable actors of development. Another program put in place by the government is the Youth Socio-economic Integrated Project for Manufacturing of Sporting Materials (PIFMAS). This program is also under the tutelage of the Ministry of Youth Affairs. It is expected that this program funded from the HIPC funds, would help to create micro-enterprises specialized in the manufacturing of sporting equipment using local materials. The PIFMAS program received a set up cost in 2007 of

1,275,490,000 FCFA expected to a) Mobilize 640 youths, b) Train 160 youths as potential producers of sporting equipment, c) Provide administrative and financial management techniques, d) Produce 38,000 balls and 400 nets to be sold in the national and regional markets (Youth and Peace Building, 2013).

Apart from the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the government also created the ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. This ministry was also created after the reorganization of the government on December 8, 2004. Though this ministry is not directly responsible for youth affairs, it has the daunting task to create opportunities to enable youths and other unemployed persons to obtain gainful employment by creating an enabling environment on skills training. Just like the ministry of Youth Affairs, the ministry of Employment and Vocational Training designed specific programs that aim to uplift Cameroonian youths from the difficult situation of unemployment. These programmes include the National Employment Fund (NEF) and the Integrated Support Project for Actors of the Informal Sector known by its French acronym as PIAASI. The National Employment Fund (NEF) was set up in 1990 with direct responsibility to cater for increasing youth unemployment. One of the programs put in place by the NEF is the Support Programme for the Return of Cameroonians living abroad. The specific objective of this programme is to facilitate the re-insertion of returnees into the society by providing them with counseling services and assisting them gain employment. Another programme of the National Employment Fund (NEF) is the Support Program for the Development of Rural Employment known by its French acronym as PADER. This program aims at helping youths in the rural areas of Cameroon to become gainfully employed and thereby discourage rural-urban migration with the consequence of increasing the rate of urban youth unemployment.

Also, programs like the Graduates Employment Programme (PED) were created in the NEF, to specifically cater for the needs of higher education graduates, with the NEF playing an intermediary role as a placement agency in charge of professional training. The PED is a pre-employment programme that aims at integrating young graduates into the production domain who initially have mostly theoretical knowledge and very little or no work experience, but are job seekers. This programme, launched in 2007 as one of the components of the Pact of Youth Employment (PEJ) was a contribution to the National Policy for the fight against Youth unemployment. Specifically, the collaboration between the NEF and MINESUP could lead to modifications of curricula, with NEF helping with extra curricula activities like the Techniques of Job Search (TRE) to final year students. Another

programme, the Support Programme for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES), was a partnership signed between MINESUP and NEF to support the professional insertion of HE graduates. Through this, much information in terms of job orientation in the University milieu is being published. Details on these programmes will be given in the review of literature in chapter two under government policy on professionalization of higher education courses.

It is true that the government of Cameroon has made efforts to resolve the problem of youth unemployment. But a lot more still has to be done. Despite all these efforts, things are not getting any better as we still feel the increasing threat of youth, and mostly graduate youth unemployment on the economy. That is why we think that other more sustainable action is needed to bring a lasting solution to the problem of youth employment and employability. It should be noted that these youths are mostly HE graduates. The limitation of government efforts to bring lasting solutions can be confirmed by the International Labour Organization's 2013 report. This report reveals that the unemployment rate in Cameroon stands at 30% while that of underemployment stands at 75%. Also, the underemployment rate for qualified youths leaving school aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years is 94% and 84% respectively (Source: Cameroon Tribune, Wednesday, January 10, 2010, pages 7 & 9).

It is therefore glaring that a lot more still has to be done and certainly government cannot do it alone. We therefore think that the professionalization of higher education to reflect some of the labour market needs can lead to skills acquisition and employability of the graduates, thereby, constituting a more sustainable solution to the problem of unemployment and employability of youths who are mostly graduates these days, given the widening of access to higher education in recent years. Nowadays, there is a social, economic and political urgency of responding to the challenges of youth unemployment as a precondition for poverty eradication, sustainable development and lasting peace. A good higher education curriculum that equips youths with skills that can lead to decent employment be it formal or informal will be more sustainable in the fight against unemployment while answering the employability challenge. From empirical observations made by Eddy Hope Foundation(2013), slow job- growth economies, low- quality jobs, skills mismatch, inadequate job matching, the work experience trap, lack of access to capital, little or no entrepreneurship/business training, limited youth participation, social discrimination, frustration and discouragement, amongst others are the principal barriers to descent employment for youths. According to the foundation, *“The primary reason for failure is that*

*people do not develop new plans to replace those plans that didn't work.*" We think that the government of Cameroon needs to develop new plans. And one of such plans could be revamping the higher education system to respond to the needs of the 21st century knowledge economy. This is the premise on which this thesis is built, because we believe that unemployment is not the product of a lack of education, but a disconnect between the educational curriculum and the needs of the labour market.

### **Contextual Background**

In the context of Cameroon, professionalisation of HE is not something new. After the independence, Cameroon faced an immediate need to train senior civil servants to fill some of the positions that had hitherto been occupied by expatriates. The Federal University of Cameroon which evolved from the National Institute for Universities Studies established in 1961 and later renamed the University of Yaoundé had as urgent goal to meet the needs of the nation. Many of the reform objectives were designed to address the challenge of providing a quality education. The decongestion of the University of Yaoundé, the granting of more academic and management autonomy to Universities, the provision of more varied programmes (which are more professional, adapted and responding to the needs of the job market), the provision of a conducive environment for teaching and research, and the provision for selection of students were geared towards ensuring quality in the academic domain (Njeuma et al.,1999).The prime goals of the University reforms of 1993 were the decongestion of the University of Yaoundé and the professionalisation of University studies to train graduates relevant to the private sector and the needs of the country as a whole. Its specific objectives were to: reducing the overcrowding at the University of Yaoundé supported by the creation of six Universities, with four of them based at the University centres created in 1977, each with a specific mission directed towards an overall national development viewpoint; providing all Cameroonians with equivalent chances of obtaining University education. This was to be attained by the geographical location of each of the Universities and also provision for common programmes to be offered in most of the Universities; make programmes more varied, professional, adapted and responsive to the needs of the job market, by providing more programmes that would enable graduates find employment in the private sector as and be self-employed; make Universities more reachable to local, regional and international communities; make more balanced and best use of existing infrastructure, facilities and services, especially those already existing in the University centres; broaden and increase the participation of different

stakeholders in the financing and management of Universities; grant Universities more academic and management autonomy by providing basic infrastructure and finances; provide a more conducive environment for teaching and research by creating a better atmosphere for teachers, teaching and research; revive and maximise inter-university and international co-operation; and motivate staff and improve living conditions of staff and students through better remuneration. From these 10 specific objectives, the need for infrastructural improvement while ensuring maximum use of existence ones, provision of finance, making programmes more varied to response to the demands of the labour market (curriculum relevance) and need for staff improvement were clearly articulated.

Higher education institutions in Cameroon have seen significant changes as a result of globalization, and one of the biggest challenges has been preparing university graduates for the labor market following graduation. With the quick expansion of institutions from one state university in 1993 to seven in 2014, greater enrolment, and a clear focus on privatization and the market, the transformation was obvious in 1993. The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) for Cameroon was published by the government in 2010 and details the country's development strategy, with a focus on education, training, and the creation of a creative and innovative human capital that is competitive in both the domestic and global labor markets. This document also mainstreamed HE as an engine of economic expansion, demonstrating the restoration of public confidence in HE. Without realizing the burden this would put on higher education, attention was focused over the years in particular to primary and secondary education. Widening involvement in HE in recent decades has led to difficulties related to unemployment.

As a result, students in various universities across the nation must be prepared to graduate from their educations with a holistic understanding of their subject matter as well as flexible, adaptable, marketable skills and competencies that can bridge the gap between academic study and the working world. In an effort to professionalize higher education and increase opportunities for graduates on the job market, the government of Cameroon and other members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) decided to follow the global trend by establishing a coordinated higher education and research system with the introduction of the Bachelor Master and Doctorate (BMD).

Coming to Government Policy, we shall be focusing relatively on the time, place and conditions of the country. For the purpose of this study, educational policy will be defined functionally as; an explicit or implicit single decision or a group of decisions which may set

out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard actions or guide implementation of previous decisions, (Haddad 1995). Policy making is probably the first step in any planning circles and planners must appreciate the dynamics of policy formation before they can design, implement and evaluate procedures effectively, (UNESCO, 1995). Haddad's definition above centres on our focus in a broad sense that, the government formulate implicit and explicit policies whose results will be seen in the future. These decisions are taken considering the population's socio-political welfare. The government of Cameroon since independence have formulated and applied diverse internal and external policies on the educational system of Cameroon and higher education in particular, amongst which are:

- The Law of Orientation in education (LO) in 1998
- The poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) in 2003
- The Sector Wide Approach (SWA) in 2005.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) IN 2000
- Education for All by UNESCO IN 2000
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015
- Higher Education Act no 110/2009. Coll.
- The Licence-Masters-Doctoral (LMD) of 2008.

These policies have masterminded the progress of higher education in Cameroon and have more or less given the desired results. It must be admitted that the above policies hardly approach the system from its planning. Moreover, they are mostly paper work and not experienced in the field. However, state policies hold a key role in the educational planning and graduate employability in every nation. The decisions taken in an educational system are influential enough to either deform or construct the system for economic growth and development. The state decides on when school begins and ends; what type of education for the particular generation, what type of teachers, the resources to put in, which subject and how it should be thought. These are most delicate decisions because they influence the whole nation and at times for a very long period of time therefore, care should be taken on the type of policy implemented in an educational system. Technology today has an imposing control over this generation in all aspects. This idea is captured

by Lieberman (2013) and he expresses it thus:

Nowadays, university lecturers seem to have difficulties with the educational world because most students are distracted by the growing

technology. Naturally, the students don't see it that way. It wasn't their choice to get endless instruction on topics that don't seem relevant to them. They desperately want to learn, but what they want to learn about is their social world how it works and how they can secure a place in it that will maximize their social rewards and minimize the social pain they feel. Their brains are built to feel these strong social motivations and to use the mentalising system to help them along. Evolutionarily, the social interest of youths is no distraction. Rather, it is the most important thing they can learn well, develop usable and applicable skills and own jobs for life betterment (Lieberman,2013: 282)

A keen observation and experienced have proven that policies in Cameroon education are driven by politics. Educational policies follow political maps. This entanglement of education into politics malls the sense of education. Politically appointed leaders are mostly incompetent and careless; there is loss of skills and ability as the wrong persons are in the right places in the system.

Discussions with Cameroon's development partners led to the inclusion of higher education as a key component of its employment policy. The latest poverty reduction strategy paper for Cameroon, namely the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), was produced as a result of the proactive and enlightening efforts of Cameroonian higher education authorities during policy procedures and debates (2009). The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) of 2003 and 2006 underlined the utilization of higher education, which is where the current economic growth orientation processes in Cameroon's higher education began (IMF 2003; 2006).The aforementioned two PRSPs were updated and replaced with a new economic development document known as the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, GESP (Document de stratégies pour la croissance et l'emploi, DOCE), which would be assessed after ten years due to several inherent and recognized flaws. (Doh, 2012). The following goals for higher education are covered under the GESP objectives, which were modified with consideration to the vision 2035 objectives (GESP 2009:74–75). I Enhance equity and access (by 25% by 2020); ii) Enhance the effectiveness and quality of education; iii) Create effective relationships with all parties involved in education and training; and iv) Enhance management and governance.

A strategic plan to move Cameroon's higher education system from *its existing state of inefficiency to its materialization* is the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) (NUGP 2009). It establishes a five-part, mutually exclusive package that is to be consistently implemented and is intended to guide the long-term reorientation processes of higher education: managerial governance (capacity building for contemporary governance and administrative practices); resource and financial management; digital governance (of ICT in higher education); and social governance (of living conditions, financial and communication support systems for students and staff). According to MINESUP, 2009 in Doh (2012, p. 141), the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) is operationalized into broad long term objectives which include:

- Development of professional and entrepreneurship training;
- Reconfiguration and diversification of the geographical map and location of higher education institutions;
- Restructuring of academic, and development research;
- Implementation of digital governance in higher education;
- Strategizing employability of graduates and their insertion toward the socio-professional world;
- Reinforcement of steering and management capacities of higher education

The Sup Infos (2011, p. 14) postulates that the challenges of the day include professionalization, improvement of the use of ICTs, employability and widening access. The GESP has been qualified as the second generation of the PRSPs on Cameroon's macro-economic, structural and social policies towards growth and poverty reduction (GESP, 2009, p. 3). It conveys the first ten-year period (2010–2020) of the long-term vision of Cameroon “becoming an emergent nation around the 2035 horizon”. The GESP builds on a more specific, concrete and narrower theoretical perspective that “growth” (wealth creation, jobs, concrete reduction of unemployment and underemployment) is the strategic vector of poverty reduction through youth employment within an immediate contextual perspective. An important advantage provided by the GESP to this study is that whereas higher education was simply and passively mentioned in the two PRSPs of 2003 and 2006, numerous implications and roles for HE are discerned and articulated in the GESP. The recent emphasis from the GESP and as reaffirmed by the Sectorial Policy Document (SPD) for higher education in Cameroon is that higher education must be able to:

- “bring pertinent responses to the projects and challenges of economic growth” in Cameroon, and
- “Play a leading role for Cameroon becoming an emergent nation and its sustainable development” as well as to the overall
- “longterm vision up to 2035” (SPD, 2010).

It is crucial to take note of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper's recent state and the present transformation routes for HE (GESP). In the GESP, "education" and "health" are taken into account alongside "infrastructure development" and "modernization of the production mechanisms of the national economy" as the main priorities of Cameroon (Section 3.3 GESP, 2009). The GESP emphasizes education as the primary tactic for the long-term development of Cameroon's human capital. A section on higher education (HE) under education outlines a number of measures that work in tandem to advance Cameroon's ambitions for economic development and job creation (GESP, 2009, p. 76). The GESP highlights the necessity of certain urgent reforms including:

1. Infrastructural development and investments in teaching staff related to;
2. The expansion and diversification of the technological, professional, and more market-friendly components of the HE system;
3. Developing partnerships between the university and the related productive sectors (industries and socio-professional milieus);
4. Developing continuing education blended with;
5. Frameworks for recognition of experience-based skills;
6. Digitizing the HE sector through the implantation and use of the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT);
7. Setting up a higher education area (for engineers and technicians);
8. Improving the support system through the award of merit-based stipends to enable excellent students accede to doctoral levels in order to;
9. Sustain the quality and pool of the university teaching and research staff as well as;
10. Improve their working conditions;
11. Regionalization through a more profound reviewing process of the map of university establishments in order to reinforce efficiency and rationalize the implantation of university establishments to regional needs;
12. Provide the necessary guidance framework for student entrepreneurship, creativity and innovations;

13. Improve equity and create chances for the vulnerable population and
14. Ensure gender balance and equal opportunity by *setting up frameworks to promote and ensure access for young girls into all domains of the HE system.*

As part of the operational dynamics to accompany the above strategies are:

1. *“improve access to 25 percent” by 2020 accompanied by equity and*
2. *“Improving the efficiency and quality of the teaching and research”*
3. Develop more *“efficient partnerships”* with the different stakeholders of the HE.
4. *“Improve Management and Governance of the system”* (GESP, 2009).

As a result, modifications to its statutory referential policy papers were needed to reflect the evolving vision for higher education in Cameroon. The new Sectoral Policy Document for Higher Education (SPD, 2010) in Cameroon declares that the role of higher education, as demanded by the contemporary dispensation and dynamics of economic development, goes beyond that of the mere supply of human resources. In addition to being better equipped to educate highly educated individuals, university institutions adapt such individuals to become the knowledge (creation, diffusion, and dissemination) workers that 'the new economy' demands (SPD, 2010). Their capacity to "convert research into ideas" would allow for a more accurate assessment of their production, according to the SPD (SPD, 2010).

In terms of governance, the document emphasizes the implication that these new orientations, particularly the pursuit of "excellence" in teaching and research, typically call for a transformation and changes in the relationship between the university and various publics, political, and private actors; particularly between the university and its establishments (SPD, 2010, p. 2). If the institution needs to be more strategic, acting more like *a strategic company*, capable of managing most of its ventures, risks, and destiny, the document enhances awareness of organizational autonomy. As a strategic organization,

The university would have to be capable of defining its future, putting in place its proper development strategies and be able to establish the link between economic progress, scientific and technical innovations and research, and to produce economically useful knowledge for the development of local economies (SPD, 2010, p. 2).

The New modern university outlined by Cameroon's growth and employment strategy paper (GESP) is therefore no longer a centre for scholars, isolated from the world and critics of temporal powers, but a forum around which complex processes of innovation and

industrial development are built, a centre for social promotion, notably the training of highly skilled staff, a communication crux and a business incubator (Sup Infos, 2011, p. 7), in Doh (2015).

The main reasons for the creation of the PED were:

- The narrowness of the economic platform faced with an ever-growing job demand;
- An insufficient exploitation of potential employment opportunities in our country;
- And above all, the growing requirements from companies of a work force ready to do the job (with experience), faced with a training system not well adapted to the real needs of the job market.

Also, according to NEF statistics, close to 70% of graduate job seekers make their first entrance into the job market with hardly any practical knowledge and experience of how the field operates. The PED was therefore created in an attempt to fill this gap. The PED is a pre-employment course programme that aims at integrating young graduate job seekers, with little or no work experience into the production labour market. It is one of the components of the Pact for Youth Employment (PEJ), launched in December 2007, as a contribution to the national youth policy for the fight against youth unemployment. More specifically, it permits:

- The exploitation of the existing vocational training potentials within the enterprises, by young graduates in view of practical qualification for industries.
- The acquisition of a practical experience by young graduates thereby enriching their curriculum vitae.
- The putting of an income at the disposal of the young trainee who has benefitted from the PED.

In this way, this programme which falls under the scope of on-the-job –training allows the recipients, not only to obtain a qualification, but also to acquire a first experience within the enterprise. The strategy of this interactive programme (pre-employment training) is based on the equal sharing (50/50) compensation fees paid to the trainees by the NEF and the company accepting the graduate job seekers for training. The young graduates who benefit from the PED undergo within the enterprises, a 12months training course during which they acquire skills and competences under the control of one or several tutors or mentors. The procedure for the implementation of the PED, which is very flexible, is as follows:

- Application for accreditation to the program from the company;

- Evaluation of the capacities of the company to meet the objectives of the PED;
- Selection of the candidates from the NEF's data base, on the basis of a profile needed by the employer. This selection is done by the company with the support of the NEF employment counsellors;
- Subscription with the PED contract (between the NEF, the company and the recipient) with a detailed training programme;
- Follow-up of the candidate within the company.

Advantages of this programme to the company include:

- The response at a minimized cost to their human resource problems: the observation of candidates during the period of training course enables companies to make an objective choice of the trainees responding to their requirements;
- The increase in their productivity following the arrival of new blood within the company.

The young graduates also benefit in terms of:

- Acquiring work related skills, competences and experiences;
- The integration into the production network;
- The feeling of being useful to society by their contribution to the production of the national wealth;
- Acquiring an income during the training to satisfy their needs with a possible assurance of financial independence;
- Possibility of being fully recruited at the end of the training.

Another program put in place at the NEF, was the Support program for the Insertion of Higher education Graduates (PRAIDES). This program was the result of a partnership signed between the MINESUP and the NEF, on June 05 2002. Through this program, the MINESUP and the NEF engaged to put in place specific competences in view of carrying out joint actions susceptible to favour young HE graduates into the world of work. With regards to this, the NEF, informs the HE stakeholders about new professions emerging in the labour market, especially in the CEMAC zone, so that courses could be tailored to produce graduates who could benefit in terms of employment upon graduation from universities

Pedagogy, which is the science and art of teaching is a field of studies that is concerned with the teaching of teachers how to teach people effectively Nicodamus (2007). Pedagogy is another important tool for educational planners to exploit. The teaching methods

used in the universities are possibly a contributing factor to the dilemma at hand. This implies that the theoretical base teachings void of practical lessons fails to meet up with the challenges brought by curriculum as lectures and practice (TD) seem elongating the gap that exist between the curriculum and the job market. In this case, Pedagogy seeks to explore the problem of how to teach, who to teach, when to teach and why teach. This is fostered by the fact that there is no institution that teaches university teachers how to teach in Cameroon. Therefore, the absence of pedagogic skills, ethics or deontology highly limits teachers work in these institutions. As cited by (Pegg et al. 2012) effective pedagogy demands consistent policy framework with support for learning for diverse students as their main focus. Policies at government, systems, institutions and organizational levels need to recognize the fundamental importance of individuals and team learning. Policies should be designed to create an effective and an equitable learning environment for all students to benefit socially and economically (TLRP; 2010, p 14) Peggs et al. Consider pedagogy as an integral part of the educational policy, meaning that a vision in policy that prioritizes graduates' employability does not work in isolation; it involves the pedagogy of that institution in order to achieve the vision. Moreover, the pedagogy of a university institution is interwoven with the concept of employability defined as a set of achievements-skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy, (ESECT based on Yorke 2006). It may interest you to know that employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student get a job or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is even less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis on developing critical, reflective, ability with a view of empowering and enhancing the learner (Harvey, 2013).

The Competence Base Approach (CBA) is the probably the ideal method to be used in university teachings in developing countries, unfortunately there is no avenue for training lecturers on how to teach and evaluate CBA in the universities. The university which carries a large majority of youths, family heads and job seekers are not being thought on the competences. These brings a lot of doubts as to how will these students at the higher education ever meet up with skills demanding life. They seem to study for three years without practice, nor internship in any field. At the end they cannot answer the question; what can I do? They find themselves wanting with the burning need of a particular skill in order to fit in the needs of the job market. This is probably why most graduates enrol in vocational trainings

in different fields and institutions like Youths Employment Service (YES) Cameroon, Young African Leaders (YALI) Cameroon amongst others. It must be mentioned here that these institutions are far more costly than these poor youths can afford, making it an affair for the rich.

Higher education is the gate way for employment world wild. The more you train, the more effective and efficient you are at the job side. People further their education not just for prestigious reasons but also to guarantee a well-paid and stable job in their areas of specialisation. In this light, the school curriculum becomes an indispensable tool through which the teachers can objectively train the students in preparation for the job market. School curriculum is the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught in a school, college and many others, (Oxford Advance Dictionary 9thed.). According to the Association for the Development of Africa (ADA) (2008; p. 122), curriculum is “a political and technical processes that express and reflects the values, attitudes and feelings of a society towards its own well-being and development”. Here it is portrayed as a means that permits the educational system to adapt to the needs of the society at a given time in history. The Regional Preparatory Conference of the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Conference of Education, ICE (2008) holds that a curriculum is at the same time a political and technical issue very much embedded in a complex interface between a society, politics and education involving a wild range of institution and actors. Thus, it is a dense and flexible contract between educational planning and the society/job market. In the same light, Machabo (2008, p. 16) states that ; « Le curriculum s’incrive dans les realites sociales, culturelles, economiques, ethiques et sociales des regions et des pays dans lesquelles ils sont amenes à orienter le system, un curriculum ne porte pas, ils se construit localement ». Therefore, educational planners and curriculum specialist have to consider primarily the ever-changing society and individual’s expectations and demands on the one hand, and the fast technological growing type of man power the job market is employing and will employ in the nearest future. The school curriculum is viewed as a brainchild behind every graduate’s possible infiltration into the job market as the determinant of his or her ability to render the services that the employers need. The curricula in the various departments of the University of Yaoundé I and most universities in Cameroon are more theory oriented (Samfoga, 2002) couple with the disparity between these subjects and the employer’s interest, the students are bound to remain jobless after graduation. This demise in the Cameroon system of education

that results from onset (educational planning) warrants a close look in order to ascertain why university graduates cannot get employed after graduation.

According to Fonkeng, (2006; p.231), the educational law no 98/004 of April 1998 that laid down education in Cameroon stipulates in section 4 that “the general purpose of education shall be to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and their smooth integration into the society, bearing in mind the smooth prevailing economic, sociocultural, political and moral factors”. Though these involved the whole system from primary to tertiary, the purpose of curriculum for employability still has much to be desired in the higher education system. It makes no headways for the system’s collaboration with the job opportunities which was already identified in 1985 as poor link with the economic environment being a major problem identified in higher education (Fonkeng, 2006; p.240)

Planning a curriculum that meets the needs of a learner upon graduation is seen as part of its complete development as human beings in the context of his/her community. This implies therefore that teachers, students, parents, employees and the state are indispensable elements that should plan the university curriculum of a society. In every education system, curriculum is one of the major tools to facilitate and harness the school-to-job transition amongst graduates. School curriculum must take into consideration the different abilities (consider inclusive education) and needs of both the students and the employers. It must be able to adapt to different needs and strategies such as flexible time frame for work completion, differentiation of tasks, flexibility for teachers, time for additional support and emphasis on vocational as well as academic goals can be useful (UNESCO, 2005). The management of the University of Yaoundé I lack integrated pathway with the job market. Pathways combine basic practical skills that hitherto strengthen career technical instruction in a single curriculum, offering career training from first year in the university to the third year, and providing comprehensive academic and personal support service to increase student’s success both in school and at the work place. This should be maintained for the next generation. Wilson captures this idea in the following lines:

For integrated partway program to continue, State and colleges needs to identify high demand industries. And occupations and prepare students for high value credentials in those industries. Doing so requires close cooperation with industry as well as public workforce agencies to ensure

that pathway and supporting curricular and instructions are closely aligned with the labour market (Wilson, 2015; p.2).

His vision in this context is most applicable to the experiences of the Cameroon education system. With the change of time accompanied by the high enrolments in the University of Yaoundé 1, pathway or partnership between schools and job markets should be dynamic in order to meet up with the changes in the society and education.

Research and observation have shown that the UY I may be suffering from inadequacy between the study program and the needs of the productive system on the one hand, and the required skills relevant for employment or job creation on the other hand, from its maladjustment to scientific and technological evolution. This could possibly explain why products of the system find it difficult to integrate into the production sector. This state of things calls for the revision of the program with the hope of rendering them more professional in order to meet up with the country's economic needs and options and to enable a harmonious social integration from the product of the educational system, (The Sector Wild Approach).

### **Conceptual Background**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), conceptual framework is a vital or written product that explains either graphically or normatively the main things under study. They include key factors, concepts or variables and presume relationship amongst them. A conceptual framework is a structure of what has been learned to best explain the natural progression of a phenomenon that is being studied (Camp, 2001). This section will examine and explicitly elaborate on the concept of professionalization of courses, government policy, curriculum content, teaching methods, evaluation processes, employability and possible relationship that exist between them.

### **Professionalization of Courses**

HE has been called not only to play a major role in sustainable development but, also in enhancing graduates' acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to ease their integration in the job market. To attain this, Universities are expected to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market by improving on curricular relevance that include the knowledge and skills required for the current economic, political, social and environmental context (Pillay, 2011). Kiani (2011) opined that there is a high correlation between the Higher Education

programmes and development of an economy. In fact, professionalisation of academic programmes has been seen as a way in resolving the problem of graduates' unemployment. The fact cannot be denied that a good quality human resource-base is extremely important in today's greatly competitive setting (Khare, 2016). The investment in education to develop human capital and its contribution to economic development and growth are evidenced in many authors (Becker, 1964). Well educated and good quality of human capital leads to a country's development by placing it an edge in the global economy. Therefore, this necessitates the importance of well-educated graduates endowed with employability skills. The "Market Model" of the professionalisation inspired by the Humboldtian Model and Leroux (2014) opined that professionalisation in this view does not detract Higher Education from its one key mission which is to provide general education. Professional training and acquisition of specialized knowledge are therefore seen as important role that HE is expected to play in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Engell and Dangerfield's (1998) Market Model holds that market signals are monitored and translated into new curricula and programmes. This implies that Higher Education should help its graduates to better find their place in the socio-professional world but, in achieving this, there is need for professional education, practical training and acquisition of specialized knowledge. The sustainable development in its objective four has emphasised on the need for quality education for youths empowerment and empowerment of marginalized groups. Furthermore, there has been a strong argument to strengthen the links between Higher Education and the world of work (Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) for 2010-2020; Government of Cameroon, 2010). These documents demanded University training with a professional focus, professional training and prioritizing the satisfaction of local needs.

Given that GESP (2010) and Education Sector Strategy (2006) have also attributed high unemployment to training, MINESUP is expected to improve the quality of training by sustainably strengthening the interaction between universities and professional circles, matching University training to the real needs of the economy and also making sure that adequate resources are put in place to help practicalise training and acquire specialized knowledge. In a study carried out by Etomes (2019) on graduate' employability and career opportunities, the suggestion given by many of the graduates and employers is the need for Higher Education to engage in professionalization as a way to curb graduates' unemployment. According to the agenda 2063 framework, Africa needs to significantly improve its human capital in order to achieve the economic transformation envisaged under

Agenda 2063. HE is the highest provider of Labour force in the economy and providing adequate resources for teaching is of paramount importance.

After looking at how Professionalisation of Courses of Higher Education affects the Employability of graduates, it was equally of utmost importance to see how government policy, the content of the curricular, teaching methods, evaluation processes, which are indicators of the independent variable of this study have a direct relationship with the study's dependent variable. We adopted four of these indicators which have been treated below to show how they affect the employability of graduates.

### **Government Policy**

Higher education (HE) in Cameroon is guided by national and international policies and conditions that overlap in terms of policy frameworks. Cameroon is a signatory to numerous international agreements for cooperation and solidarity, particularly those pertaining to education, as a committed member of the global community. Its HE has been subjected to recommendations, rules, and re-regulations from international development agencies due to its poverty and dependence on borrowing and handouts. These organizations, which have recently had a considerable role in influencing Cameroonian HE, include the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the African Development Bank (ADB). According to recommendations from international organizations, the financing of higher education in Cameroon, like most of Africa, was put on the back burner for roughly 20 years in favour of other sectors and educational sub-sectors. The recent rediscovery of higher education's significance as a driver of economic growth at different levels, however, could be considered as contributing in part to the recent shifts as demonstrated in this study. The international cooperation agreements linked to or involving Cameroon appear to be the primary causes of the majority of the current change processes in higher education in Cameroon.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2000) and educational goals like the Education for All goals are examples of these (EFA 2000). Although it may turn out that the MDG or EFA unfortunately did not prioritize HE, HE is the sector that is greatly impacted by these initiatives' effects and has a substantial impact on their success. In retrospect, it's possible to say that the MDG and EFA had certain flaws in terms of how people perceived higher education. The failure and lack of foresight to foresee the influence and interconnectedness of the several cycles of the educational system appeared. For instance, the

higher education (HE) sector in Cameroon eventually began to experience pressures and capacity imbalances in terms of infrastructure, staffing, quality, and funding after several years of exponential growth in enrolment in the lower levels of the educational system. In retrospect, it's possible to say that the MDG and EFA had a few flaws in terms of how people perceived higher education. The failure and lack of foresight to foresee the influence and interconnectedness of the several cycles of the educational system seems to have occurred. For instance, the HE sector in Cameroon eventually began to experience difficulties and capacity imbalances in terms of infrastructure, staffing, quality, and funding following several years of exponential growth in enrolment in the lowest levels of the educational system.

The HE system urgently needed to adapt to rising demands for secondary and high school teachers, among other skills and competencies, in addition to not being able to handle the enormous growth in student numbers from the lower education cycles. These flaws highlight the significance of adopting a comprehensive strategy when formulating educational policy. The result of the large-scale enrolment in higher education was a mass output of graduates, which led to unemployment issues. Although the 2000 international frameworks (MDG and EFA) did not prioritize HE, the 1998 World Declaration on Higher Education suggested earlier that HE played a significant role in socioeconomic growth through its service function (WDHE). The WDHE claimed in its preamble and mission statement that it was absolutely essential for all stakeholders including students, families, business, and industry to be involved and that HE must use research to *give as part of service to the community, relevant expertise*. Article 6 of the declaration emphasizes on “*long term orientation based on relevance*” and operationalizes relevance as the *fit between what the society expects of institutions and what they do (6a)*. The WDHE urged HE to strengthen its social contributions, including the expansion of the entire educational system. Following Article 7 of the declaration, which underlines the need to improve ties between HE, the workplace, and other spheres of society, is the significance of cooperation.

This study is primarily interested in how higher education and the workplace relate to one another. The 2009 Conference on Higher Education that followed was unambiguous about the status of higher education as a public good thus calling for relentless investments in the sector. It was framed by multiplying evidence of the use of higher education in the economic development of emerging nations in the preceding decade as well as the *transition from information to knowledge society*. The conference's unique focus on Africa is

particularly significant. Given the significance of information and higher education, the goal was that *no nation or region falls behind* (UNESCO, 2009).

The development of higher education in Cameroon has been significantly aided by new circumstances and outlets for funding particularly support from international financial agencies. The public was repeatedly reassured by Cameroonian authorities in a number of public speeches between 2005 and 2010 that the financial conditions surrounding the start of the current major project are better than they were a few years ago, with comparatively sizable financial resources to invest in the social sectors, particularly in education and infrastructure (President's Message to the Youth, 10 February 2007). It is emphasized that the completion of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries' Initiatives (HIPC) in 2006 has made it possible for the majority of the transformation initiatives in Cameroon's higher education over the previous five to six years to be partially and significantly completed. The aftermath of the HIPC led to the creation of the Support Program to the Technological and Professional Components of Higher Education (SPTPCHE), which is promoting the professionalization strategy and policy for a radical transformation towards increased relevance and socioeconomic involvement of HE in Cameroon. With funding from the World Bank, the SPTPCHE expands and enhances PASE-MINESUP, the higher education component of the Support Program to the Educational Sector.

The Cameroon government relies on the Appui a la Gestion des Initiatives Rentables (AGIR) Support Program for the Management of Income-Generating Initiatives of HE to promote income-generating enterprises and an entrepreneurial culture for the HE system. There are recently developed centers and programs for distance learning that get World Bank funding. The most applied higher education institutions in Cameroon are three University Institutes of Technology, which were established with similar sources of finance and co-funding.

Regarding the national frameworks, it is clear that the higher education system in Cameroon is undergoing a transformation and reorientation process toward reducing poverty, reducing unemployment, and promoting economic development. This process appears to be guided by convergent and overlapping national and international commitments, which may also put pressure on the system to act in certain ways. For instance, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), a revised and more focused version of the two Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers from 2003 and 2006, is the current economic development document directing the economic focus of the HE system in Cameroon.

In addition to committing and restating government determination to fully realize the MDG, this GESP describes "the country's progress towards reaching and realizing" Cameroon's economic development goals (GESP 2009, p. 14). The GESP is the first strategic plan that looks ahead ten years, from 2010 to 2020, with the aim of translating the first sets of development objectives and the shared vision of Cameroon emerging as a nation by 2035:

- Lowering poverty to a level that is acceptable in society;
- Attaining the position of a middle-income nation;
- Becoming a newly industrialized nation and boosting national cohesion and solidifying the democratic system.

Government aims to:

- Reduce poverty to the point that not more than 1/10 Cameroonians would live below the poverty levels or raise living standards and alleviate the population's living situations" are more specifically related to the aforementioned.
- Place the transformation of natural resources in the context of current national and global realities when contextualizing national industrial policies.
- Modernize the economy by establishing "the essential framework for the rapid development and widespread adoption of the new information and communication technologies" across all spheres and facets of society. The GESP anticipates that during the period 2010–2020, the emphasis will be particularly on growth, employment, improvement of state governance, and strategic management, as this period is seen as the most and most immediate strategic springboard for the implementation and realization of the long-term vision up to 2035 (GESP 2009, p. 17).

The 1993 university reforms should be mentioned first and foremost when discussing the internal policy and regulatory framework governing the societal service function of higher education in Cameroon. It can be said that the societal problem solving component was implicit in the reforms, albeit less articulated than more recent times, despite the fact that they appeared to have primarily focused on addressing the acute access situation at the time through the creation of five additional universities as well as addressing their related funding challenges. The 1993 reforms granted these newly established institutions full financial and steering autonomy as well as the freedom to interact with outside parties in an effort to augment the insufficient government support for their rising enrolments. Even while

universities have had different interpretations of the societal service function over the years, many, if not all, of them have created ways to leverage their expertise to solve social issues, particularly with socio-economic operators in exchange for additional revenue.

Later, in the 2001 Law on the Orientation of Higher Education in Cameroon, the societal service function of the HE system was included and institutionalized. The main goal of the HE system in Cameroon is to "provide support for national development initiatives and human advancement," in addition to producing, organizing, and disseminating scientific, cultural, and professional information (2001 Orientation Law, Article 2). Later, in October 2005, a framework that was more comprehensive and uniform was introduced under the name New University Governance Policy (NUGP) (Nouvelle Gouvernance Universitaire). The NUGP makes it clear that attitudes around the functions of higher education have changed. The policymakers' proactive actions also appear to differ from earlier perceptions. This NUGP offers a tactical route for bringing about Cameroonian HE's *materialization from its actual condition of inefficiency* (NUGP 2009). It establishes a five-part, multifaceted, yet mutually exclusive package that is to be constantly used and is intended to propel higher education's long-term reorientation process.

It is important to note some of the elements that are related to the reforms, legislation, and policies even if they constitute deliberate political efforts to enhance the direct service function of higher education in Cameroon. These factors include: increased demands on the higher education system to demonstrate its direct social contributions in light of a high graduate employment rate since the late 1980s is the accountability factor. The need for HE to participate in or take the lead in economic development initiatives due to the poor growth rate. Additionally, there is the general appeal for higher education to support Cameroon's goal of emerging as a nation by 2035. Changes in the economic and production dynamics, particularly the growing shift to a service economy, help to increase the role of higher education in Cameroon's economic development. Therefore, the professionalization agenda in higher education under the BMD and the employability of graduates are researched in the context of these policy contexts in this study.

The study is based on the hypothesis that the professionalization of courses in higher education in Cameroon has a substantial impact on graduates' employability and, as a result, accelerates the nation's economic development and growth. Nelson, Palonsky, and McCarthy (2017, p. 13) state the following: *In order to have a well-functioning economy, we must have a well-educated populace. This is not only true for our domestic economy; it is true for*

*maintaining our competitive position within the international and global economic system.* Graduates are only prepared and well-suited for the Cameroonian market, but are also ready and able to compete in the international market arenas like in the CEMAC zone and other global employment markets at large, if professionalization under the BMD higher educational reform causes graduates to become more employable. By making its graduates more employable and competitive, higher education in Cameroon will better fulfil its social role of helping its graduates escape the poverty trap. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which professionalization in Cameroon's higher education institutions under the BMD reform can benefit graduates' employability

### **Content of the Curricula**

It is necessary to give a brief overview of the fundamentals of curriculum, tracing and discussing its development as a conceptual framework for the design of employability learning practices within higher education in the literature of this work. Curriculum content, in terms of courses, programs, teaching learning processes, and evaluation processes, is a central theme in this thesis. It is crucial to create new employability learning paradigms for emerging market economies that are framed within an appropriate socio-economic development framework. In regard to this project, the curriculum is based on constructivist principles, which hold that knowledge is dynamic, grows, and is produced as it seeks interaction with external contexts and contents. In general, a wide range of factors have influenced and had an impact on the evolution of educational systems around the world from one era to the next. For instance, the 21st-century knowledge explosion has and continues to exert pressure on educational systems in a variety of ways. This abundance of information and its rate of growth have compelled educators to re-evaluate the issue of content selection and even the role of knowledge material in the educational process (Keel,2022). It is also important to mention at this point that the higher education curricula in Cameroon have scarcely changed in response to the expanding and changing body of knowledge. According to Carpenter, Goldblatt& Hanson, (2021), *the content of higher education curricula have existed for as long as the individual content lecturers have been teaching those courses.* Maybe this was due to the general neglect of higher education in the past, as earlier explained in the introduction of this work. The return of trust to higher education as a driver of economic development may also be a clarion call for the revamping, if not total overhauling of existing curricular to reflect changing times.

Secondly, the physical expansion of educational systems especially at tertiary levels in terms of increasing enrolments, because of the growing awareness of the connection between level of educational attainment and social and economic returns. It is only natural that these factors would have considerable influence on the various elements involved in the process of education; such as the selection and structure of curriculum, and in teaching strategies and techniques (Coombs, 1985). According to Taba (1962), curriculum matters are very important because they involve the translation of educational objectives into operational plans, because curriculum is the substance of that form of communication which is called teaching, and it is a major factor in the selection of teaching methods and techniques. The BMD reform measure in higher education in Cameroon with the view of harmonizing certificates and improving mobility and employability of graduates is enough reason for the review of the curriculum to reflect these needs. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are living more and more in a global economy with new and ever evolving technologies. Educational curricula need to reflect these changes and challenges. To quote the introductory lines of the OECD report:

Education systems are under constant pressure, on two main fronts. First, they need to adapt to changes in society which as it becomes a learning society, has rising expectations for education. Second, the school as a “house of knowledge” is increasingly facing competition from other knowledge sources, including information entertainment, and from enterprises that define themselves as knowledge producers and mediators.

Here we notice that education and especially higher education must adjust and continue to adjust its curriculum to reflect the societal and individual needs from which they emanate. In our case, of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need is to produce knowledgeable, skilful and employable graduates who can transit smoothly to, stay and grow in the labour market. It is the selection and construction of the right and appropriate content and instruction processes that can facilitate this. To develop education in a new economic context necessitates new perspectives for curriculum research and curriculum construction, reflecting the relationship between education and economic growth, education and employability, as basic motivations for educational change through curriculum. Before one begins to consider the nature and function of curriculum in employability education, it is first necessary to engage the issue of curriculum in a more theoretical way. The purpose is to place curriculum within the larger framework of the educational process, to analyse the concept of curriculum, and to construct

a general model of curriculum which may serve as a construct for the study of employability education (Tanyi, 2006).

### **Teaching Methods**

Professionalization calls for student-centred teaching which is a constructivist approach where the role of the teacher as facilitator (Alesandrini and Larson, 2002) helps students acquire knowledge through activities. Johnson and Johnson (1999) believe that one's personal involvement in learning experience requires them to work in groups and interact in social settings based on the principle of Vygotsky's social constructivism. Internships or practicals are good examples of a constructivist approach to teaching. Internships are the link between theoretical knowledge and concepts learned in the classroom setting, and real time industry applications. Internships have long been regarded as an important component in preparing undergraduate students for the entry-level job market. Internships provide students with valuable opportunities for growth through the shadowing of mentors, attendance at meetings, and actual performance of duties. Radigan (2009) found out that students who have participated in internships have reported better time management and communication skills, higher levels of self-discipline, increased initiative and have higher self-image concepts. Students participating in internships were found to have a significantly higher sense of career preparation over students without such experience in five skill areas: computer applications, creative thinking, job interviewing, networking, and relationship building. Hussain (2012) asserts that traditionally, a teacher has been playing an active role in transferring knowledge to passive students. Gibbs (1982) argues that as HE teachers, we cling to the traditional method of lecture because we are ignorant, overworked, our attitudes obstruct change, institutional constraints support lecturing and more. In the new settings the stage is set for students to play an active role in the learning process through activities. Findings from the Lord, Travis, Magic and King (2005) revealed greater effects of learner-centered approach on weekly test scores of students as compared to students' test scores in traditional or teacher centered environment. Moore (2001) identifies methods in learner-centred instruction as follows: discussion, cooperative learning, discovery learning, inquiry learning, simulation and games and individualized instruction. Tambo (2013) categorizes the above methods into four broad categories. There is indirect teaching which involves students in investigating, drawing inferences from data and forming hypotheses. This fosters creativity. Interactive teaching which includes discussion and cooperative learning is another category. Seaman and Fellenz (1989) assert that discussion helps learners to use the ideas,

experience, insights and knowledge provided by the teacher or peer learners to develop social skills and abilities to organize their thoughts and to develop rational arguments. Any of the methods listed above could incorporate aspects of experiential learning, which is another category of teaching. It is learner-centred and activity oriented. According to Johnson and Johnson (1986), experiential learning is based on three principles: when students discover knowledge for themselves it is more meaningful, students learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience and students are more committed to learning when they are free to set their own learning goals and to pursue them within a set framework. There is yet another category called independent study which is a range of teaching methods that are planned and provided to foster the development of initiative, self-reliance and self-improvement of students as individuals. However, Moore, (2001) cautions that the above methods are typically time-consuming.

Teaching is defined as *the process of choosing and organizing learning experiences in order to convey curriculum objectives and content to students* (Tambo, 2000). It may relate to the actual activity that is typically referred to as teaching as well as the section of a curriculum design where the strategy for this activity is developed. Thus, curriculum design includes teaching as a component as well as a process that is separate from and generated from curriculum. According to Belinga (2005, p. 69) :

Pour enseigner de nos jours, il ne suffit pas seulement de connaître la matière à enseigner ; il faut également connaître la didactologie pour mieux évaluer l'apprentissage des élèves...L'obtention d'un diplôme universitaire ne constitue pas en soi une garantie pour savoir enseigner et communiquer les connaissances. La didactique reste encore la seule science de l'Education qui habilite à l'enseignement ; car c'est elle qui traite les problèmes des méthodes et techniques d'enseignement, de la gestion de la classe, de planification rationnelle des enseignements en prenant et par le fait de même les attendus du système éducatif et de la société. La didactique sert de filtre, de tamis par rapport aux matières scientifiques à enseigner ; c'est elle qui permet à l'enseignant de sélectionner les contenus et les systèmes de valeurs en fonction des besoins réels de formation des élèves”

According to Belinga's (2005) viewpoints, not everyone who holds a university degree is eligible to teach. Due to the knowledge boom of the twenty-first century, university lecturers must be taught in teaching approaches like managing material and subject matter, class control, and content selection.

As an element of curriculum design, the selection and organization of instructional procedures arise from the selection and structure of content. One of the tenets of a curriculum system, according to Beauchamp and Beauchamp in Tabo (2000, p. 159), is that the selection of curriculum content can be done independently of instructional methods, but the selection of The type of curriculum content determines the instructional approaches.

In a broader sense, the dependence of instructional procedures is in three directions: upon the curriculum content, upon the general structure of the disciplines from which this content arises, and upon the particular characteristics of the learners, both individually and collectively. *Good* instructional procedures and *"bad"* instructional procedures can be judged according to the manner in which content, student, and subject are integrated into a coherent pattern of curriculum and to the extent to which this pattern can be successfully translated by teachers to students. Instruction, as an aspect of curriculum or as the process of teaching, in this work is referring to teaching methods and techniques (one of the indicators of the independent variables of the study). Quite often these terms are used interchangeably and refer to particular skills or routines such as the use of a blackboard or the organization of a project.

### **Teaching Method for Employability**

Gaining employment is only one aspect of employability. On the other hand, enrolling in a vocational course does not guarantee that a student will be employable. Employability is more than just honing skills, knowledge, or abilities to help students land a job or advance in their current career. Learning is the goal, and ability is prioritized over "employ." Essentially, the focus is on cultivating critical and reflective skills in order to empower and improve the learner. Harvey (2003).

The issue of graduate's employability should be at the centre of planning the economic, geographical, social, political and environmental activities of the faculties. According to HEFCE (2006) embedding employability into the core of higher education should be a key priority of the government, universities, colleges and employers. This will have major positive effects on the public and private sectors, highlighting the importance of higher education for social and cultural advancement as well as its larger role in promoting economic progress. The main obstacle is the challenge facing the university system is how to best combine and balance the various teaching and learning modalities that support students' employability and successful learning

The quality of pedagogy needed to be enhanced in: the quality of delivery, how to deliver (both theory and practice), personnel qualification and mastery of subject matter, learner's assessment vis-a-vis available jobs for employment in variety of settings and disciplines (Pegg et al. 2006) there is possibly the need to restructure the pedagogy, the practices of teaching learning in direct interaction with students, bracketing on initiatives like: faire access to the profession, widening participation in higher education, development of employer/university partnership, credit per course 40% theory and 60% practice, application of competence base approach (CBA) basing on the culture of Cameroon.

Additionally, teaching is a vital tool for fostering employability in a varied student body at universities. The focus is shifting toward career guidance and personal development planning tools to help students connect. between their academic, professional, extracurricular, and learning pursuits and their career goals.

This strategy links career management, learning, skill development, personal growth and goals, and labor market opportunities to help and educate students about their options. It is concerning that students are enrolling in higher school primarily to find well-paying employment after graduation, and this trend has to be addressed. The need for greater gains is at the core of youth's high enrolments and enormous sacrifice (on the forgone activities and finance) put in suggest that; competence base approach (CBA) order skill and competences needed for the job market should be accompanied by the ability to articulate learning and raising confidence, self-esteem and aspirations (Little, 2011).

The teaching approach has a significant impact on all of these. If the instructors receive training in a novel method that connects theory and practice, with an emphasis on the Unemployment would be addressed in a constructive manner.

According to Wilson (2015), through pedagogy, there should be capacity building where both educators and employers will respond to one another's needs.

Employers should help with equipment, space, lending staff, and other support to college employers, as well as lecturing and even teaching adjuncts, while universities should tailor training and skilled job applicants to the labor market. course at the college while instructors from the college provide courses to the workplace.

Kolb (1984) develops the experiential learning theory to describe how pedagogy and didactics should be undertaken in the university during knowledge transmission and training.

According to David Kolb, simulations in the teaching and learning process and experience in work-related scenarios are the main ways that meaningful learning occurs.

Crucially, in order to stimulate students' interest in the job market, examples of effective practices must be included in class assignments. Cameroon's higher education system should make teaching and learning more hands-on and experiential in order to better prepare the students who possess the abilities that employers are looking for.

### **Evaluation Processes**

It is essential to assess both the student and the teaching-learning process. HE institutions have their own internal processes for guaranteeing and improving the quality of their programs, and they are required to monitor and enhance the quality of their teaching programs (Henard and Roseveare, 2012). Student assessments, the creation and approval of new programs, and the routine monitoring and recurring evaluation of ongoing programs are examples of internal procedures. Students' learning is often influenced by assessments (Brown et al. 1997). Therefore, altering how we evaluate our kids is the most effective approach to modify how they learn and the material they acquire. For instance, the essay would be suitable if we wanted to assess students' capacity to make a cogent and rational argument. But if we are more concerned with science students' laboratory skills, an observed performance assessment scheme might be more appropriate (Norton, 2009).

Evaluation, according to Yarbrough et al., (2011, p. 287), is systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards. An organization, program, project, or other intervention or initiative can use it to evaluate any goal, feasible concept or proposal, or alternative in order to aid in decision-making. It can also be used to determine the level of success or value in relation to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of any action that has been carried out.

Evaluation's primary objective is to encourage reflection and assist in identifying possible areas for future development, in addition to offering insight into previous or ongoing projects. Formative evaluation, sometimes referred to as formative assessment, usually takes place in a classroom setting where data on student performance is collected, examined, and utilized by peers, teachers, or both to determine the course of instruction. These decisions are likely to be better or more well-founded than those they would have made without the information that was gathered. (Carpenter et al., 2021).

Michael Scriven (1967) coined the terms formative and summative evaluation in 1967, and emphasized their differences both in terms of the goals of the information they seek and how the information is used. According to Scriven, formative evaluation collected data to evaluate a curriculum's efficacy and inform decisions made by the school system over which curriculum to implement and how to enhance it. He considered formative assessment as a tool for improving the teaching-learning process for students.

### **Summative Evaluation**

Summative evaluation is another term for participant assessment in which the program's results are the main focus. In contrast, formative assessment provides a summary of the participants' growth at a certain point in time. Summative assessments aim to compare student learning at the conclusion of a unit of instruction in order to assess it against a certain standard.

Summative assessment is the word used to describe the evaluation of educational faculty members by their various supervisors with the goal of comparing all teachers using the same standards in order to gauge their performance levels. In this instance, summative The purpose of assessment is to satisfy the demands of the district or school about teacher accountability. Usually in the form of a form, the evaluation includes check lists and, on occasion, narratives. Areas evaluated include the general climate in the classroom, instruction, professionalism, and planning and preparation (Arsenault, Heffernan & Murphy, 2021).

### **Formative Evaluation-**

Formative assessment is a variety of formal and informal evaluation techniques carried out by teachers during the learning process in order to adapt teaching and learning activities to increase student achievement (Huhta, 2010). It often provides qualitative feedback (rather than grades) for the teacher and student that concentrate on the specifics of performance and subject. Summative assessment, on the other hand, tries to monitor educational results, frequently for reasons of external accountability. Shepard (2005) asserts that formative evaluation accomplishes a number of objectives:

- To determine and address individual or group weaknesses;
- to shift attention from grades to learning procedures in order to

- To identify and remediate group or into raise pupils' awareness of their own learning processes, or metacognition.
- To move focus Regular, continuous evaluation enables students to concentrate on their development and helps teachers adjust their lessons.
- shift the focus from grades to learning processes in order to boost self-efficacy and lessen the detrimental effects of extrinsic motivation;
- to enhance students' metacognitive understanding of their own learning processes.

Formative assessment, according to Harlen and James (1997), is essentially positive in goal since it is meant to promote learning; as such, it is a component of teaching.

- It takes into account each student's development, effort, and other learning components that may not be covered in the curriculum rather than only relying on criteria.
- It must take into account many scenarios in which specific skills and ideas are used; there will also be behavioral patterns and inconsistencies; these differences would be seen as "error" in a summative assessment, but they provide insight into diagnosis;
- In formative assessment, validity and utility are crucial and should come before reliability issues;
- Formative assessment necessitates that the students play a central role than evaluation for other purposes; students must actively participate in their own education (teachers cannot learn for them), and they must recognize their own abilities. and shortcomings, as well as how they may address them.

The main purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback. Instead of focusing only on a test score or other indicator of how far a student is deviating from the desired standard, it usually entails a focus on the specific substance of what is being learned. Nicol and after reviewing the literature, Macfarlane-Dick (2006) enumerated seven guidelines for effective feedback practices:

- It makes clear what constitutes successful performance (goals, criteria, and anticipated standards);
- it helps students develop self-assessment in their learning;
- it gives them high-quality information about what they have learned;
- It facilitates communication about learning between teachers and peers; it promotes self-esteem and positive motivational beliefs;

- it offers chances to bridge the performance gap between present and intended performance; and it gives teachers information that may be utilized to inform their instruction and it fosters teacher and peer pressure about learning.

One of the most effective strategies to improve student motivation and learning is formative assessment, which has been found to have a significant impact on improving student accomplishment. Motivation can be increased through the effective use of formative assessment in a number of ways, such as believing in their capacity to learn, attributing learning successes to personal efforts and skills, prioritizing progress toward learning objectives over higher grades, and analyzing their thought processes to find strategies that enhance comprehension. However, for these gains to become evident formative assessment must: Clarify and share learning goals and success criteria; Create effective classroom discussions and other tasks which demonstrate evidence of students' understanding; provide feedback which can and will be acted upon; allow students to become instructional resources for one another; and stimulate students to become owners of their own learning (Hu, Nguyen, Nguyen & Stalmeijer, 2022). Therefore, formative assessments are valuable in daily lessons when used to adapt teaching methods to meet student needs and monitor student progress in relation to learning goals. Students receive feedback from teachers and colleagues and help students monitor their progress as they allow opportunities to modify and refine their thoughts.

In the words of York (2010, p. 10): if institutions are serious about developing graduate attributes or employability (with their implications for interaction between students), then the challenges posed by assessment have to be addressed. A commitment to the development of graduate attributes or employability implies, for many subject disciplines, a preparedness to rethink curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

It is clear that assessment can be used strategically to motivate and engage students, and carefully chosen assessment tasks can help develop specific employability attributes (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac & Lawton, 2012), in which attention is drawn to the fact that while the effective development of employability is stimulated by using assessment, there is also a concern that traditional assessment systems might frustrate the development of personal skills. Pegg et al., (2012) state that, the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are usually assessed by assignment, multiple choice test and oral examination. Research confirmed that these skills are viewed by providers as competency-based and lend themselves to traditional methods of assessment (Pegg et al. 2012).

An example of using evaluation or assessment to enhance employability is the case of the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth University in a project named “Pitch Assessments” where Student groups were tasked with competitively ‘pitching’ for one of five ‘real-world’ project grants at a staged end-of-module conference. Each group was allocated a five-minute slot in which to make both a video and an oral presentation (Pegg et al 2012). The five grants covered a range of environmental management projects each of which gave student groups a specific role (you work for a private energy company’) and a client or awarding body (Forestry Commission Wales, Local Planning Authority). These simulations of live projects, give students the opportunity to act professionally engaged in the projects and developing work-based competency skills such as team skills, presentation skills, attention to detail, budgeting, time and project management, public speaking and organization. Formative assessments like the case described above, have great potential for promoting attitudes required to develop employability skills (Knight and York, 2003).

Curriculum can be constructed in a variety of creative evaluation formats, including tests, project work, presentations, reports, posters, group work, portfolios, portfolios (including portfolios), work-related learning, peer assessment, self-assessment, and more. Good practices to provide general training for employment require the provision of a variety of experiences and learning strategies. In all, whether in formative or summative assessments, education for employability should make use of a wide variety of assessment methods to give the learners every possibility of developing the needed skills for the 21st century labour market.

### **Graduates’ Employability**

According to (Benedict.M & Peter.N 2023) in recent years, the idea of graduate employability has taken center stage in both the global higher education sector and the job market. Where will university graduates find employment, in other words? Who ought to hire them? Is the Government or the private sector responsible for integrating graduates into the labor force? Or are these graduates expected to find work after completing their education at a university? All of these concerns about graduates’ employability have raised the issue of what role Higher Education can play in supporting the emerging knowledge-based economy, which depends on highly qualified, capable, and adaptable workers (Ngwa & Ngonba, 2020; Gokuladas, 2011; Wittekind, Raeder & Grote, 2010). To be able to contribute to this type of knowledge-driven economy, universities are increasingly required to generate employable

graduates who can fit in the sector, compete in the global labour market, or create work for themselves. The preparation of students for future employment is seen by many students and society as one of higher education's most important functions (Benedict.M & Peter. N 2023). According to (Barrett, Bowman, Singe & Kilbourne, 2022), having a degree enhances a person's professional chances and prospective earnings despite the rise in graduates entering the workforce. Therefore, it makes sense that in order for students to find lucrative employment after graduating from school, they must have the talents and qualities that employer's value. This highlights any connections that might exist between receiving a university degree and finding work (Benedict M & Peter.N 2023).

(Benedict. M & Peter. N, 2023) further hold that, the ability of students to transit from higher education to the workforce has become one of the main functions and obligations of institutions. The challenges that universities must overcome, particularly in light of the rising enrolment, the high youth unemployment rate, and the level of competition in the global labor market, are the relevance of university curricula and how these curricula can increase the employability of their graduates. Data from UNESCO show that enrollment in tertiary education increased significantly over the past 20 years, from 68 million students in 1991 to 151 million students in 2008. At the same time, as noted in the ILO's Global Employment Trends Reports, the financial crisis that started in 2008 has led to an increase in unemployment. In 2010 there was 6.2 percent of people worldwide without a job, up from 5.6 percent in 2007. The employment crisis continues to have the greatest impact on young people, as seen by the 74.8 million unemployed in 2011, a rise of more than 4 million since 2007. However, several nations are reportedly unable to provide enough jobs to accommodate the expansion in the working-age population, according to UNESCO (2009). If nothing is done to stop this tendency, a generation of young, productive employees will face an uncertain future. Universities must provide their students with the skills they need to enter the workforce and develop their ability to meet certain workplace needs if they are to increase their chances of getting respectable jobs that are compatible with their degree and training. (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023)

According to (Benedict.M & Peter. N,2023), there have been attempts in Cameroon to solve the problem of employability by considering youth employment as one of the foremost policy concerns. The government in 2011 showed readiness to strive for better integration of youths in the work force in the gigantic attempt to employ twenty five thousand youths, yet the recruitment was hardly skill oriented and many university graduates were recruited into

jobs that did not reflect what they studied in the university and or are less than their level of education and training, especially in terms of financial returns. This situation leads to underemployment which in itself, is a form of unemployment and does not really solve the problem of employability of higher education graduates. According to African Economic Outlook, (2012), this government action is expected to produce results in the short and medium term, but is this enough to sustainably solve the problem of graduate unemployment and employability? The government also currently intensified efforts in this regard through the drafting and implementation of the youth plan (2009 – 2013), which aims at rendering operational the youth policy adopted in 2006. Despite all these efforts, unemployment and underemployment still persist. (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023). According to the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) (2009), unemployment rate in Cameroon stands at about 13% and underemployment at about 75.8%. Besides, the last national survey of employment revealed that unemployment among people with higher education qualifications is above 13% compared to 9% for those with secondary school qualifications. The average age of young unemployed people with higher education qualifications is 12.9. Most (59%) are first time job seekers; unemployment in this category is generally long-term since 56% of those in this group have been unemployed for more than one year (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023) The average length of unemployment is 34.3 months (African Economic Outlook, 2012). As opined by (Benedict.M & Peter.N 2023), it is therefore evident that inadequacy between employment and training remains problematic and a call for concern.

This study therefore aims to find out the extent to which professionalization of BMD courses in higher education institutes in Cameroon, can influence this problem of employability of graduates. It will focus on the idea that while academic credentials are important, companies place just as much, if not more, value on job seekers' abilities and attitudes. Employment is not assured by a high-grade point average alone. Therefore, it is essential for graduates to develop the traits that employers value most. These include the following: drive, the capacity to think creatively, communication and problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to operate both independently and collaboratively. Graduates who are expected to work in a wide range of industries and positions over the course of their careers must also be eager to acquire new technology and always want to update and enhance their abilities. Employers may decide to give them a job offer if they exhibit any of these traits. Universities therefore have the daunting task of preparing students for a changing

world by improving their knowledge and skills to meet the demands of employers and the realities of the workplace (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023).

Since graduates's employability is seen as a potent tool for enhancing the caliber of human capital, its development has become a priority for universities and national governments all over the world. Due to increased graduate unemployment, inadequate job preparation, and employers' unhappiness with graduate skill development, concerns about graduate employability in Cameroon have been voiced repeatedly over the past 20 years (Benedict.M & Peter. N,2023). These worries have intensified as a result of the modern labour market's shifting demands and structures, which are defined by a sharp rise in global trade as well as private, joint-venture, and foreign direct investment (FDI) organizations (Ngwa & Ngonba, 2020; Nghia & Tran, 2020; Nghia, 2019; Nguyen, Tran & Le, 2019; Tran, Ngo & Nguyen, 2018a; Tran, ThanhPhan & Marginson, 2018b; Anwar & Nguyen, 2014). Graduates with the abilities to function well in a socialist, multi-sectoral market economy are highly sought for.

Cameroon also needs more competent human resources with a strong command of English to operate not just in a more "internationalized" local labour market but also in the region and throughout the world due to the country's rising demand for regional and global participation and rivalry (Ngwa & Ngonba, 2020; Tran et al, 2018a; Tran et al, 2018b). In response to the critical need to enhance graduate employability in accordance with the new demands of the labor market and to improve the quality of higher education in general, major higher education reforms have been implemented since the early 2000s (Ngwa & Ngonba, 2020).

A significant portion of higher education's focus in recent years has been on the employability of graduates. Although employability may be viewed as too limited and focused on graduate success in the context of this study, potentially restricting the role of higher education as a direct facilitator of labor market demands, it is impossible to avoid when discussing competence development (Nyenty.S,2023). Employability has been presented as an aspect of quality of Higher Education and as a benefit of university academic programmes for career and work (Storen & Aamodt, 2010). Employability for graduates is not a novel concept. According to McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), employability has changed historically from the turn of the 20th century. The idea has shifted from a mechanical, deterministic, and dichotomous perspective to multifaceted humanistic goals, claims Nyenty

S. (2023). The evolutionary perspective of the concept compares well with the evolution of human resource management concerns theory from Taylor's Scientific Management in 1930 towards newer paradigm focusing on individual needs, motives and network organisations reflecting the problems and realities of increasingly segmented labour markets (Choo & Bontis, 2002). Another evolutionary perspective on employability in line with the above is described by Thijssen et al., (2008). They provide a framework for identifying general growth by describing the events at the individual, business, and societal levels. They explained how the idea has mostly been applied historically. In the 1970s predominantly for resolving problems with school leavers and underprivileged people with political ambitions to attain full employment and cut public losses; in the 1980s for restructuring companies with corporate ambitions to attain efficient human resource management and, in the 1990s for individual as motives for developing successful career opportunities in segmented and ever more flexible labour market (Nyenty, S 2023).

As opined by (Nyenty. S 2023), narrowing the issue of employability down to the probability of getting any job after graduation becomes insufficient for the development of Higher Education management systems and policies. Employability of graduates in the context of this study is not only about getting any job after graduation but it also capitalizes on graduate's ability to create jobs for themselves (selfemployment). In the context of this study, employability of graduates encompasses more than just landing a job after graduation; it also takes use of the graduates' capacity to generate work for themselves (selfemployment). Concurrently, Higher Education Institutions are to respond to the differentiating demand by offering courses beyond the main-stream (Weligamage, 2009). The goal of employability is to guarantee a solid and safe connection between higher education and outside practice. Higher education institutions are criticized for a number of reasons, including their main objectives, curriculum design, execution, assessment, length of programs offered, expense of education, and linearized learning. HEIs are expected to respond to societal transformations for their continued successful service (Nyenty.S,2023) To Overtoom (2000), employability is a set of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce workforce that is productive, but according to Griffin and Annulis (2013), this goes hand in hand with individuals who possess strong characteristics such as high sense of self, who are innovative, skillful, competitive, have a strong sense of determination, and are creative in facing the challenges of the nation as well as globalization in the 21st century. The expansion of Higher Education and the Bologna Process have reframed the

political debate and placed the smooth transition from school to work and the employability of graduates at the forefront of education policy (Schomburg & Teichler, 2011). Higher education is therefore expected to prepare graduates for the workforce, and universities must adhere to employability norms (Nyenty.S,2023).

### **Employability Skills**

A significant amount of research has been done in recent years regarding the employability skills that students need to learn in order to land and maintain entry-level positions. The majority of these research have examined how workers view the workplace competencies required to keep entry-level positions. Does a student who has successfully fulfilled the criteria of a higher education possess the abilities that employers most need? This is the phenomenon of interest in this study. One of the main forces driving industrial efficiency and the implementation of tactics to enhance production, service, and product quality is competition (Mohamed Noor, 2013).

Because strategies require worker collaboration and teamwork, employers need creative, flexible workers who have a broad range of interpersonal and managerial skills (Mustapha & Abdullah, 2000). According (Mohamed Noor,2013), Past research revealed that employers looked for certain skills, behaviours and attitudes in their potential employees. Many employers preferred employees who were motivated, possessed basic skills, and had satisfied higher performance standards; who could adapt through the use of creative thinking and problem solving skills, who possessed effective personal management skills, had interpersonal, negotiating and teamwork skills that made them effective work group members, and could influence others to act through leadership skills, and had individual responsibility, self management and integrity (SCANS, 1991).Employability, the ability of graduates to gain employment appropriate to their educational standard, was the focus of the Dearing Inquiry into higher education (Dearing, 1997).

Employability was highlighted as a concern for employers, and was the focus of a major study (Harvey et. al., 1997) that was used to inform the Dearing Inquiry into graduate education. As a result, employability became a concern for both the graduate school providers and the graduates themselves, who would stand to gain the most from being employable. Employability is an issue of direct concern to students (Mohamed Noor,2013). The prime motivation in attending university for the majority of students is not to study a

particular subject in depth, but to enhance their employment status (Stewart and Knowles, 2000).

Mohammed Noor (2013) asserts that graduates have a larger requirement to periodically improve and increase their employability abilities. Employability also means that those possessing the capability to acquire the skills to do the required work may not necessarily be able to do the work immediately and without further training (Cox and King, 2006).

As they attempt to make their organizations more flexible and adaptable to the shifting demands of the market, employers are searching for workers who are more flexible and adaptable (Mohamed Noor, 2013). As quoted in a newspaper article (New Straits Times, 2005), the Human Resources Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Wira Dr Fong Chan Onn highlighted the fact that 30,000 Malaysian graduates had only managed to get casual and temporary work such as being cashiers and restaurant workers because of their poor English proficiency. This element prevents graduates from improving in their positions, which lowers their chances of having improved career possibilities, particularly when it comes to landing employment that are related to their careers (Mohamed Noor, 2013).

According to (Mohamed Noor;2013) The Multimedia Development Corporation Malaysia conducted a survey among Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) Malaysia status companies and found that respondents perceived Malaysian ICT graduates to be 'average'. The graduates were generally good team players and had good learning ability; however, their major weakness was their communication skills. In a poll of Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) Malaysia status enterprises, the Multimedia Development Corporation Malaysia discovered that respondents thought Malaysian ICT graduates were "average." The grads' communication skills were their main shortcoming, despite the fact that they were generally good team players and had good learning abilities.

According to a Malaysian survey, graduates' lack of the appropriate degree is the main cause of their unemployment. While graduates with degrees in engineering and other sciences are still in high demand, other graduates with particular qualifications are already widely available. Another reason is that graduates with a degree no longer automatically qualify for getting their first job (Chang, 2004). Rather, the most knowledgeable and skilled graduates in their field of study are hired first. Additionally, the business sector is become increasingly competitive, and computerization has made it easier to measure work

performance. Managers will only want to hire individuals who can contribute to the success of the team, claims Mohamed Noor (2013). Employers value effective communication and interpersonal skills, such as the ability to solve problems, articulate ideas, explain issues and problems, speak up constructively, resolve problems, comprehend issues and problems faced by businesses, and develop practical solutions to problems. Therefore, employees are expected to contribute from day one of being hired. (Chang, 2004); while there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a broad understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills and knowledge constitute employability both in general, and specifically for graduates. Employers demand that graduates exhibit a variety of broader skills and traits, such as teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, and managerial ability, in addition to the technical and discipline-specific competencies they expect from their degrees.

The CBI contributed to the discussion on employability in their report, 'Time well spent: Embedding employability in work experience', (CBI 2007). Employability abilities are described as having a positive outlook, managing oneself, working in a team, being aware of business and customers, solving problems, communicating and being literate, applying numeracy, and using information technology. Whether a graduate has "a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, an openness to new ideas, and a drive to make these happen," the CBI emphasizes that having a positive attitude is a critical component of employability. They point out that businesses favor graduates that exhibit an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset as well as creative thinking that questions preconceived notions and offers new views (Mohamed Noor, 2013). Quoting (Mohamed Noor, 2013) Employability skills are the abilities that practically everyone needs to perform nearly any work, according to the UKCES report "The Employability Challenge" (2009a), which is based on the most often used definitions of employability. These are the abilities that a person needs in order to use the more specialized knowledge and technical skills that their unique workplace will demand.

In a response to that B-HERT paper, Queensland University stated: The university considers that graduate attribute support can be found in both the planning curriculum (the goals, learning outcomes, assessment program and learning activities planned for students) and the enacted curriculum (the process and content of the learning experienced by students)' (B-HERT News 2003).

The graduates' employability skills that we used for this study were drawn from (Mohamed Noor, 2013). We chose to present them under these headings for the sake of clarity: Problem Solving, human, information, communication and Technology, personal organisation, leadership and communication skills as follows:

**Problem Solving and Adaptability Skills:**

- Identify other ways to achieve the goal.
- Tracks progress toward goals in high-risk endeavors.
- Recognizes possible adverse consequences while taking risks into account.
- Capable of adapting to various situations, they take reasonable risks connected to their employment.
- Capable of handling ambiguity, preferring to take on new tasks and responsibilities
- Capable of recognizing and proposing several approaches to accomplish objectives and finish tasks.
- Flexible enough to adjust to changes.
- Adapts to changing circumstances.
- Change is started in order to increase production.
- The individual is innovative, offers ideas to enhance the work, and collects data to solve issues.
- Identifies practical solutions to issues.
- Effective at settling disputes with other people.
- Resolves issues without seeking help from others.
- Identifies issues and offers innovative solutions to them.

**Human Skills:**

- Enjoys working in groups or the give-and-take policy.
- Willing to adhere to the group's standards and conventions.
- Takes pleasure in working as a group.
- Easily gets along with others.
- Collaborates well with others.
- Prioritizes team objectives over personal ones.
- Collaborates with coworkers.
- Capable of hearing what others have to say.
- empathizes with other people.

- Effectively communicates with others.

#### **Information, Communication and Technology Skills:**

- Internet-based ICT expertise.
- Knowledge of ICT in word processing.
- ICT proficiency with email.
- ICT proficiency with spreadsheets.
- Using ICT to manage presentations

#### **Personal Organization:**

- Graduates' capacity for effective time management.
- able to fulfill deadlines.
- Capable of fulfilling specified requirements while carrying out a task.
- Finish tasks in a comprehensive way.
- Capable of setting priorities and making the greatest use of time and resources for the firm.
- Capable of being on time for job.

#### **Leadership Skills:**

- Provides others with direction and guidance.
- have the capacity to guide others.
- Capable of assigning tasks to others.
- Capable of inspiring people to strive toward shared objectives.
- Willing to assume responsibility and ownership for the work.

#### **Communication Skills:**

- Effective presentations are made.
- Possess the ability to convince others with a strong logical argument.
- Capable of verbally communicating concepts to a group or to an individual.

#### **Measuring employability**

As stated by Knight and Yorke (2002). The terms employable and employment are not synonymous. To them, when we talk of employability, we are just concerned with employment or just talking about developing the skills that many employers want to see in graduates recruited (Fossimock.B,2017). In addition, Hallet (2012) says that, employability is involved with a much broader development of students into graduates who feel ready to

prepare for what life holds for them beyond university, “it is refreshing to think that life might grow into something broader than a particular set of skills and competences into a richer idea of graduate readiness... (p.30). Meanwhile, employment is mostly the relationship between two parties usually based on contract where work is paid for, where one party is which may be a corporation, for profit, not-for-profit, organisation, co-operative or other entities is the employer and the other is the employee. Employability is best measured in terms of outcome of the recent graduate’s employment rates and as an institutional achievement. Individual employability implies the propensity for a graduate to get a job (Fossimock.B,2017) According to (Flanders, 1995), as cited by Harvey (2000), this involves different indicators like :

### **The Job Type**

For some, this means landing a graduate-level position; for others, it means landing a job that "requires graduate skills and abilities," "fulfilling work," or is "career-oriented."

### **Timing**

In this case, employability is indicated by landing a job within a certain period of time after graduation or before retraining is required.

### **Graduates attributes**

This implies that graduates have and are able to demonstrate these attributes in order to get a job and the employers are fully aware of the effective attributes that are necessary for effective functioning of their organisations (Harvey, 2001). Programs of study closely associated to learning in practical settings that are directly relevant to future work are offered by faculties such as medicine, journalism, and basic teacher training. However, the majority of programs in philosophy, literature, and social science are not directly related to particular jobs. Nevertheless, in those areas that do not include statutory professional practice employability is, in some cases, built into programmes through devices such as placement opportunities, employer-linked projects, visits and work-shadowing ( Fossimock.B,2017). In employability measurement, the following indicators are most appropriate: Institutional effectiveness (by the proportion of graduates who gain employment), institutional effectiveness might be indicated by an audit of developmental opportunities of the institution, the survey of graduates satisfaction with their program of study and the extent to which it prepares them for the job market (Harvey et al. 1996). Employability is also assessed at the employer level, claims Fossimock (2017). Harvey makes the assumption that the hiring

process for graduates may be founded on a logical evaluation of each person's rational qualities, in which case hiring graduates may be viewed as a surface-level indicator of their employability and, to a lesser extent, of the institution's employability enhancement initiatives. This however may be influenced by some factors which mediate employment such as: type of higher education institution, mode of study, students location and mobility, subject of study, previous work experience, age, gender, ethnicity and social class ( Brennan et al. 1996). These metrics either encourage or deter employers from hiring graduates.

### **The Curriculum in Schools**

In any country, one of the most important instruments for bridging the gap between higher education and the labor market is the curriculum. It is a written document designed to serve as the main starting point for instruction in schools. It is much more than a time table and a description of subject matter to be taught (Fossimock.B,2017). It lays down the principal objectives of teaching, the attitudes to be developed in the learners, the skills, and the organization of teaching (Henchey,1989) In educational planning in Cameroon Universities, the various subjects implemented and taught to the learners are decided following the objectives and goals of the policy makers, which possibly have a political influence. According to Fonkeng (2006; p. 297) Most often, it is a one round political ideology purporting to bring about change in a yet politically conditioned school system. Since ministers who make decisions about these programs are politically selected, the impact of politics on Cameroon's educational system is evident.

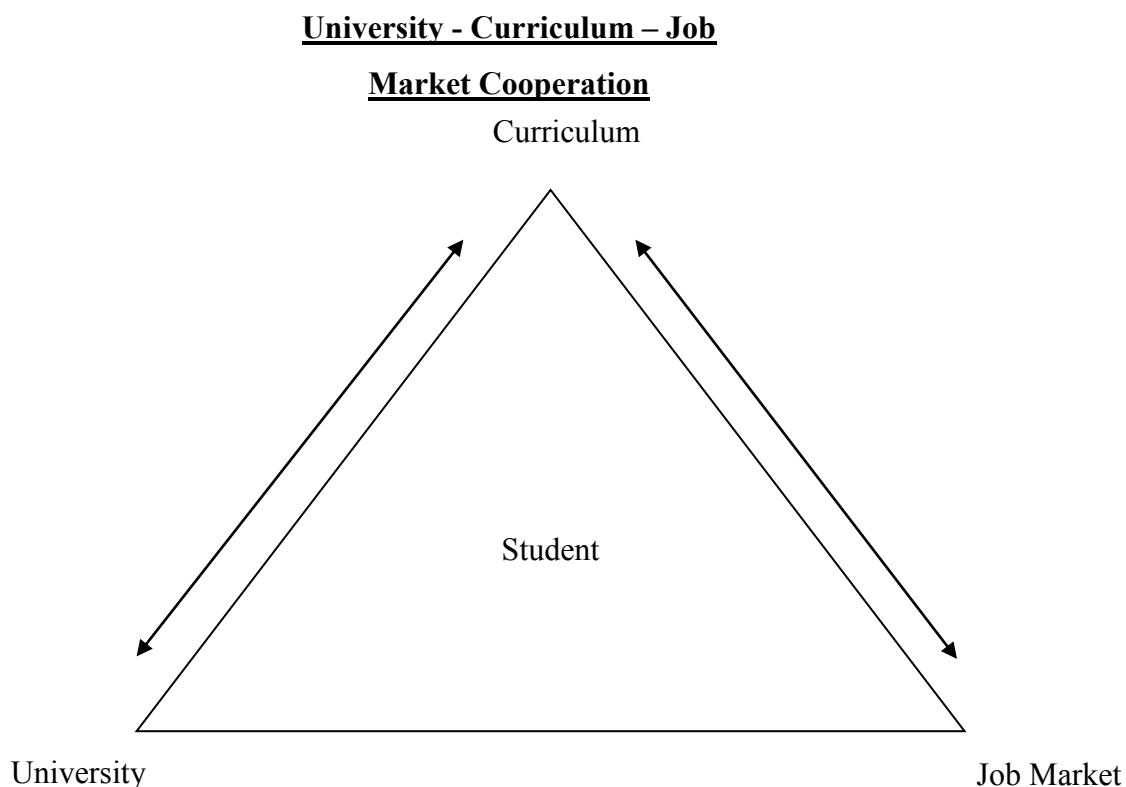
Tanyi (2016) affirms this fact in the following words The greatest influence on our educational system is that which is brought about by the dogmatic attitudes of our educational planners through educational system which is based more on the socio-political activities. In other words, when new ministers are appointed, a new education policy is introduced, and the dismissal likewise ends with that policy. Most of the time the appointed minister are not from the teaching cohort so they hardly know the problem of education. (Tanyi, 2016).

According to Fossimock (2017), the policies, curriculum, pedagogy, staff, and even the institution's infrastructure are all negatively impacted by this disjointed structuring of the educational system. Both the teaching core and the students' ethical principles and attitudes may be impacted by this. An unfavorable environment for quality and skill learning is also created by poor knowledge transfer brought on by a lack of a university lecturer training program or an aptitude test to evaluate the lecturer's abilities, as well as carelessness with

school infrastructure (a university nowadays without an I.T. space, flushing toilets, very limited portable water points, etc.).

This has recently masterminded school dropouts, poor quality learning and unemployment as stated by World Bank (2007). This behavior is particularly annoying in Cameroon, where 20 families appear to pool their meager funds to send their kids to college with the hope that they will end up saving the family. Regretfully, the courses taken in college are less competent and focused on the workforce, the policies implemented are theoretical rather than practical, the infrastructure is neglected, and after graduation, the children are unable to find employment to support their families. Higher education courses are not designed with the labor market in mind. With students at the center of all choices, this is accomplished through collaboration between the state (the policy makers), the job market (employers), and universities. This can be demonstrated in fig 1 below. (Fossimock. B, 2017).

**Figure 1: University Curriculum Job Market Cooperation**



**Source (Fossimock.B 2017)**

According (Fossimock.B,2017) the diagram above, presents the state as the overall controller of all decisions for the economy. In order to understand the changes, demands, and

aspirations of the labor market at a given time, policymakers consult employers during the education planning process through in-person meetings, interviews, or questionnaires. In Cameroon, this technique is still in its infancy. The lack of cooperation between employers and university planners makes it difficult for graduates to find work or create one. In an effort to combat youth unemployment, the Cameroonian government established the National Employment Fund (NEF) in 2006. This organization's goals include acting as a middleman between companies and job seekers, funding training, encouraging the growth of microbusinesses and students, and sharing job market information. The Graduates Employment Program (GEP), or PED as it is known in French, was established by NEF. PED is a pre-employment program that was established in 2007 with the goal of integrating graduates without work experience or skills into the production domain while they are looking for employment. After a year of training graduates in various sectors with benefits, NEF follows up to make sure the taught individual has a job. [www.fnecm.org](http://www.fnecm.org).

It should be mentioned that the NEF and the University of Yaoundé I do not have a direct cooperation. As a result, the issue facing graduates is not instantly resolved because NEF only collaborates with the labor market and does not care what the university produces or teaches. If NEF and the university collaborated, the skills that NEF or the labor market require would be incorporated into the planning process. Graduates of the three-year university program would be prepared for positions that NEF would provide as a middleman. A body called PRIDES (Parole Regionaleauxd'Innovation et de Development Economique Solidaires) was also established by the School, University and Vocational Counseling Pilot Centre/Center Pilote D'Orientation Scolaire et universitaire et Professionnelle (COSUP). Its purpose is to bring together small and medium-sized businesses, research libraries, training facilities, associations, and economic vacations that share similar values and areas of focus.

These will produce jobs and provide opportunities for young people to train for the jobs that are available. This program is too slow or immature to have a significant impact on institutions, which regrettably produce a lot of graduates. This is most likely the reason the program is ineffective and the unemployment rate among Cameroonian university graduates continues to rise. Regarding Cameroon's higher education, it is likely that the policy makers never focused on the labor market (employers) to understand and incorporate into the planning recent changes, such as the technological advancements that have dubbed this century "the android generation," and they never came up with a way to require graduates of these faculties to take a test of some technological skills in addition to other skills like

problem-solving, managerial, communication, and creativity, and pedagogical, to mention a few.

Graduates cannot select or establish employment on their own without these abilities. This maintains raising Cameroon's unemployment rates, encouraging underemployment, and giving the younger generation a hazy future while they are being utilized as test subjects by regular degree holders and school dropouts under the guise of "teaching." Due to unemployment and 25,000 mass hires that were made nationwide in 2012, this practice is widespread in both state and private institutions. It should be mentioned that both the public and private sectors are involved in Cameroon's labor market. Consequently, as the state plays a significant role in hiring Cameroonian residents, it ought to be part in the consultation process. To the detriment of Cameroonians, the state predicts what kind of development project will be undertaken in the near future, but young people are never taught in that field, and specialists are recruited from elsewhere at exorbitant costs. For example, these costly outsiders are responsible for the construction of bridges, stadiums in Limbe and Douala, hydroelectric dams at Loum, M'Evele, Lom Pangar, and Menchum, and many more projects that might have been completed at reasonable costs by skilled Cameroonians. Because they were unable to acquire the necessary skills and practice in school, graduates are left to serve and work in their country as second-class citizens.

The concepts of online study, online business, online banking, and computer use are neither luxuries nor scientific in nature. These technological talents are essential for all living things in the twenty-first century. These skills scarcely exist in the curricula of universities; unemployment is therefore bound to own the day.

### **Curriculum Content as a Determinant of Professionalisation of Courses in Higher Education for Graduates' Acquisition of Employability Skills**

Most vocations today require higher skill levels due to changes brought about by the shift to a knowledge economy. Therefore, it is difficult for nations hoping to transition to the knowledge economy to implement changes that will improve the quality of education and instruction through modifications to pedagogy and content. The skills and experiences gained by graduates through college curriculum are sometimes not sufficient for entry-level positions (Pauw, Bhorat, Goga, Mucube, Oosthuizen, & Van der Westhuizen, 2006). In a study carried out by Etomes (2019) findings revealed that (67.8%) of employers noted that University academic programmes do not prepare graduates for employment with majority of

the employers stated that Cameroon Higher Education system is too theoretical, too examination oriented and lack technical skills. According to this survey, 96.4 percent of businesses strongly believe that academic programs at universities need to reform, and the the university system of instruction is not entrepreneurially focused, they explained.

According to Mantz, Yarke and Knight (2012), good learning and employability intention needs to be supported by learning, teaching and assessment approaches that are consistent with curricular intentions. Davies (2002) opined that programme and their curriculum should be designed with employability policy in mind. In the Cameroonian context, professionalisation of Higher Education is defined as a strategy to modernize curriculum and its related technologies (teaching and learning) to socio-professional needs and applicability (Doh, 2012).

Diverse opinions have been expressed on professionalization as the cornerstone of higher education. In light of this, and in accordance with the Draft Document on Sector Wide Approach to Education (2006), the remainder of the Cameroon educational system suffers from both a lack of adaptability to scientific and technological advancements and inadequacy between the teaching program and the requirements of a productive system, with the exception of the primary level programs, which were developed using a competent approach with which many people were still at odds.

According to Nyenty (2023), this explains why the system's products have trouble integrating into the production sector. Once more, Nyenty.S.2023) using the Draft Document on Sector Wide Approach to Education (2006) in Cameroon, there is a plan to create an efficient cooperation in order to increase the quality of our academic programs in its objective .Studying the actual demands of the labor market was the first step in improving the framework and mechanism of consultations between the educational, socioeconomic, and professional environments for the development of curricula that included the aspects of self-employment and non-salaried employment.

In response to this 20% of every course was supposed to be professionalise as cited by Titanji (2016). Citing the research work of Mbah (2014), one of the endogenous factors responsible for graduate unemployment was the absence of course relevance. It is concerning that our curriculum for HE education programs does not address practical skills. Even in academic programmes so called “professional” there is a high degree of theory with little or no practical skills addressed (Nyenty.B,2023). In addition to revealing students’ desire to see

University Education as relevant to local and global markets, Mbah (2014) study suggested that such relevance can be enhanced when practical components are associated with curriculum of each academic programme. More practical components must to be incorporated into university curricula.

Engaging students in practical activities tends to give them the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in a real world or practical situation and this has the potential to prepare them for life after studies (Nyenty.B 2023). According to Dewey (1938), experience enhances learning by promoting reflective and critical thinking. The moment has come for our higher education system to change dramatically by modernizing its curricula to increase the likelihood that graduates will find employment or start their own business. Butcher et al. (2011) said that the best way to get started is by enhancing curriculum of Higher Education academic programmes. In actuality, universities engage with socio-professional actors through research and teaching partnerships, business forums, and student internships. However, it may appear that these interactions are still in their early stages, and the full advantages have not yet materialized. The basic assumption of policy makers is that Higher Education ought to play a decisive role in society and contribute to sustainable growth and job creation (COM, 2011). Therefore, Higher Education Institutions should be aware of the needs of the economy and subsequently adjust their curriculum to ensure greater compatibility (Nyenty.S 2023).

The professionalization of academic programs in higher education for graduates' acquisition of employability skills is determined by infrastructure resources. According to Bhola and Dhanawade (2017), inadequate infrastructure provided by institutions and universities causes additional difficulties prior to graduates' employability. Cameroon's public universities are not exempt from this problem; they too struggle with a lack of resources to adequately support the caliber of instruction provided to students so they can develop the necessary employability skills. School buildings, libraries, classrooms, computer centres, technology, machinery, tools, laboratories and equipment are education infrastructures which are crucial elements of learning environment in schools and Universities (Janssen, 2017). Janssen (ibid) said there is strong evidence that high quality infrastructural resources facilitate better instruction, improves students' outcomes, reduces dropout rates and among other benefits. Within the context of professionalizing, HE programmes; the importance of adequate and well-equipped infrastructural resources cannot be over emphasized. Inadequate infrastructural resources in universities are an out-and-out

key factor in effective teaching and learning. In conformity with this, education stakeholders at the level of university need to invest financially to bring about the improvement in infrastructural resources (Nyenty.S ibid). Bhunia, Kumar and Duary (2012) said when there are adequate infrastructural resources; the individuals (teachers) will be able to carry out their job duties in an appropriate manner that will lead to progression of educational institutions. As a result of this, the government of Cameroon in the quest to provide quality training to students in HEIs need to ensure that they bring about improvements in infrastructural facilities on a continuous basis. While the 1993 reforms in Cameroon prescribed that Universities should admit students depending on available infrastructural resources (laboratories, libraries, teaching materials and classroom space) as well as available human and financial resources), the demand for university education in Cameroon is continue to increase which super pass even investments in infrastructural resources (Nyenty.S ibid).

Although public Universities in Cameroon have the autonomy to set their own in-take levels, they are under enormous social and political pressure to admit students in excess of these capacities (Nyenty.S ibid). Jonathan and Kayode (2010) opined that one imperative infrastructural aspect that needs to be vigorously developed is the educational infrastructural resources. University's infrastructural resources are aimed to support enable and enhance the work of its faculty, staff, and students. In the quest professional training, is vital for the government to first address the issue of large class size which compromise teaching quality, assessment standard and teaching method. The issue of large class size is not new to public Universities in Cameroon. It started far back in the late 80s due to limited infrastructure and this issue was one of the objectives of the 1993 reforms which aimed to be addressed. However, despite the 1993 reforms and 2001 law of orientation of Higher Education in Cameroon, the same situation of inadequate infrastructure still prevails due to the increasing demand for Higher Education in public Universities. Professionalisation of programmes in Higher Education in Cameroon will be difficult to realize if materials/physical resources for sustainable teaching and learning are not adequately addressed across faculties/schools/colleges. No school can operate in a vacuum. The buildings, furniture, teaching aids, and several other materials are vital especially in the professionalisation of Higher Education programmes to empower students with skills for employability.

## Changes in Higher Education and Employability

There is a wealth of literature on the subject of how higher education is evolving to meet shifting employer demands. Higher education institutions have come under pressure to discover ways to include employability into the curricula as a result of the changing nature of the economy and its impact on the labor market. The role of higher education as a whole is affected by these developments in the economy and labor market (Ou & Zhao, 2022; Drenzo&Greenhaus, 2011), market pressure, technical innovation, and globalization have prompted firms to come up with fresh and creative approaches to managing their human resources. Ou& Zhao (2022) claim that because these changes are happening so swiftly and frequently, employers are forcing their staff to adapt at the same rate. Employers have also changed what they are looking for in new hires and how they treat employees as a result of these developments. The first strategy is to identify employees with abilities and skills that are valuable to the business and help them become more employable by enrolling them in additional company-provided training programs (Gutiérrez-Santiuste, García-Segura, Olivares-García& González-Alfaya, 2022). The Assessment of Prior and Experimental Learning (AP(E)L) as a foundation and training method is another that is becoming more and more in demand. Establishing existing knowledge with new hires enables staff to avoid repetitive training and concentrate on their primary competencies (Krause, 2022).

The second approach is the constant exchange of personnel in order to acquire newly trained staff without the need to train them. This actually means that companies stay “lean” by avoiding long term contracts with employees that do not update their capabilities/ (Greenhaus, Callaman & Drenzo, 2008 cited in Drenzo&Greenhaus, 2011). This causes an upward turn in job loss and a downward turn in job stability (Krause, 2022), Companies turn to reduce the number of managers, discard unprofitable units, reduce noncore functions and rely on temporary and contract workers in order to keep skills and capacities consistent with company’s objectives eliminating the problem of maintaining less valuable employees. Small, Mc Phail & Shaw (2022) divides workers into four different classes; job satisfiers, flexible workers, career builders and franchise builders. He says that organizations prefer franchise builders and career builders in their effort to increase employees’ employability. Career builders are described as very loyal employees who plan on progressing upwards in the same company while franchise builders are workers who constantly change workplaces and focus on building a *personal brand* Drenzo & Greenhaus (2011), call these types of workers *boundary less workers*’ who work across inter-organizational boundaries and

improve their employability while doing so. This employability replaces job security, since it makes them more employable. These workers develop a proactive response to the environment, and have control over their employment option (Direenzo & Greenhaus, 2011).

From literature we also notice that economic changes do not only affect employers but how employees react to the environment as well. Bennett, Ananthram, Lindsay, Benati & Jevons (2022), states that in 1998, graduates were employed not by their area of expertise but also for their personal skills. In 2011, Khelifi (2022) claims that qualified employees are in demand, making them the ones to evaluate their employers, and not the opposite. He also states that the lack of job security makes graduates define their careers by profitability, not by vocation. Job turnovers are becoming more common. In order to explore their careers and develop a greater understanding of the environment, individuals constantly search for new employment opportunities, strengthening their values and capabilities (Direenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). The concern with employability has now become part of any level of education, since high school until post-graduation (Direenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). The constant changes require employees to constantly update their capabilities, driving them back to school in order to become more employable and 'marketable' (Nikravan, 2011).

The knowledge explosion of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with constant technological advances and quick changes in economy, are indications that higher education curricula have to be updated accordingly. The rapid changes in technological advances also cause the demand for specialized and more professional labour, driving individuals to return to universities and other professional higher education institutes in order to acquire the new technical and professional skills to improve their employability. The pressure on universities to embed employability in their curricula is growing, since universities are looked upon as producers of innovative and specialized knowledge that can become driving forces for national growth and prosperity (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). Economic and technological changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have given rise to expectations that higher education should become more complex, instead of building only academic knowledge, it is supposed to build personal traits and employability skills in students. This can be accomplished by different means.

Knight and Yorke (2003), suggest creating a work experience, entrepreneurship programme, improving careers advice and the use of portfolios as explained earlier in this literature review. This new turn of events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has caused many countries in the world and particularly in Africa to mainstream their higher education in their economic

development strategies. Examples of some African countries doing this are Malawi, Cameroon and Zambia in early 2000, which highlighted the use of higher education in employability and poverty reduction strategy papers. The high education budgets of Cameroon and Ethiopia saw significant increases to correspond to this new vision of higher education and economic development. This was reflected in Cameroon's current development document, the GESP of 2009. Again, according to (SupInfos, 2010, p. 7), one fact of the engagement and role of higher education in Cameroon seemed to be the necessity to increase the socio-economic, socio-professional and market-friendliness of the higher education curriculum as well as their restructuring and reorganization. This is mirrored in the "New University Governance Policy" (NUGP) (1.2), under the new university reforms along the BMD with the objective being that of professionalising higher education courses, with the aim of producing a skilled and innovative human capital that is more employable and able to herald the emergence of the nation in 2035. (Operational strategy of the NUGP up to 2010).

This Cameroonian effort to reposition higher education as a driver of economic development and a producer of skilled and knowledgeable human capital was earlier on corroborated by Harvey and colleagues (1997) cited by Knight & Yorke (2003), stating that employers search for knowledgeable, intelligent, willing to learn, self-managing, communicating, team-working and intrapersonal graduates, that investing in producing this kind of human capital by investing in good education is a requisite for sustainable development. A successful national economy is dependent on a highly-powered higher education sector. No wonder the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said "the University must become a primary tool for Africa's development in this new century". In the case of Cameroon, as has been elaborated above, there are increasing pressures on universities to produce skilled and knowledgeable graduates by establishing stronger mutually beneficial partnership with all stakeholders in the public and private sector.

On this point, Bloom et al., (2005) argue that if Africa is to someday maximize its economic potential under current constraints, then intensive investment in higher education is necessary to accelerate technological diffusion. They also postulate that there are mutually allied public and private benefits produced from an increased investment in higher education. Their contention is that "the private benefits for individuals are well established and include better employment prospects, higher salaries, and a greater ability to save and invest". These benefits may result in better overall quality of life.

Higher education graduates are likely to be more aware of and better able to use new technologies and by means of public and private channels, more likely to cultivate an entrepreneurial and innovative disposition in society, promoting research and development. The multiplier effect of higher education can potentially influence the quest of sustainable job-creating growth. On this point, Bloom et al. (2005) asserts that graduate's knowledge can also improve the skills and understanding of non-graduate co-workers, while the greater confidence and know-how inculcated by advanced schooling may generate entrepreneurship, with positive effects not only on employability, but on positive job creation.

But the critical and impending challenge for countries which have recorded unprecedented enrolment growth is now finding jobs for graduates. Despite the steady growth registered in the region for a while, the economic base to absorb the exploding graduate population still remains largely thin. Furthermore, a good number of employed graduates feel that they are underemployed and underpaid. Some experts advise that youth unemployment can be reduced if tertiary education institutions link up with productive sectors in curriculum development and in the so called 'open space activities. The tracer studies carried out by national authorities in Ghana and Namibia show that the greater the distance between classrooms imparted skills and skills required in the worlds of work, the higher the rate of graduate unemployment is likely to be (Mihyo, Hammond, Makhoka&Tjihenua, 2011).

In many countries, universities are engaging numerous stakeholders in designing, implementing and evaluating curricula. Others are consolidating university-industry linkages, among others to foster innovation and technology transfer. Others also are strengthening their entrepreneurship and internship dimensions. Still many others are talking about "job creating graduates" as opposed to *job seeking graduates*, in many cases without the requisite frameworks and support mechanisms. On the other hand, the issue of graduate employment is compounded by incompetent, unqualified and under-qualified and unemployable graduates (Kelly, Moore & Lyons, 2022).

Furthermore, the mismatch between labour market demands and practical knowledge and skills is rampant complicating the employment dynamics in the region. In Africa, governments continue to remain one of the largest, if not the largest, employers of professionals (and graduates) in their respective countries. And yet government positions have become considerably unattractive, especially for those with considerable intellectual prowess and entrepreneurial edge. Thus, even with considerable and meticulous planning, for

instance in curriculum development, the best graduates may not be attracted to the largest employer and job market consequently perpetuating the issue of mismatch. The impact of unemployment and underemployment in Africa is such that it is simply a time bomb waiting to explode with catastrophic social and political consequences for countries, the region and the world as a whole. The gravity of the challenge is bound to exacerbate due to high birth rate, burgeoning primary and secondary education, and ever-expanding tertiary education (Mihyo et al., 2011). Yet, Anna Tims (2011) thinks that the changes in higher education curriculum are worrisome to some professors who think that soon education will be confounded with training. Some university professors think that the traditional role of universities is to provide individuals with wisdom and therefore should not only be seen in terms of investment.

Tracing graduates has become an imperative among the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines. It plays a significant role in the academe. It provides feedback to the organization, evaluates the curriculum, and determines if the curriculum has been responsive to the community and industry. However, tracer studies may vary in their emphasis depending on the primary motivation of the institution. There have been tracer studies on employability (Melink, & Pavlin, 2009; Aspiring Minds, 2016; Domingo, 2013; Gedye & Beaumont, 2018; Baking, 2015; Woya, 2019; Javier, 2015; Boholano, 2012; Navida, 2017; Abarro, 2017; Napallaton & Baquiller, 2017). However, there is a scarcity of research on the employment status of graduates (Infante, Junco, & Marquez, 2014). One of these was our previous tracer that covered both the employability and employment status of the three batches of graduates (Caingcoy & Barroso, 2020). Much more, there is a need to establish an inventory of employability skills among graduates, including the adequacy of competencies acquired in college. The purpose is to constantly evaluate the curriculum and its responsiveness to job demands.

Literature shows that employability has been a serious concern among higher education institutions. It is a common knowledge that the longer each graduate waited to land a job, the more costly the lost opportunities are. International Monetary Fund (2020) reported the cost of joblessness. Accordingly, “unemployment imposes high costs on individuals, society, and country.” Its value is more than just financial. When prolonged, it may lead to one’s skepticism. Eventually, the value of education and training would lose among unemployed individuals (Simpson, 2020).

## **Theoretical Background**

Under this section, we shall be looking at the basic assumptions about the variables of the study. These assumptions will be rooted from known theories of the phenomenon under investigation. As such, we shall pay attention to some general theories that will be used to analyse the study's variables. In this light The Human Capital Theory which is the main theory of this thesis and other sub theories are examined:

### **The Human Capital Theory by Garry Becker (1983, 1993)**

The Human Capital Theory is the foundation of this study, as propounded by Gary Becker (1983, 1993) and other theorists like Mark Plaug and Mincer. These proponents of the human capital theory see people as assets that are invested in through education and training so that, after they graduate from school, their production can grow quantitatively and qualitatively in the labor market and industry. According to Becker, as one's degree of education, training, and experience rises, so does the likelihood of finding employment and income in particular. According to Becker and other proponents of the theory, the type and quality of education can provide skills that increase a person's employability and productivity (Mekuri-Ndimele, 2022). These human capital theorists contend that graduate employability, production levels, income, and poverty reduction all correlate with the type and quality of education received. In the context of this study, the BMD reform in selected higher education institutions in Cameroon received the lion's share of attention.

The Human Capital theory was founded with the aim of facilitating the formulation of higher education policies. It links economic success to the education of the workforce. According to Becker (1974), manpower or human resource should be trained to permit the graduates impact the skills in the economic sector of the economy in order to permit economic growth and development of the country. In this light, Knight, & Yorke (2014) affirmed that the development of employability in graduates has become a significant expectation that governments around the world have to varying extent impose on national higher education systems. According to Becker, expenditure on schooling and medical care and lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are human capital. This is because it raise they raise earnings, improve health and add to a person's good habits in the society. They are called human capital because people cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health or values in the way they can be separated from financial and material assets. In contribution to this, Allan Fisher in 1946 emphasised on the economic dimension of

educational policy and the need to consider as an instrument of economic policy. In his argument, he considers that human progress has been too much handicapped by the neglect of human capital, visibly in the limitation of imperfect system of education. This has created bottlenecks in the economic process due to scarcity of skill labour. Lack of skill labour is tantamount to unemployment and thus a fall in economic growth. According to Tafah et al. (2012), human capital measured by education and health impacts significantly and positively on economic growth. In this analysis, they showed that in a long run, 0.1 change in primary and secondary school enrolments will lead respectively to 0.7% and 0.39% in the growth of gross domestic products (GDP), the same way, a 1% change in life expectancy is expected to lead on average on a variation of 1.12% of growth. Considering the above statistics and the fact that Human Capital is still very limited in Cameroon, Tafah and others argue that H.C is an important source of growth and the authority needs to adopt policies to develop H.C in order to achieve the growing ambition of the country. According to Schultz (1960), H.C consist of all the accumulation of all prior investment in education, on the job training, health, migration and other factors that increase individuals' productivity and therefore earnings. Labourers have become capitalist, said Schultz, through the acquisition of knowledge and skills that have economic values. This knowledge and skills are in great part the product of investment and combined with other human investments to make a people productive in all dimensions. Schultz asserted that H.C.T helps us understand three main perplexing questions on economic growth;

- Firstly, consider the long period behaviour of the capital-income ratio. Schultz cancels the old believe that a country which amasses more reproductive capital relative to its land and labour would employ such capital in greater extend because of its growing abundance and cheapness. He proclaims that the estimates now available shows that less of such capital turns to be employed relative to income as economic growth proceeds.
- Secondly, why national income has risen more than the combination of land, personshours worked and the stock of human capital. The explanation to this lies in the return to scale to improve equality of input particularly the improvement of human capital to produce goods and services. 72
- He combined the two ideologies above to construct the third one known as the essentially unexplained large increase in real earnings of workers. He puzzled that can it be a windfall? Or a quitrent pending the arrangement of labour supply? Or a pure rent reflecting a fix amount of labour. One is made to understand here that it seems to

represent the return on investment made on human beings. According to Schultz, developing nations have perpetrated a misleading development doctrine, assigning primary importance to the formation of physical capital. This one-sided effort is on the way to meet the demands of the nation's economic growth. He therefore emphasised on H.C.T as an orthodox portion of the core of labour economics.

### **Significance of the theory to the study**

With cognizance to this theory, the University and private individuals should invest more on H.C. Contextual application of this theory to our study will encourage investments in specific areas like the school curriculum, educational policy, pedagogy, personal and infrastructure. These investments carry alongside technological skills, pedagogical skills, entrepreneurial skills, knowhow competencies be inculcated to the program of study. These permit these young people the double advantage of impacting the economic sector of the country and improving their standards of living and that of their families. The emergence of this theory brings to light the relationship between education and the economic activity, portraying how they both need each other. Research holds that, economy finances education, meanwhile education supports economies. The students in universities today will tomorrow become personals and form the human capital that the economy needs. Therefore, training is primordial to get them armed for the future challenges. Human capital theory becomes therefore an indispensable tool for this study. Moreover, this theory is significant to this study in the sense that Cameroon as a single developing country, needs to study and apply the relationship between Human Capital and growth. This is because Cameroon is in dire need of good growth performance in order to be able to meet the millennium development goals and of realizing its dreams of becoming an emerging economy by 2035 (Tefah et al. 2012). Therefore, H.C.T becomes vital tool for these dreams to be realized citizens will be filled with talents, ability and knowledge which are needed to boost the economic activities of the country. This theory through this research, will inculcate the desire to invest on H.C in both the state and private individuals, owing to its high returns. Investment in education and health are prerequisites of sustainable economic growth. More educated workers are efficient at work and earn higher than less educated workers. Meanwhile a healthy worker is more productive than a sick worker. This theory is also significant to this study as the economics of H.C will bring about particular dramatic changes in the incentives for more women to invest in H.E in Cameroon. It must not be only through women education but also through outside school training of workers, 74 on the job training and even formal or informal training

programs. Moreover, we cannot omit the influence of families on the knowledge, skills, health, values, and habits of their children. Parents affect educational attainment, marital stability, propensities to smoke and to get to work on time, and many other dimensions of their children's lives.

### **Outcomes of Human Capital Theory**

The approach to measuring of the non-market outcomes of education and of the social benefits including externalities is offered (Mchon 2000). According to Solow (1956) as cited in (Mchon 2000), the structural model indigenizes the key content of the classic model like population growth, saving rate, dissemination of technical changes and political stability as well as poverty an aspect of sustainability. Social outcomes; these are those that of primary interest to comprehensive economic development with sustainability. All are rather standard goals of economic development. According to Mchon, these standard goals are; health impact including greater longevity and reduced infant mortality, increasing democratization, human right and political stability, impacts of these in rates of investment in physical capital with feedback effect on economic growth, impacts on poverty reduction and reduction in inequality, implications of environmental sustainability and implications on homicides and property crimes rates. Externalities according to Mchon (2000) is the consequences of investments or an industry or any commercial activity which affects other parties without being reflected on the market price, for instance, pollution of the environment. It is also the cost or benefit that affects a party who did not chose to incur that cost or benefit. The government always prefers that companies should "internalize" all externalities so that the cost and benefits will affect mostly parties who chose to incur them. These externalities in H.C.T becomes more glaring in our society as its shows principally on the rate of unemployment amongst university graduates, the consequences of 73 poverty in our society as a result of unemployment, the inability of both the state and individuals to invest on H.C, the fall in Economic growth and GDP of the country and many others.

### **The Experiential Learning Theory by David Kolb (1984)**

The second framework theory in this investigation is David Kolb's (1984) interpretation of the experiential learning theory. Kolb makes the claim that knowledge is more easily learned through experience and situations relevant to one's job, drawing significantly on the writings of Dewey and Lewin (Kolb, Boyatzis&Mainemelis, 2014). This study, The Professionalisation of BMD Courses and Graduates'Employability is mostly

based on the premise that job-related content should be integrated into higher education curricula through internships and work placements. (Thomas, Barbas&Schnapp, 2022).

### **The Correspondence Theory (Bowles and Gintis)**

The Correspondence Theory, originally created by Bowles and Gintis and modified into the Neo Correspondence by Saunders and Machell (2000), was further used to demonstrate the correspondence between education and work. It was shown that the type and quality of education one receives has a direct or indirect impact on what one will do in terms of work after graduation.

### **Boundaryless Career and Employability Theory by Arthur (1984)**

Additionally, the Boundaryless Career and Employability Theory of Arthur (1984) was introduced to support the notion that graduates from higher education must be exposed to boundaryless or cross-sectional skills that cut across all faculties and disciplines, such as ICT skills and attitudes, in order to succeed in the rapidly changing and volatile labor market (Hewapathirana &Almasri, 2021).

### **Justification of the Study**

An underdeveloped country faced with the challenges of fast-growing population and youth's unemployment is vulnerable to uprising and terror among the growing population. The level of employment is fast growing, underemployment is at its peak and poverty, frustration is the order of the day among youths. This situation is influential enough to raise tension, social rift and political propaganda amongst youths in Cameroon. This situation needs to be checked on time and remedied in order to stamp out the growing tension among youths. This study targets this phenomenon, as it seeks to analyse the course, effect and propose practical solutions to rescue the graduates.

Educational planning is not a "one-man-show". It involves both the state and the whole society, job market to be precise. This study will bring to light the hidden suppose cooperation that should exist between the education system planners and the employers. Thus, graduates will find their place in the job market and the economy will advance, if the state considers the methods advanced in this research work

It may interest someone to know that the planning of an educational system is a determiner to the skilful readiness of human resources (manpower) which the employers most desire. Today, with the fast-growing nature of technology and renovations in various sectors,

any educational system that exists independent of the economic sector of that country is bound to remain poor with constant increase in unemployment rate. When you move around the streets of Yaoundé (Mfoundi division), you meet bachelor degree holders roaming the streets hopelessly. Some have engaged into various criminal activities like becoming cyber criminals, others prefer to become gays, thieves and all sorts of crimes in the society in the guise of putting food on the table. Others have turned to escape to other countries to struggle just to make ends meet. Many confess that after graduation, they could not find jobs to do, as jobs demanded specific skills which they lacked

This study is timely and contextually relevant as it seeks to ascertain why this high rate of unemployment amongst graduates from the University of Yaoundé I keep growing geometrically. The investments (cost) on education are high and returns upon completion are low or does not exist. These expected gains range from employments (well-paid jobs), meeting basic needs, selffulfilment and actualisation etc. In the case where these aspects cannot be achieved, such a system is a failure. Research has shown that the educational system applied in Cameroon Universities is a call for concern using the mother university, the University of Yaoundé I as a point of departure. These concerns should more or less capitalise on the school-to-job relationship which is the main purpose for which young Cameroonians enrol in higher education.

This research could equally be justified by the need to reshape the curriculum of the faculties to skill and job focus, the pedagogy to pedagogy for employability, the government's policy should be effectively grounded and as well tilted towards enlarge communion with the private employers or promoting the private sector to keep them up to the task and the increase in the scarce resources in this sector in order to enhance employment in the country.

A majority of people enrol in higher education primarily in order to graduate and obtain a job, promotion, or a new position (Ngwa&Ngonba, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial that universities provide their graduates with employment skills (Wittekind, Raeder & Grote, 2010). Despite the fact that universities all over the world produce a large number of graduates, the majority of them have trouble finding employment. This is due to a discrepancy between the skills they learned and the skill that companies are looking for (Baker & Henson, 2010). Youth unemployment is a global issue. Around 12.4 percent of people aged 15 to 24 worldwide were unemployed as at 2012, up from 12.3 percent in 2011,

according to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report from that year. With an estimated 73.4 million young people without jobs, the youth unemployment rate was projected to increase to 12.6 in 2013. Additionally; it is predicted to increase to 12.8% in 2018. According to the report, more than 60% of young people were either unemployed or stuck in low-paying occupations in six out of the 10 developing countries studied. Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, a recent World Bank report, observes that as youths now make up the majority of the population in most African nations, it is more important than ever to create chances for more productive employment. As stated in this report,

Africa in particular confronts demographic issues as its young population grows and access to stable employment remains difficult. Some young people may feel they have no choice but to join a criminal activity or armed combat since they have limited job opportunities and little hope for the future.

Given the significance of youth employment for the long-term economic growth of any country, as well as the role higher education institutions play in preparing these young people to enter the workforce as professionals with the necessary skills, this thesis looks into the key ways that professionalization in higher education could have a positive impact on graduates.

The problem of graduate employability seen through the lens of the employers is the propensity of graduates to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary for the future effective functioning of their organization (Harvey, Moon, Geall & Bower, 1997). Increasingly, graduates need to be more flexible in response to the growing number of career changes experienced throughout life for many people, because of the increase short-term contracts, part-time work, outsourcing, and home-working (Healy, Hammer & McIlveen, 2022). Siddique, Ahsan, Azizi & Haass (2022) has called this, new cohort of flexible experts.

Employment and employability do not mean the same thing. Being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace or the labour market as a whole. Employability from the perspective of higher education institutions is therefore about producing graduates who are capable to respond to the needs of the employers and industry and these impact upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra-curricula activities. Until such a time when university programmes and the quality of graduates they produce in Cameroon will reflect the needs of industry, the question of graduate employability will remain problematic. Although there is a high degree of consensus

amongst key stakeholders on the importance of addressing employability within higher education, the problem of how best this can be achieved and the extent to which universities can influence this aspect of student development still remains.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For many years now, Higher Education in Cameroon has witnessed several reforms. The primary drives of these reforms are to address the issue graduate unemployment. Article 4.1 of the 1998 law, in its section 2, it stated that education is to develop creativity, a sense of initiative and the spirit of enterprise in learners. Despite this, in the Sector Wide Approach (2006), it stated that only 37% of HE graduates are able to conveniently integrate into the job market. With the high rate of graduates' unemployment and the inability for many to conveniently integrate themselves in the labour market, there are several implications on the economic cost which involve reduction in gross domestic product of any nation, reduction in economic welfare, reduction in output and erosion of human capital potentials. Furthermore, with the high unemployment rate among graduates, personal and social costs as a result to the unemployment are also bound to occur which include severe financial hardship and poverty, debt, homelessness and housing stress, family tensions and breakdown, boredom, alienation, shame and stigma, increased social isolation, crime, erosion of confidence and self-esteem, the weakening of work skills and health.

From the perspective of Human Capital theory of Becker (1964), Universities are seen as a means of providing higher level of knowledge and skills within the population. However, for such to occur, there is need for a proper curriculum of academic programmes that fulfil standard for quality assurance to enable students acquire specialized knowledge and practicalise their training. Professionalisation of HE demands not only to design more programmes and call them professional but, it also needs adequate resources. Adequate resources permit quality teaching and training and ease transformative education and a good curriculum as well permit the acquisition of specialized knowledge, competences and skills.

Studies in institutions of Higher learning in Cameroon are in most cases not sufficiently responsive to the needs of individuals, society, industry and commerce. Graduates continue to find themselves alienated in front of government offices requesting jobs from government, showing signs of being inadequately prepared for adult life generally. The supply of education to the thousands that graduate each year from our universities has resulted in fear, frustration and despair rather than social satisfaction. This situation poses a

problem to: parents, government and the society at large. All these considerations emphasize the problem which this study attempts to investigate.

## **Objectives of the Study**

### **General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to find out how the professionalization of courses in higher education influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon.

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

1. To find out how government policy influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon.
2. To investigate the content of curricula and how it impinges on the employability of graduates in Cameroon.
3. To examine the teaching methods of higher education and how it shapes the employability of graduates in Cameroon.
4. To scrutinize the evaluation processes of higher education and how affects the employability of graduates in Cameroon.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed to enhance data collection and hypothesis development in order to carry out this study efficiently.

### **Main Research Question**

How does the professionalization of courses in higher education influence the employability of graduates?

### **Specific Research Questions**

1. How does government policy influence the employability of graduates in Cameroon?
2. Does the content of the curricula of higher education manipulate the employability of graduates in Cameroon?
3. How does teaching method shape the employability of graduates in Cameroon?
4. Can evaluation processes have an effect on the employability of graduates in Cameroon?

## **Hypotheses of the study**

### **General Hypothesis**

This work is built on the hypothetical premise that; the professionalization of courses influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon.

### **Specific Hypotheses of the Study**

1. Government policy influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon
2. The Contents of the curricula encroaches on the employability of graduates in Cameroon.
3. Teaching methods shapes the employability of graduates in Cameroon.
4. Evaluation processes has an effect on the employability of graduates in Cameroon.

### **Scope of the Study**

Geographically, the study was carried out in the centre region of Cameroon and the research conducted in the major city of Yaoundé, with most of the research carried out at the National Employment Fund (NEF); a placement agency that plays an intermediary role in the transition of most HE graduates from university to their first job. The rationale for choosing the NEF was because they carry out specific programs that target higher education graduates such as the Graduate Employment Program (PED) and the Support Program for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES). Through these two programmes, focusing on higher education graduates, we were able while on internship at the National Employment Fund, not only to participate in their professionalization seminars, but also to experience what takes place on the field.

We equally had the opportunity of being connected to their database of HE graduates who had successfully transitioned to the world of work after some professional training in the industry during the period between 2008-2013 in the centre Region and specifically in Yaoundé through the NEF. The NEF therefore served as a linking agency for us to get to the working graduates in a more orderly manner just as it served as a placement agency for them to get a job. Also, at the NEF it was possible for us to reach a good number of unemployed graduate jobseekers to fill out the questionnaires for the study. These job seekers come in their numbers daily in search of job opportunities. The choice of the centre Region and Yaoundé in particular was influenced by the fact that the researcher resides in Yaoundé, thus making Yaoundé, both cost and time effective.

### **Thematic Scope**

The research's primary focus was on the professionalization of higher education courses and how it affected graduates' employability. Government policy in higher education, curriculum components, pedagogical strategies, and evaluation procedures were operationalized as professionalization. The research was founded on the significant agreement among economists that a highly professionalized and competitive human capital can result in graduates' employability and have an impact on economic growth through good education.

The work was theoretically based on the framework of four main theories: The Gary Becker (1993) school of thought dominates our understanding of the human capital theory, which holds that people raise their value in the labor market by learning new skills and knowledge to increase their employability and financial rewards. The Experiential Learning Theory, as seen from David Kolb's standpoint, was a second important framework theory. According to Kolb's (1984) theory, learning that is helpful mostly occurs through experience in real-world or simulated work-related learning scenarios during the teaching and learning process. It presents examples of best practices to support the applicability of Kolb's theory in employability education in contexts of higher education.

The investigation of the correspondence theory conducted by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in their classic treatise on education, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradiction of Economic Life*, served as another source of inspiration. In short, according to Bowles and Gintis' beliefs, the conditions of schooling and the structure of social relations are more significant than the actual content of learning. By training young people for a sort of labor that matches their type of schooling, these conditions, which are hierarchical along social class lines, aid in the reproduction of structural inequality. The theory's Neo correspondence, created by Saunders and Machell in 2000 and with a specific focus on the Cameroonian context, was examined in this article. In fact, this thesis created a new dimension of this correspondence to offer it new meaning in the unique context of the higher education system in Cameroon.

In order to highlight the fact that old employment is being replaced by new ones in the 21st-century information economy and to represent the transition from production to knowledge and service systems, the notion of the boundaryless career and employability training in higher education was adopted. In order to be able to adapt their curricula and

produce graduates with boundaryless skills and attributes that can fit into this new knowledge in terms of professions that are boundaryless in nature, higher education must recognize these shifting conditions and demands in of the needs of multinational and large corporations that are characteristic of the knowledge economy labor markets.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study focuses on the professionalization of university courses and how they affect graduates' employability. It also conducts research on government policy, the curricula contents, teaching methods, evaluation processes, important employability skills and competencies, and the collaboration between universities and stakeholders in the labor market. The results of this study will have significant ramifications for education and training, so it would be of interest to university curriculum designers, employers, graduate, employees, human resource practitioners, researchers, and educators in fields related to human resource management/development and adult education. This significance of the study is therefore multifaceted.

Due to its location in the CEMAC region, it is significant to the Cameroonian government. In terms of Cameroon's plans to emerge as a country in 2035, it is crucial economically Graduate employability should as quoted by Tamrat, (2022, p. 8): become a more important issue for the institutions due to the changing nature of the graduate labor market, mass enrolment in higher education, pressures on student finance, competition in the process of gaining initial employment, and expectations of students, employers, parents, and government.

On a larger scale, it has been recognized that higher education significantly affects economic competitiveness on both the national and international levels through the creation and diffusion of information (Ngwa&Ngonba, 2020). In this context, the importance of this effort becomes clear. It is significant as a tool for universities, individual students, and countries in the CEMAC region that are struggling with the implementation of the BMD reform in higher education. This is in addition to being a way of contributing to general scholarship, particularly in the area of higher education in Cameroon.

The Government, institutions, and companies will continue to place a high premium on integrating employability into the foundation of higher education. This will have substantial commercial and public benefits, highlighting the importance of higher education for both social and cultural advancement and its broader role in promoting economic

progress. Policymakers, university professors, and curriculum designers, that is, those involved in classroom instruction as well as those who deal with policy and students in other ways, such as career counsellors and learning development staff, particularly the NEF, could all gain from this effort. It will shed light on the opportunities and limitations that exist in various higher education institutions when it comes to integrating employability into courses. Entrepreneurs and other players in the labor market will equally value it.

This study is intended to assist policymakers in creating guidelines for the implementation of professional courses in universities and other higher educational institutions. The needs of all parties involved will become clearer to policymakers, allowing them to create laws and policies that address these demands. In this approach, the reform will be implemented smoothly and without encountering any opposition. Other countries in the CEMAC region that are currently having trouble implementing the BMD reform in higher education will look to the Cameroonian example for guidance and inspiration.

University lecturers might use the findings of the study to enhance their pedagogical practices thereby helping to increase graduates' employability in Cameroon. The university administration could take note of the system's strengths and faults and make necessary improvements. This work may serve as an inspiration for other students who want to do research using the same paradigm, either to build on it or to adopt a different perspective for research.

This research may be useful to curriculum designers as well. They could benefit from the findings by learning whether or not the BMD system's higher education programs are pertinent to the demands of all stakeholders, including students and industry (entrepreneurs). In cases where it had not been done or in cases of inadequacy, this could lead to the inclusion of the demands and needs of the labor market into the curricula of universities under the BMD system, resulting in the supply of graduates from universities who are competitively employable to the job market. Educational planners could more accurately predict future educational demands and outcomes in a similar manner.

Employers and entrepreneurs could present their needs (labor market needs) in terms of necessary skills for graduate employability through partnerships between universities and the workplace. These partnerships could have a significant impact on the design of new curricula for employability education and could mark the beginning of better networks between universities and industries.

Specifically, in the area of higher education, which is now seen as a driving force in the production of qualified human capital for the knowledge economy, it is hoped that this study will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the internationally recognized development goals of Education for All (EFA), the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), and many other goals of education.

According to Nelson Mandela (2001) in an interview with Oprah Winfield, *only education can break the shackles of social immobility and isolation, poverty, and unemployment*. We are confident that the shackles of social isolation, poverty, and unemployment in Cameroon would have been broken if the suggestions were taken into account and put into action.

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

For a better grasp of the perspectives of the study at this point, it is necessary to define a few key terms. However, chapter two will include a second, more thorough conceptual framework that will conceptualize the ideas explored in the study. In order to create a strong conceptual framework with a particular and specific focus on higher education courses which in this case mostly refers to curricula and contexts of study with consequent implications on graduates' outcome in the labor market, professionalization and its relationship with employability are the key concepts developed thematically in this study. As such these terms: profession, professionalization, curriculum, employability, higher education and graduates have been closely examined in relation to the professionalization of BMD courses and graduates' employability in Cameroon.

It will therefore be very necessary to start with the definition of the term profession in order to get to the definition of professionalization.

#### **Profession**

According to Haynes (2022, p. 56), professions are products of labor market institutions and the outcomes of initiatives to provide a certain level of practice autonomy as well as a labor market shelter. The main component in the development of this status is advanced education offered by, and only by, higher education institutions. Power and privilege arise out of this labor market sanctuary

This term is extremely pertinent to this study because it talks about the labor market and how higher education institutions are the only ones who give the *essential component in creation* of professions. The extent to which professionalization of higher education courses might affect graduates' access to first-graduation jobs and increase employability while working is the main subject of this study. The definition of profession provided by Bosma (2022) is another that applies to this study. According to him, there are eight profession-occupation continua onto which any job or form of employment can be located viz:

- Specialized theory and intellectual technique required.
- Relevance to basic social values and processes.
- Nature of preparation in terms of amount and specialization of training and degree of symbolization and ideation required.
- Motivation for work meaning service to society as opposed to self-interest.
- Autonomy of practice.
- Sense of commitment or strength of calling to the profession.
- Sense of professional commitment and culture.
- Strength of codes of ethics.

The definition of Bosma (2022), also ties with this study in the sense that it focuses on the place of higher education in preparation for occupations, when he says:

*a profession should require a high degree of specialized knowledge and skill, be based primarily upon a service motivation, should concern a crucial societal task(s), and should require an extended preparation, among other things.*

### **Professionalization**

According to Ngwa&Ngonba (2020), professionalization is the process of creating a set of attitudes and actions that are thought to be appropriate for a specific occupation. According to them, it is the active display of a professional's qualities.

According to Leroux (2011), professionalization is the process by which higher education institutions produce a steady stream of highly skilled workers who meet the needs of the labor market. This process began with the introduction of vocational courses into universities and courses focused on employment in the private sector. He uses the higher education system in France as an example, which long ago moved away from only introducing vocational courses into universities and toward professionalizing general and more theoretical ones, with the goal of giving holders of such general qualifications skills that

can help them transit into the workforce in that it positions professions in the contexts of labor markets and the function of colleges in the preparation of the profession; in giving a high degree of specialized knowledge and competence, Leroux's notion of professionalization is highly important to this research.

McGill (2019) defined professionalization as the process of achieving occupational advancement through knowledge, doing, personal qualities, and disposition task performance, awareness and understanding, personal development, academic knowledge and skills, role performance, teamwork, decision-making, problem-solving, and judgment. This term is especially pertinent to this study because, in our opinion, colleges are centers of *knowing* (knowledge acquisition). We believe that Cameroonian universities have already become or will soon become venues for "doing" in preparation for graduate employment, in addition to the fact that the BMD reform has added the extra component of relationships with industry with the benefits of internships for study.

Abbott&Meerabeau (2020) in a comparative study of eight European countries, seeking the relationship between the process of professionalization in academic and interdisciplinary studies, defined professionalization as the process by which people are:

- Acculturated both formally and informally into an academic discipline in order to teach and research in it as academics in universities through processes that involve discipline selection, examination in disciplines, participation in discipline for a, discipline-based research.
- Recognized and legitimated as professionals in a given discipline; and
- Shape their professional academic lives to accommodate themselves to the working contexts in which they operate.

This definition meshes with our study in the sense that it talks about training, formally or informally in a university for the purposes of work in their specific disciplines or domains. On his part, Polat (2020) defines professionalization as the development of a professional identity which is created by professional research ethics and must be acquired during one's (university) studies by leaving exemplary discipline specific methods, theories and knowledge. Furthermore, such skills are connected with a specific trained disciplinary habit.

Again, this term fits with the study because it places a strong emphasis on the creation of a professional identity through skill development at a university. In this study, professionalization is defined in terms of the subject-specific knowledge and abilities one

acquires while pursuing their education, particularly while pursuing a degree at a university that places a strong emphasis on the idea of adjusting one's self to the working environments in which one will later operate. Therefore, professionalization could refer to a process of learning, doing, and being in a particular discipline that starts in college and develops over the course of a person's working career. Furthermore, professionalization is defined by, Havnes, A. (2018, p. 659), as the process of

*mastering skills and competences... that result in activities focused on new practices, techniques and knowledge. Professional development activities are therefore those in which practitioners engage in order to continually update their abilities.*

Here, the emphasis is on learning how developing a certain set of abilities may be used in the real world. This viewpoint is consistent with the study's focus on professionalization in that it assumes that work-based learning activities and cutting-edge technologies that reflect the knowledge economy is integrated into higher education curricula so that graduates can continuously improve their employability on the job market.

Finally, the European Union (2006) defines professionalization as the process by which specific individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for good professional practice. This process has the advantage of specifically meeting the training needs of the youth of a nation through well-targeted course modules and benefits from being close to the workplace, markets, and businesses. This definition of the European Union, which captures nearly every aspect of the term as seen in this study in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills through course modules in the university that address market needs, sums up the perspective on professionalization as it is presented in this study.

### **Curriculum**

Pinar (2012) defines a curriculum as a program of study provided by a university. An educational course is a plan created by the institution or ministry of education that establishes how well each subject is being learned throughout all phases of formal education. The Council on Higher Education (2013) defines a curriculum as an educational course as a deliberate and organized collection of learning opportunities that results in a credential. We shall primarily see the curriculum in this study as a course of study, and more precisely as a university course. Franklin Bobbit (1918) an early American educationist theorized that:

The central theory [of the curriculum] is simple. Human life however varied consists of the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for those specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class; they can be discovered. This requires only that one goes out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which their affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits appreciation, and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite, and particularized. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences that learners must have by way of obtaining those objectives (1918, p. 42).

This definition's attention to what people need to know in order to work and maintain their quality of life is positive. Many training programs serve as examples of this type of approach, breaking down certain tasks or jobs into their component parts and creating lists of abilities and skills. This is related to employability education, where the objectives and goals are to build specific skills and knowledge so that students could become self-employed when they are unable to obtain profitable employment by using the abilities, they have acquired to productively create their own employment.

Ronald Doll (1993) defined curriculum as the formal and informal content, as well as the process, through which students, working under the guidance of an academic institution, acquire information and understanding, develop skills, and change their attitudes, appreciations, and values. The curriculum can be thought of as the entire experience, in other words. According to this perspective, the curriculum includes both planned and impromptu activities that students engage in as well as the content that has been chosen and given. This definition is consistent with our study's perspective of the curriculum. It is the subject matter that must be learned through a process of formal or informal study in order to gain knowledge and build skills.

According to Tambo (2003), the word curriculum has been defined in the literature of education in the following ways:

Curriculum is such "permanent subjects as grammar, reading, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, and the greatest books of the Western world that embody essential knowledge. Curriculum is those subjects that are most useful for living in contemporary society. Curriculum is all planned learning for which the institution is responsible. Curriculum is all the experiences learners have under the guidance of the institution. Curriculum is the totality

of learning experiences provided to students so that they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites. Curriculum is a structured series of intended learning outcomes.

He summarizes by saying that Curriculum is often used to refer to a focus of study, consisting of various courses all designed to reach a particular proficiency or qualification, with syllabi, referring to the content or subject matter, instructional strategies and evaluation means of individual courses. The collective syllabus of a program of study represents a map of the curriculum for that program. A curriculum is developed through planning for a larger program of study and then building syllabi for courses to manifest the curriculum design and plan. However, even developing a syllabus for a specific course can be thought of as a form of curriculum development.

### **Employability**

Employability, according to Ngwa & Ngonba (2020), is a multidimensional notion that is interpreted and defined in many different ways. Many authors have noted that a distinction between employment and employability should be made initially in this study's literature evaluation (Bennett & Ananthram, 2022). They view employment as being the same as having a job, whereas employability is defined as *possessing qualities that facilitate and increase work chances*, in addition to having a job. Employment is viewed as a subset of employability, which will be the primary emphasis of this study.

Employability is defined by Tanyi et al. (2020) as *the development of traits (knowledge, skills, and talents) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen jobs (whether paid employment or not)* in its most basic sense. This definition and study are related by the idea of knowledge, skill, and ability acquisition. These skills and information are meant to be learned in universities or other higher education institutions. Employability is defined as being more than just being able to find work, with equal emphasis placed on learning and ability, which brings this definition closer to the topic of this study. Another view of employability is that derived from the research conducted by Enhancing Student Employability Coordination Team (ENSECT), in York, 2004), defining employability as:

A set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations which benefit

themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Employability considers the contextual environment of the local labor market.

This viewpoint is supported by Quinlan & Renninger (2022), who define employability as the ability to find one's first job, keep it, and find a new one if necessary. They believe that a person's employability is based on his or her claims regarding knowledge, skills, and other assets, as well as how those assets are used and deployed, how they are presented to potential employers, and the environment in which those assets are used, such as the labor market and a person's personal circumstances. According to Cheng, Adekola, Albia & Cai (2021), it is preferable to make a distinction between elements important to finding a job and ones relevant to getting ready for work in order to comprehend the multi-dimensional nature of employability. With the understanding that the university adequately prepares students at both levels of employability, employability is considered from both angles in the context of this work.

### **Higher Education**

It is important to first examine education in order to define higher education. Reboul (1976) defined education as an action that helps people develop their physical, intellectual, social, artistic, and moral sentiments in order to carry out human activities. He sees this action as producing education. This concept of education is consistent with the findings of this study in that all acts and attitudes, whether physical or intellectual, that people develop during their time in school are intended to lead to the performance and accomplishment of human tasks. The human tasks that we anticipate graduates to complete for this research are those related to their employment, which makes them more employable as they become more marketable in the sector.

Also, education is defined as *“a set of information, knowledge, messages and representations that is conveyed to young and adult individuals of society, either via established institutions such as schools or through non-formal educational programmes and the media”* (Sodirjonov, 2020). We found this definition of education, which refers to *adult members of society* and *via non-formal educational programs*, to be extremely similar to how education is understood in this work. This is due to the fact that most university students are already adults who are getting ready to transition into the workforce. They require non-formal or some extracurricular activities, like internships, to increase their employability level because the academic training they receive is obviously insufficient for them to become

highly employable. Tambo (2000, p. 23) defines education according to what education should be rather than what it is. He says:

It is the role of education to promote participation in social improvement: to influence people's ways of doing things, to be in accord with the changing times to improve standards of living, show ways of preventing sicknesses and practising sound habits of health, sanitation and nutrition.

As seen from the above definitions, the concept of education is therefore a broad-spectrum concept with so many definitions depending on the context in which it is used. Fonkeng (2007, p. 36) lends credence to this observation when he notes that:

Educational development occurs only within the context of society as a whole and as such an educational system will vary according to time and place. The aim extent, organization, curricular and methodology of education reflect existing institutions and dominant attitudes, values and forces which characterize a particular society.

Durkheim (1911), in Tsafack (2011), on their part say that education is the voluntary action carried out by an adult in the life of a young person or by an adult generation on a young generation in the light of their physical, intellectual and moral development and integration into the society. In the words of Tsafack (2001, p. 35) :

L'éducation tend à l'heureux épanouissement du sujet en vue de sa perfection, de son bonheur et de sa destination sociale. Elle suscite le progrès de tendances et l'inhibition de celles qui seraient nuisibles à l'objectif poursuivi. Elle s'exerce sur l'enfant dès sa naissance et le conduit d'étapes en étapes vers l'autonomie de l'adulte. Elle consiste à créer autour de lui le climat qui convient à exercer une action précise tant par l'apport directe que par le comportement de l'éducateur. Une bonne éducation doit permettre à l'individu d'utiliser ses possibilités au maximum, de faire face aux difficultés qu'il rencontre inévitablement dans sa vie et de s'adapter à sociale de son temps évolution qui peut avoir une répercussion directe sur son mode de vie ou son activité professionnelle.

From the aforementioned definitions, it is clear that education enables students to make the most of their acquired knowledge when tackling issues like the challenge of finding and retaining employment. Therefore, education is a lifetime process that starts at birth, may continue into old age, and only comes to an end with death. These definitions are appropriate for this study since they speak to the higher education stage of this ongoing process.

According to Wikipedia, a free online encyclopedia, higher education is an optional last stage of formal education that takes place after secondary education. It is also known as tertiary education or third-level education. Universities, academies, seminaries, and institutes of technology are frequently the locations of this type of instruction. Certain collegiate-level organizations, such as vocational schools, trade schools, and other career colleges that grant academic degrees or professional certificates, may also offer higher education. Typically, undergraduate, graduate, and vocational educations are all considered to fall within this category of education. State-owned institutions like the Universities of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé II, Buea, Douala, Ngaoundere, Maroua, and Bamenda, as well as private and confessional institutions like the Catholic University of Central Africa, a mission-based private university with a large number of other lay privately owned universities, offer higher education in Cameroon. Cameroon is home to a large number of other universities

The *Higher Education Act of 1965* of the United States of America defines higher education as an educational setting that:

- admits as regular students only persons having a certain certificate of graduation from a school providing post-secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate,
- is legally authorized to provide a program of education beyond secondary education,
- provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree,
- is a public or other non-profit institution, and
- is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the secretary for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the secretary has determined that there is satisfactory

assurance that the institution meets the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

The aforementioned definitions give a clear picture of how private higher education institutions in Cameroon continue to have an impact on their clientele, which is primarily post-secondary school graduates looking for training to acquire some fundamental skills that can enable them to find ready employment, particularly in the fields of commerce and industry and some new professions that are currently emerging on the job market. Therefore, the definitions align with how we think about higher education in this work.

Also redefined as mainly a method of skilling more and more workers, delivering professional and in-service courses in lifelong relearning; rather than about growing the brains of citizens," higher education now focuses more on this goal than on expanding citizens' minds (Burki, 2020). This description supports the study's perspective on higher education, which holds that it is an institution that creates graduates with the necessary abilities and traits from the very start of their university careers, comprehensive, integrated programs that integrates graduate employability competencies and aligns with industry objectives to accomplish this.

Higher education is the highest level in the formal part of Cameroon's school system. It is necessary to point out here that the higher education system in Cameroon is made up of both public and private higher education institutions (Article 17 of chapter one of Law no 005 of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2001). In terms of its purpose and role, higher education is defined as follows by the Tuning Africa project (2013, p. 28):

A means to create, transfer and disseminate knowledge. Fulfilling this goal involves different processes to ensure both the production and comprehension of this knowledge. Presently, there is a growing demand for compatibility between the educational programs of different universities both within the same country and between different countries to favour the mobility and exchange of teachers and students. The concept of competences implies a means of producing and transmitting knowledge, the relationship between education and society, the mission and values of the education system, the practice of teacher training and assessment and the activities and performance of students.

Because education is seen as a driver in the creation and dissemination of skills and competences that can assist a seamless transition of graduates into the world of work, this definition of higher education in terms of its objective, role, and mission will be very crucial to this effort.

Overall, Tambo (2003, p. 26) defines education as *a sum total of a person's learning experiences during his or her life time, regardless of whether it is formal, non-formal, primary, secondary, higher, adult, or continuous education. People can better comprehend their surroundings, other people, and themselves with the aid of education. It helps people to transform and advance both the society and themselves.* Our study focuses on the higher education component of education and how graduates might become employable so they can *better themselves* through acceptable work.

### **Graduates**

Ngwa&Ngonba (2020), defined a graduate as *a person who has successfully finished a program of study or training, particularly one for which an undergraduate or first academic degree has been conferred.* The extent to which present day university teaching and learning processes actually develop such outcomes in graduates is even more contestable. Graduate qualities are now generally understood to be the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes that university graduates possess that go beyond discipline content knowledge and are learned during the completion of any undergraduate degree. They need to encapsulate what a university education is all about. Oliver, Jones, Ferns& Tucker (2007), see:

a graduate as a person who has acquired a degree or diploma upon completing a course. In other words, a graduate is someone who has accomplished a certain degree of education, such as a doctor who has just graduated from medical school, or a child who has just finished kindergarten.

This study falls in line with the above definition of a graduate as it seeks to find out whether they can actually put into practice the knowledge and skills that they have acquired while at school.

### **The Structure of the Work**

The work has been divided into five chapters, the first which is titled: Introduction to the Study covers the: background to the study, justification of the study, research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, aims, and hypotheses, definition of terms and structure of the work.

Chapter Two looks at the conceptual, theoretical and empirical framework of the study. It equally demonstrates how the theories relate to and support the research, along with a review of related literature in terms of connections made between the professionalization of higher education, particularly under the BMD educational reform, and graduates' employability in relation to the research questions.

Chapter three will describe the research design and methodology that the researcher used in conducting the study. It also comprises of the target population, description of the sample and sampling procedures. The chapter has the description of the research instruments, reliability of the research instruments and validity of the research instruments. This chapter will further describe data collection and data analysis procedures that the researcher intends to use.

Chapter four focuses on the presentation of descriptive data and the validation of hypotheses.

Chapter five analyses the findings and the interpretation of results and makes additional recommendations while identifying potential future research areas. A conclusion, a list of references, and appendices complete the work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE, CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Conceptual Framework

##### Government Policy

Professionalization policy in Cameroon higher education is based on five dimensions:

- Support program to the technological and professional components of Higher Education;
- Applied programs through professional schools; Creation of regionally-applied schools;
- Globalization and service-sector oriented programs;
- And a new sector of regionally-applied universities in the form of University Institutes of Technology.

The first dimension refers to programmes aimed at driving the government objectives to improve the capacities of the technological and professional fields of study and to respond to the country's urgent socio-economic development needs. Within this dimension, the most prioritized domains *are medical, teacher training, and technological education*. This is what brought about the creation of medical schools in Buea, Douala, and recently Bamenda. For teacher training the upgrading of Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Bamenda to a full cycle, the creation of Higher Technical Teacher Training Bamenda (HTTTC) Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Maroua and Higher Technical Teacher Training Bamenda (HTTTC) kumba. Technological section brought about the creation of University Institutes of Technology known as IUT in French such as: University institute of Technology Douala, University Institute of technology in Banjun under the University of Dschang, University institute of Technology Ngaoundere, University institute of Technology Mbalmayo, under university of Yaounde 1. The selection of the above-stated priority programmes was driven by the necessity for the Higher Education System to address certain urgent social development needs of the country during the post economic crisis and Structural Adjustment Programs years.

The second dimension refers to applied programmes that existed in the Cameroon Higher Education System from its initial inception through professional schools and institutes

which had been tailored to respond to specific development needs of the country. These are the cases of agriculture, public works, administration, and diplomacy, Journalism, Translation and Interpretation. This dimension of professionalization involved increasing capacities of these establishments and diversifying their programs offerings.

The third dimension follows the necessity to create higher education institutions with programs that provide value to an existing and dominant economic activity of a specific locality or addressing certain urgent problems. This includes the Institute of Fine Arts at Nkongsamba and Fumban, Institute of Sahel under University of Maroua. The rationale observed behind the creation of these institutes was that the education and training offered in the institutes be aligned to the rich cultural and artistic activities of the locality.

The fourth dimension is depicted by the explosion of so-called “market friendly” and business programmes such as Business Administration, Commerce, Accounting, Management, Banking and Finance (Buea, SOA all have specialized programmes. Also, private higher education as in their HND, BTS and degree programmes). The creation of the Higher Institute of Commerce and Management (HICM) in the University of Bamenda and the ESSEC Douala, takes control of these programs.

The fifth dimension is about a new sector of regionally-applied universities in the form of University Institutes of Technology. College of Technology in Bamenda, College of Technology Buea, each having specialized focus, these are the only institutes that exhibit programme differentiation which is that the one in Douala is about industrial engineering, Ngaoundere in food processing and the one in Mbalmayo is on wood Processing. Others suffer what we call programme ISOPHORMISM- that’s copying the programmes of others, for example, the college of technology in Bamenda is the same with that of Buea (Sup Infos, 2010).

Universities were required to define, in consultation with other stakeholders, the local market needs, involve professionals in the conception of programs, define prerequisites for admission into various professional programs, and develop teaching staff recruitment profiles in order to achieve this goal. A variety of professional programs have been introduced within the universities as a result of the reforms. Women and Gender Studies, Accounting, Banking and Finance, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Science, Chemical Processes Technology, Materials Science, and Journalism and Mass Communication are a few examples offered at the University of Buea (Njeuma, 1993).

The graduate of any African tertiary institution is therefore, in the words of Kassam (1988), be: (a) One who is significantly playing his/her full roles in the economic development of the immediate and external society; one who participates fully and meaningfully in the social, civil, political, and cultural activities of the community; (c) One who lives a self-fulfilling and optimal lifestyle; (d) One who is highly resistant to any form of oppression, exploitation. This can only be achieved through professionalization of programmes that will enable graduates to have specific skills. The BMD System calls on all programmes to involve the following elements: CM (Lectures) TD (Tutorials) TP (Travaux Pratique) and TPE (Travail personnel des Etudiant). Consequently, this brings about learners' autonomy and set the pace for professional insertion and self-employment. It is in this wise a Chinese adage holds: "You tell me I forget; you show me, I remember and you involve me, I learn". Thus, professionalization entails involving the students into programmes in such a way that they have work-place experience that enables them to be integrated into a profession.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education was established by the government on December 8, 2004, to take the position of the previous Ministry of Youth and Sports. This ministry focuses primarily on the difficulties and issues that young people in Cameroon experience. It is responsible for developing strategies and policies that encourage young people to contribute to Cameroon's growth. The Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative provides the majority of the funding for the targeted programs that the Ministry of Youth Affairs has developed to address the issue of youth unemployment. The Rural and Urban Youth Support Program, or PAJER-U in French, is the first program ever created by this ministry. This program's overall goal is to promote the socio-economic insertion of Cameroonian youths (both educated and uneducated) through social mobilization, training and financing so as to enable them to become veritable actors of development. Another program put in place by the government is the Youth Socio-economic Integrated Project for Manufacturing of Sporting Materials (PIFMAS). This program is also under the tutelage of the Ministry of Youth Affairs. It is expected that this program funded from the HIPC funds, would help to create micro-enterprises specialized in the manufacturing of sporting equipment using local materials. The PIFMAS program received a set up cost in 2007 of 1,275,490,000 FCFA expected to a) Mobilize 640 youths, b) Train 160 youths as potential producers of sporting equipment, c) Provide administrative and financial management

techniques, d) Produce 38,000 balls and 400 nets to be sold in the national and regional markets (Youth and Peace Building, 2013).

Apart from the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the government also created the ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. This ministry was also created after the reorganization of the government on December 8, 2004. Though this ministry is not directly responsible for youth affairs, it has the daunting task to create opportunities to enable youths and other unemployed persons to obtain gainful employment by creating an enabling environment on skills training. Just like the ministry of Youth Affairs, the ministry of Employment and Vocational Training designed specific programs that aim to uplift Cameroonian youths from the difficult situation of unemployment. These programmes include the National Employment Fund (NEF) and the Integrated Support Project for Actors of the Informal Sector known by its French acronym as PIAASI. The National Employment Fund (NEF) was set up in 1990 with direct responsibility to cater for increasing youth unemployment. One of the programs put in place by the NEF is the Support Programme for the Return of Cameroonians living abroad. The specific objective of this programme is to facilitate the re-insertion of returnees into the society by providing them with counseling services and assisting them gain employment. Another programme of the National Employment Fund (NEF) is the Support Program for the Development of Rural Employment known by its French acronym as PADER. This program aims at helping youths in the rural areas of Cameroon to become gainfully employed and thereby discourage rural-urban migration with the consequence of increasing the rate of urban youth unemployment.

Also, programs like the Graduates Employment Programme (PED) were created in the NEF, to specifically cater for the needs of higher education graduates, with the NEF playing an intermediary role as a placement agency in charge of professional training. The PED is a pre-employment programme that aims at integrating young graduates into the production domain who initially have mostly theoretical knowledge and very little or no work experience, but are job seekers. This programme, launched in 2007 as one of the components of the Pact of Youth Employment (PEJ) was a contribution to the National Policy for the fight against Youth unemployment. Specifically, the collaboration between the NEF and MINESUP could lead to modifications of curricula, with NEF helping with extra curricula activities like the Techniques of Job Search (TRE) to final year students. Another programme, the Support Programme for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES), was a partnership signed between MINESUP and NEF to support the

professional insertion of HE graduates. Through this, much information in terms of job orientation in the University milieu is being published. Details on these programmes will be given in the review of literature in chapter two under government policy on professionalization of higher education courses.

It is true that the government of Cameroon has made efforts to resolve the problem of youth unemployment. But a lot more still has to be done. Despite all these efforts, things are not getting any better as we still feel the increasing threat of youth, and mostly graduate youth unemployment on the economy. That is why we think that other more sustainable action is needed to bring a lasting solution to the problem of youth employment and employability. It should be noted that these youths are mostly HE graduates. The limitation of government efforts to bring lasting solutions can be confirmed by the International Labour Organization's 2013 report. This report reveals that the unemployment rate in Cameroon stands at 30% while that of underemployment stands at 75%. Also, the underemployment rate for qualified youths leaving school aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years is 94% and 84% respectively (Source: Cameroon Tribune, Wednesday, January 10, 2010, pages 7 & 9).

It is therefore glaring that a lot more still has to be done and certainly government cannot do it alone. We therefore think that the professionalization of higher education to reflect some of the labour market needs can lead to skills acquisition and employability of the graduates, thereby, constituting a more sustainable solution to the problem of unemployment and employability of youths who are mostly graduates these days, given the widening of access to higher education in recent years. Nowadays, there is a social, economic and political urgency of responding to the challenges of youth unemployment as a precondition for poverty eradication, sustainable development and lasting peace. A good higher education curriculum that equips youths with skills that can lead to decent employment be it formal or informal will be more sustainable in the fight against unemployment while answering the employability challenge. From empirical observations made by Eddy Hope Foundation(2013), slow job- growth economies, low- quality jobs, skills mismatch, inadequate job matching, the work experience trap, lack of access to capital, little or no entrepreneurship/business training, limited youth participation, social discrimination, frustration and discouragement, amongst others are the principal barriers to descent employment for youths. According to the foundation, *“The primary reason for failure is that people do not develop new plans to replace those plans that didn't work.”* We think that the government of Cameroon needs to develop new plans. And one of such plans could be

revamping the higher education system to respond to the needs of the 21st century knowledge economy, and that is the premise on which this thesis is built, because we believe that Unemployment is not the product of a lack of education, but a disconnect between the educational curriculum and the needs of the labour market.

### **Content of the curriculum**

It is necessary to give a brief overview of the fundamentals of curriculum, tracing and discussing its development as a conceptual framework for the design of employability learning practices within higher education in the literature of this work. Curriculum content, in terms of courses, programs, teaching learning processes, and evaluation processes, is a central theme in this thesis. It is crucial to create new employability learning paradigms for emerging market economies that are framed within an appropriate socio-economic development framework. In regard to this project, the curriculum is based on constructivist principles, which hold that knowledge is dynamic, grows, and is produced as it seeks interaction with external contexts and contents. In general, a wide range of factors have influenced and had an impact on the evolution of educational systems around the world from one era to the next. For instance, the 21st-century knowledge explosion has and continues to exert pressure on educational systems in a variety of ways. This abundance of information and its rate of growth have compelled educators to re-evaluate the issue of content selection and even the role of knowledge material in the educational process (Keel,2022). It is also important to mention at this point that the higher education curricula in Cameroon have scarcely changed in response to the expanding and changing body of knowledge. According to Carpenter, Goldblatt& Hanson, (2021), *the content of higher education curricula have existed for as long as the individual content lecturers have been teaching those courses.* Maybe this was due to the general neglect of higher education in the past, as earlier explained in the introduction of this work. The return of trust to higher education as a driver of economic development may also be a clarion call for the revamping, if not total overhauling of existing curricular to reflect changing times.

Secondly, the physical expansion of educational systems especially at tertiary levels in terms of increasing enrolments, because of the growing awareness of the connection between level of educational attainment and social and economic returns. It is only natural that these factors would have considerable influence on the various elements involved in the process of education; such as the selection and structure of curriculum, and in teaching strategies and techniques (Coombs, 1985). According to Taba (1962), curriculum matters are

very important because they involve the translation of educational objectives into operational plans, because curriculum is the substance of that form of communication which is called teaching, and it is a major factor in the selection of teaching methods and techniques. The BMD reform measure in higher education in Cameroon with the view of harmonizing certificates and improving mobility and employability of graduates is enough reason for the review of the curriculum to reflect these needs. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are living more and more in a global economy with new and ever evolving technologies. Educational curricula need to reflect these changes and challenges. To quote the introductory lines of the OECD report:

Education systems are under constant pressure, on two main fronts. First, they need to adapt to changes in society which as it becomes a learning society, has rising expectations for education. Second, the school as a “house of knowledge” is increasingly facing competition from other knowledge sources, including information entertainment, and from enterprises that define themselves as knowledge producers and mediators.

Here we notice that education and especially higher education must adjust and continue to adjust its curriculum to reflect the societal and individual needs from which they emanate. In our case, of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need is to produce knowledgeable, skilful and employable graduates who can transit smoothly to, stay and grow in the labour market. It is the selection and construction of the right and appropriate content and instruction processes that can facilitate this. To develop education in a new economic context necessitates new perspectives for curriculum research and curriculum construction, reflecting the relationship between education and economic growth, education and employability, as basic motivations for educational change through curriculum. Before one begins to consider the nature and function of curriculum in employability education, it is first necessary to engage the issue of curriculum in a more theoretical way. The purpose is to place curriculum within the larger framework of the educational process, to analyse the concept of curriculum, and to construct a general model of curriculum which may serve as a construct for the study of employability education (Tanyi, 2006).

## Teaching Methods

Teaching is defined as *the process of choosing and organizing learning experiences in order to convey curriculum objectives and content to students* (Tambo, 2000). It may relate to the actual activity that is typically referred to as teaching as well as the section of a curriculum design where the strategy for this activity is developed. Thus, curriculum design includes teaching as a component as well as a process that is separate from and generated from curriculum. According to Belinga (2005, p. 69) :

Pour enseigner de nos jours, il ne suffit pas seulement de connaître la matière à enseigner ; il faut également connaître la décimologie pour mieux évaluer l'apprentissage des élèves...L'obtention d'un diplôme universitaire ne constitue pas en soi une garantie pour savoir enseigner et communiquer les connaissances. La didactique reste encore la seule science de l'Education qui habilite à l'enseignement ; car c'est elle qui traite les problèmes des méthodes et techniques d'enseignement, de la gestion de la classe, de planification rationnelle des enseignements en prenant et par le fait de même les attendus du système éducatif et de la société. La didactique sert de filtre, de tamis par rapport aux matières scientifiques à enseigner ; c'est elle qui permet à l'enseignant de sélectionner les contenus et les systèmes de valeurs en fonction des besoins réels de formation des élèves”

According to Belinga's (2005) viewpoints, not everyone who holds a university degree is eligible to teach. Due to the knowledge boom of the twenty-first century, university lecturers must be taught in teaching approaches like managing material and subject matter, class control, and content selection.

As an element of curriculum design, the selection and organization of instructional procedures arise from the selection and structure of content. Beauchamp and Beauchamp in Tambo (2000, p. 159), state as one of the postulates of a curriculum system that While curriculum content can be chosen independently of instructional strategies, the type of curriculum content influences the selection of instructional strategies.

In a broader sense, the dependence of instructional procedures is in three directions: upon the curriculum content, upon the general structure of the disciplines from which this content arises, and upon the particular characteristics of the learners, both individually and collectively. *Good* instructional procedures and "*bad*" instructional procedures can be judged according to the manner in which content, student, and subject are integrated into a coherent pattern of curriculum and to the extent to which this pattern can be successfully translated by teachers to students. Instruction, as an aspect of curriculum or as the process of teaching, in this work is referring to teaching methods and techniques (one of the variables of the study). Quite often these terms are used interchangeably and refer to particular skills or routines such as the use of a blackboard or the organization of a project.

In his discussion of educational thinking, Belth (1965, p. 58), distinguishes three levels in the operation of a discipline: models, methods, and techniques. Models, as we have already seen, refer to the contexts within which thinking takes place. He continues that: "*Method directs the operation of the various facets of deliberation in the development of the grand plan, whose source is found in the models.*" On the other hand, "technique is the developed proficiency in manipulating the various skills, memories and reflective powers for purposes that are implicit in the models, and made explicit in the methods". If we accept this distinction, we may think of the methods of a discipline as broad strategies of inquiry and of the techniques as particular means or instruments used to further these methods. If we use comparative education as an example, quantitative methods would designate a general approach to comparison; they are distinguished from qualitative methods and are based upon a number of assumptions concerning the nature of the data and the range of applicability of the method. Within this general quantitative method, specific techniques such as coefficients of correlation and tests of significance could be employed, the rationale for which would be found in the nature of the data and the pattern of the method.

### **Evaluation Processes**

Yarbrough et al. (2011, p. 287) define evaluation as the methodical assessment of a subject's value, merit, and relevance based on standards-governed criteria. It can support an organization, program, project, or other intervention or initiative in evaluating any goal, feasible idea or proposal, or alternative in order to aid in decision-making; or it can determine the level of success or value with respect to the goal, objectives, and outcomes of any such action that has been carried out.

Evaluation's primary objective is to encourage reflection and assist in identifying possible areas for future development, in addition to offering insight into previous or ongoing projects. Formative evaluation, sometimes referred to as formative assessment, usually takes place in a classroom setting where data on student performance is collected, examined, and utilized by peers, teachers, or students to determine the course of teaching. These choices are probably better or more sensible than they would have been in the absence of the information acquired. In 2021, Carpenter et al.

Michael Scriven (1967) coined the terms formative and summative evaluation in 1967, and emphasized their differences both in terms of the goals of the information they seek and how the information is used. According to Scriven (*ibid*) formative evaluation collected data to evaluate a curriculum's efficacy and inform decisions made by the school system over which curriculum to implement and how to enhance it. He considered formative assessment as a tool for improving the teaching-learning process for students.

Summative evaluation is another term for participant assessment in which the program's results are the main focus. In contrast, formative assessment provides a summary of the participants' growth at a certain point in time.

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard. According to ([wikipedia.org/wiki/-summative assessment](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/-summative_assessment)), Summative assessment is used as an evaluation technique in instructional design. It can provide information on the efficacy of a program's ability to do what it was designed to do. Summative assessment can be used to refer to assessment of educational faculty by their respective supervisor, with the object of measuring all teachers on the same criteria to determine the level of their performance. In this context summative assessment is meant to meet the school or district's needs for teacher accountability. The evaluation usually takes the shape of a form, and consists of check lists and occasionally narratives. Areas evaluated include the general climate in the classroom, instruction, professionalism, and planning and preparation (Arsenault, Heffernan & Murphy, 2021).

### **Formative Evaluation**

Formative assessment is a variety of formal and informal evaluation techniques carried out by teachers during the learning process in order to adapt teaching and learning activities to increase student achievement (Huhta, 2010). It often provides qualitative feedback (rather than grades) for the teacher and student that concentrate on the specifics of

performance and subject. Summative assessment, on the other hand, tries to monitor educational results, frequently for reasons of external accountability. Shepard (2005) asserts that formative evaluation accomplishes a number of objectives:

- To give teachers feedback so they can adjust future learning experiences and activities;
- To spot and address individual or group deficiencies;
- To shift the emphasis from grades to learning processes in order to boost self-efficacy and lessen the detrimental effects of extrinsic motivation;
- To enhance students' metacognitive awareness of their learning processes; Regular, continuous assessment enables both instruction improvement and student progress focus. Formative assessment, according to Harlen and James (1997), is essentially positive in goal since it is meant to promote learning; as such, it is a component of teaching.
- It considers each student's development, effort, and other learning factors that might not be included in the curriculum; in other words, it is not solely based on criteria.
- It has to take into account several instances in which certain skills and ideas are used and there will be inconsistencies as well as patterns in behaviour; such inconsistencies would be 'error' in summative evaluation, but in formative evaluation they provide diagnostic information;
- Validity and usefulness are paramount in formative assessment and should take precedence over concerns for reliability;
- Even more than assessment for other purposes, formative assessment requires that learners have a central part in it; learners have to be active in their own learning (teachers cannot learn for them) and unless they come to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how they might deal with them, they will not make progress.

The main purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback. It often entails a focus on the detailed content of what is being learnt, rather than just a test score or other measurement of how much a student is falling short of the anticipated norm. After reviewing the research, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) enumerate seven guidelines for effective feedback practices:

- It makes clear what constitutes good performance (goals, criteria, and expected standards);
- It helps students develop self-assessment in their learning;
- It gives them high-quality information about what they have learned;

- It promotes peer and teacher discussion about learning;
- It fosters positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
- It offers chances to bridge the performance gap between desired and actual performance;
- It gives teachers information that can be used to inform their instruction.

While empirical evidence has shown the substantial impact formative assessment has in raising student achievement. As a result, it is among the most effective strategies for raising student motivation and learning. A good use of formative assessment can boost motivation in a number of ways, including encouraging students to believe in their own learning potential, attributing learning achievements to their own efforts and skills, focusing on progress toward learning objectives rather than letter grades, and analyzing their thought processes to find strategies that increase comprehension. However, for these gains to become evident formative assessment must (1) Clarify and share learning goals and success criteria; (2) Create effective classroom discussions and other tasks which demonstrate evidence of student understanding; (3) provide feedback which can and will be acted upon; (4) allow students to become instructional resources for one another; and (5) stimulate students to become owners of their own learning (Hu, Nguyen, Nguyen & Stalmeijer, 2022).

Therefore, formative assessment is useful in daily instruction when it is utilized to monitor students' progress toward learning objectives and modify teaching strategies to suit their requirements. As they receive feedback from peers and/or the teacher, it can assist students in tracking their own development and provide them the chance to edit and improve their ideas.

In the words of York (2010, p. 10):

“If institutions are serious about developing graduate attributes or employability (with their implications for interaction between students), then the challenges posed by assessment have to be addressed. A commitment to the development of graduate attributes or employability implies, for many subject disciplines, a preparedness to rethink curriculum, pedagogy and assessment”.

It is clear that assessment can be used strategically to motivate and engage students, and carefully chosen assessment tasks can help develop specific employability attributes (Pegg, Waldo, Hendy-Isaac & Lawton, 2012), in which attention is drawn to the fact that

while the effective development of employability is stimulated by using assessment, there is also a concern that traditional assessment systems might frustrate the development of personal skills. Pegg et al., (2012) state that,

the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are usually assessed by assignment, multiple choice test and oral examination. Research confirmed that these skills are viewed by providers as competency-based and lend themselves to traditional methods of assessment (p. 33).

An example of using evaluation or assessment to enhance employability is the case of the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth University in a project named “Pitch Assessments” where Student groups were tasked with competitively ‘pitching’ for one of five ‘real-world’ project grants at a staged end-of-module conference. Each group was allocated a five-minute slot in which to make both a video and an oral presentation (Pegg et al,2012). The five grants covered a range of environmental management projects each of which gave student groups a specific role (you work for a private energy company’) and a client or awarding body (Forestry Commission Wales, Local Planning Authority). These simulations of live projects, give students the opportunity to act professionally engaged in the projects and developing work-based competency skills such as team skills, presentation skills, attention to detail, budgeting, time and project management, public speaking and organization. Formative assessments like the case described above, have great potential for promoting attitudes required to develop employability skills (Knight and York, 2003).

Tests, project work, presentations, reports, posters, group projects, portfolios (including e-portfolios), work-based (employer- or institution-based) and work-related learning, peer assessment, and self-assessment are just a few of the innovative ways that curricula can incorporate assessment. Offering a wide range of these experiences and learning techniques is essential to good practice when it comes to providing training in general employability skills. In all, whether in formative or summative assessments, education for employability should make use of a wide variety of assessment methods to give the learners every possibility of developing the needed skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century labour market

### **Employability**

It will be necessary to offer an overview of employability and the abilities related to it before trying a deeper conceptualization of employability. In today’s unstable workplace,

employability is crucial for both those who are still working and those who have just lost their jobs or been laid off (Wittekind, Raeder & Grote, 2010). The main aspect influencing a graduating student's ideas is employability (Gokuladas, 2011). Although there are several definitions of employability, they all center on the traits, knowledge, and skills that make people more likely to find and keep jobs, advance at work, and develop careers (van Harten, de Cuyper, Knies & Forrier, 2022).

According to (Fossimock.B, 2017), the concept of employability affects both individuals and the society at large. It has been subjected to many studies and it is at the centre of this study. There are many recent studies in this area, among which we have; Kight & Yorke, 2004 Pool & Sewell, 2008. This shows clearly that the concept is nothing new and has been subjected to several studies during last five decades. Although this concept has been under study for the last five decades, researchers and educationist seem to be “flogging a dead horse” because youths unemployment rate keep increasing especially in developing countries. A majority of these studies were based on case studies approach and findings could not be generalised mainly because they lacked quantitative evidence and gave only prescriptive advice (Wickramasinghe&Parara, 2010) and most planners and employers seem to understand this concept differently, this makes this study timely and relevant to the Cameroonian society. According to Macrothink Institute (2015), in a Journal of Studies in Education (2015, vol.5), many governments, Universities, Employers and other stakeholders have given suggestions on increasing graduates employability. Despite this extensive developments and evidence of 47 innovative practices to increase employability within universities, employability still remains to be a complex problematic area without much clarity or complete direction (Rae, 2007). According to Cotton’s model, “employability skills were recognised into three types: basic skills, higher other thinking skills, effective skills and traits”. Skills models is considered by many as one of the earliest models of employability which is based on the notion that employability depends on the notion that skills level of the individual without any mention of factors such as attitude, behaviour and experience will limits its broad usage (Catton, 1993).

However, overreliance on skills has been criticized as the main weakness of employability, that skill models are not adequate for meaningful employment (Knight & Yorke, 2004) According to Holmas (2001), since most employability studies are based on skills approach, there is an alternative approach that recognises the complexity of human behaviour. It is suggested that the undergraduate curriculum be improved as a result of this

identity approach to employability (Fossimock.B, *ibid*). The series of studies done by Knight and Yorke (2002) was instrumental in shaping the concept of employability from its early ideas. According to “Skill plus” employability is a far more complicated than just key skills as proposed by many academics and is clearly different from graduate employment (Knight & Yorke, 2002).

The USEM model, which is widely regarded as a significant advancement in employability research because it was the first to conceptualize employability in relation to other constructs like skills, subject understanding, metacognition, and personal qualities, was discovered as a result of the criticisms of the skill model (Fossomock.B *ibid*). But the model too was seen as highly theoretical and lacked research evidence which did not allowed practical use of this model to explain the concept to parents and students (Pool & Sewel, 2007). The Career EDGE model, which brought much-needed clarity and simplicity while combining all the elements of the USEM and employability skills model, was also made possible by this criticism. The model explains how the five other lower like: career development learning, experience, degree subject knowledge understanding, generic skills and emotional intelligence that allow students to reflect and evaluate these experiences, and the complex interactions with social concepts such as self-esteems, self-efficacy and selfconfidence (Pool and Sowel, 2007). The CareerEDGE also suffered the limitations as was considered as a snap-short view of employability that limits its application (Smith et al. 2014). 48 Other notable employability model include the Journey of Employment (JET) proposed by Copps & Clummer, (2013) that states that employment processes is not linear and many factors contributes towards it. It is stated that since each person's path is unique, there is no assurance that a single element will guarantee employability for everyone.

The JET model agrees with the satisfying definition of employability presented by Harvey (2010) and states that the job outcome does not just represents getting and sustaining employability, it also includes the quality of work and satisfaction gained (Copps and Plommer, 2013). Based on stakeholders' perceptions of employability, the notion has multiple interpretations, according to the literature study on graduates' employability. The university, policy, curriculum, pedagogy, staff, and infrastructure in the educational system, as well as the employers who hire the graduates and their expectations, all have an impact on employability in addition to the individual graduates' subject knowledge, experience, skills, and personality traits (Fossomock.B *ibid*).

That notwithstanding, the four operational factors of employability proposed by Finch et al., (2013) like: soft skills, problem solving skills, pre-graduation experience and academic reputation were not taken for granted. This is because it played a principal role in the establishment of the confirmatory factors analysis used to measure the provenance and utility of six factors namely: life-long learning, professional practice and standards, informed decision making, commencement readiness collaboration, collaboration and integration of theory and practice (Smith et al., 2014), which appear to bring new ideas about employability which confirms our idea that there should be clear communication and consensus amongst stake holders in employability in order to successfully promote as a worthwhile and useful outcome of higher education, Macrothink Institute, (2015)

Employability, according to Brooks (2012), is the capacity of a person to find employment that is appropriate for their level of education. Although the likelihood of finding employment is stressed in this definition, it does not address the value that an individual will bring to the economy, community, or company. Employability is a set of skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that raise a person's chances of landing a job and thriving in their chosen fields (Monteiro, Almeida, Gomes, & Sinval, 2022).

This definition is more specific and it explains how one becomes employed. This term also highlights the need for the person to succeed in their chosen line of work.

According to Cheng et al., (2021), *employability is a collection of accomplishments, skills, knowledge, and character traits that increase graduates' chances of finding employment and achieving success in their chosen fields, which is advantageous to all parties involved the individual, the workforce, the community, and the economy.* This definition of employability, which is quite inclusive and wide, most closely matches how we define employability in this study. It makes clear that a person needs to develop a certain set of abilities in order to be successful and employable in their chosen field. Additionally, the success of a person with employable skills must benefit the workforce, community, and economy (Monteiro et al., 2022).

They are: (1) Workforce employability: linked to industry-level or national "skills" objectives or government policy. This viewpoint stems from worries about how work and employment were evolving at the close of the 20th century. (2) Employability as a human resource strategy: this refers to the idea of employability, which is frequently marketed by companies as a substitute for job security and is based on the abilities and flexibility that

employees have gained throughout work. (3) Individual employability: primarily based on employability being identified as a concern. Concerns about the changing nature of work and employment toward the end of the 20th century are the source of this point of view. (2) Employability as a human resource strategy: this is the concept of employability, which is often promoted by businesses as an alternative to job stability and is predicated on the skills and adaptability that workers have developed over time. (3) Personal employability: mostly predicated on employability being recognized as an issue. Concerns regarding the university sector's capacity to equip graduates with the skills that employers require were associated with this, as were the effects of the sector's widespread growth and perceptions of profound shifts in the labor markets at large.

(Employability contains different dimensions such as the actual competence of the individual, formal qualifications gained through educational activities, professional employability skills, and soft skills, including transferable meta-competence, interpersonal skills (De Vos, Jacobs & Verbruggen, 2021). He sees subject talents and transferable skills as the two components of employability. While topic skills are more specific to a person's employment, transferable skills are personal abilities that may be applied to any job role, in any profession, and at any point in a person's career.

Employability skills on the other hand, are skills needed for life-long learning and a successful business career (Stoner & Milner, 2010). Employability skills can be taught in both educational and professional contexts. Therefore, universities should set goals and objectives for teaching employability skills (Pham, 2021). According to Pham (2021), *employability skills are categorized by the following competency areas: personal values, problem-solving and decision-making skills, relations with other people, communication skills, task-related skills, maturity, health and safety habits, and commitment to job*. Wilton (2011) identified the following employability skills for business and management graduates: Written communication; ability to work in teams; research skills; basic computer literacy; spoken communication; problem-solving skills; numeracy skills; management skills; leadership skills; creativity; entrepreneurial skills; and advanced IT or software skills. These employability skills form the basis of this research. De Vos et al., (2021) that:

“The concept of employability continues to be applied within a range of different contexts and to both those in work and those seeking work. Accordingly, while it is simple enough to assign ‘employability’s

straightforward dictionary definition, such as ‘the character or quality of being employable’, arriving at a working definition is a far more complex process. Perhaps understandably, employers have tended to view employability as primarily a characteristic of the individual. Employability thus Employability is the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realise his or her aspirations and potential in work (p.1)”.

Employability of graduates is one of the current issues, based on a growing number of university graduates generated annually by institutions of higher education.

Employers have recently been concerned about graduates' ability to work in a modern organisation, particularly their human capital. This concern predates the recent rapid expansion of higher education and the concomitant questions about the quality and abilities of graduates in the current globalisation, articulated in some quarters. The majority of the past researcher found the difficulty to defined and measure the concept of employability (Harvey, 2001; Pegg, Waldock, Hendy Isaac & Lawton, 2012). discuss that employability can, in a broad opinion, be seen as individuals' ability or human capital to move into new employment on the labour market. Employability skills are the necessary support for the acquisition and retention of a career, as are work specific skills, academic skills and a variety of attitudes and behaviours (Saterfield and McLarty, 1995).

Employability from an employer's point of view is the graduate's propensity to demonstrate attributes that employers believe will be important for the future successful operation of the organisation (While Harvey, 1997). Lay Cheng Tan and Erika French-Arnold (2012) have indicated that many factors have a substantial effect on employability and among the factors individual (human capital) factors which include attributes (e.g., basic social skills), competencies (e.g., motivation, confidence), transferable skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, communication, adaptability, team working skills), qualifications and educational attainment. However, at the end of their study, they concluded that academic qualifications are crucial but if not more important to employers, the skills and attitudes of job seekers are equally significant.

A high-grade point average is not in itself a guarantee of employment Based on the study conducted by Noor Azina Ismail (2011), found out the results or CGPA of particular

unemployed graduates was to some extent lower compared to those who are obtained by the employed graduates. In contrast, the employed graduates had higher English proficiencies compared to unemployed graduates. This meant that based on the findings of her paper, she found out that graduates who have CGPA 3.00 and above are much easier to find their place to be employed, she also highlights that the graduates who fluent in English has the chances of gaining employment than those who are not proficient. This is also supported by the finding of Fisher (1998) based on his research on Denmark, noted that employers are also becoming less concerned about the field of study. The employers rather want bright graduates who possess good grades rather than their field of study. The employer uses the grades to filter the graduates during the recruitment process. This proves that academic performance is also used as one indicator for an employer to employ graduates. Lee Harvey (2000) agreed that a degree might be a passport or permit into graduate employment. This situation was revealed that a level of human capital such as knowledge and intellectual ability is very important employed. However, this is no longer the case because of systemic shifts and the increase of graduate numbers. This meant that in the past years it is agreeable that academic qualifications important to be employed, but nowadays employers are looking for graduates who possess various skills and also the graduate working experience

### **Graduates' Employability**

The concept of gradueness highlights a number of issues related to the argument about the value of a degree. It provides answers to the questions of whether a graduate has the traits of a degree holder and whether a degree itself denotes the possession of a specific set of traits. Accordingly, the idea sparks a conversation about the qualities of graduates upon degree award (Ross, 1996). Stated differently, it discusses the requirements of a person who has been granted the status of graduate. Accordingly, the Graduate Standards Programme (GSP) proposed that a degree be awarded based on a minimum of three sets of accomplishments: field-specific, shared characteristics of particular degree families or institutions, and more general shared characteristics that all graduates possess.

In keeping with this, the Graduate Standards Programme (GSP) proposed that a degree be awarded based on a minimum of three sets of accomplishments: field-specific, shared by certain degree families or institutions, and more general shared by all graduates.

Therefore, in order to receive a degree of any kind, a graduate must meet the prerequisites for merit or abilities set forth by each of the aforementioned fields. Therefore,

the second area, which distinguishes the qualities of graduates from one institution or field from others, must also receive attention in addition to the first and third fields, which are currently of great importance to many colleges. In addition to addressing the mechanisms that encourage the attainment of the attributes in the three fields, it is equally important to ensure that graduates have met a predetermined expected threshold of each set of attributes before they graduate.

The concept of gradueness is thus a full-size set of criteria which subsumes the concept of employability. Without singling out the need to accommodate employers, gradueness emphasizes the efforts to equip students with the criteria that prepare them to contribute to others which include, but not limited to, the expectations of employers (Pegg et al,2012). Graduates are expected to possess certain general attributes after completing their experience of higher education. Among the attributes are (a) Critical and creative thinking characterised by the ability to see things objectively (HEQC, 1995); (b)Preparedness to serve members of the community other than their workplaces; (c) ‘Personal transferable skills’, grouped under four headings i- Managing tasks and solving problems, ii-Working with others, iii- communication, and iv-Self-awareness [De Montfort University (HEQC, 1995)]. The other attributes are (d) Cognitive learning, emotional and moral development and practical competence (Bowen, 1977). Cognitive learning includes verbal skills, quantitative skills, substantive knowledge, rationality, intellectual tolerance, aesthetic sensibility, creativeness, wisdom and life-long learning.

Several parties have examined how the terms "graduate" and "bachelor's degree" are used. According to Otter (1992), it is conceivable for students to graduate without having any of the critical characteristics expected of a "graduate" according to some employers and academic members. What does it mean to be a graduate is an issue that is raised by this. Due to the growing discrepancies between the academic procedures that former and present students must go through before receiving the title graduate or a bachelor's degree, phrases that have been in use since the Middle Ages are currently being evaluated. There are several phenomena that raise the question of whether being a graduate indicates credentials or talent, which in turn raises the problem of graduate quality. The Unit for the Development of Adult and Continuing Education (UDACE) recommended that specific measures be taken to support the qualities of a graduate. Since gradueness provides standards for graduates to reach the necessary competency level, it is a better idea than employability. It also outlines how HE should put up strategies to mold and shape pupils to fulfill the demands of

stakeholders, including parents, society, universities, and businesses. The idea encourages universities to foster a holistic student development experience while students are enrolled in order to prepare students with the required features so that they become graduates (the final product) who are competent for careers and society.

### **The Job Market Review**

The employment market, according to Fossimock B. (2017), is the scenario in which companies look for workers and workers look for jobs (<http://www.investipodia.com>). The job market is more of a concept that illustrates the competitiveness and interactions between various labor forces than it is an actual location. The quantity of labor supply and demand in the broader economy, particular industries with particular educational requirements, or particular job functions can all affect how big or small the job market is. While the job market affects the employment rate, unemployment rate, and underemployment rate of the economy, labor force education and training have an impact on the job market mean in the individual countries around the world. It should be mentioned that a higher unemployment rate in a society results in a bigger supply of labor in the labor market as a whole, which lowers wages and leads to underemployment. Employers may be pickier or reduce wages when they have a wider pool of candidates to choose from. As the unemployment rate drops employers are forced to compete more heavily for available workers, which has the effect of increasing wages, a rise in employment. (Fossimock.B, 2017) further holds that the job market world wide has its indicators and specificities through which researchers; policy makers, job seekers and many others can be able to determine its functioning, capacity, growth, needs and aspirations. Since 1999, the ILO has developed 18 important labor market indicators, which are as follows:

- rate of labor force participation.
- ratio of employment to population.
- Unemployment status.
- Employment by industry.
- Employment by profession.
- Employees who work part-time.
- Work hours.
- Work in the unorganized sector.
- Joblessness.

- unemployment among young people.
- Extended periods of unemployment.
- Unemployment due to time.
- A lack of activity.
- Levels of education and illiteracy.
- A mismatch in skills.
- Pay and benefits expenses.
- Productivity of labor.
- poor, working poor, income inequality, and employment by economic class.

Both the public and private sectors are covered by these metrics. The aforementioned metrics will serve as a guide when policymakers, employers, and graduates collaborate to establish faculties that prepare young people to adapt to the labor market. The graduates will enter the workforce with strong manual, technological, and psychological skills to boost the country's economic growth (Fossimock.B, *ibid*).

There are too many domestic and foreign job markets in the context of subregional integration (Fossimock.B, *ibid*). Examples of foreign employment, primarily in the private sector, are used to illustrate this point. For example, a lot of workers leave Cameroon to work abroad at World Wild. The poverty reduction plan paper signed in Cameroon in 2003 promoted this idea of intercontinental employment. "Convinced that subregional integration is an effective strategy for its insertion into an expanding global economy," reads Article 3.6.5 (Labour Market). Cameroon and other economic community of central African state (CEMAC) zone members states agreed to accelerate a number of actions including the immediate introduction of the CEMAC passport and the elimination of all impediments to the free movements of persons, goods, services and capital', (PRST p. 68). University graduates now have more work options, but University of Yaoundé graduates appear to be left behind since they lack the abilities needed to compete for jobs across borders.

There are two primary job markets in Cameroon: the private sector and government jobs (civil service). Since the 1998 law of orientation on Cameroon's education, the country's population have been psychologically conditioned to accept the government as the sole employer. However, university curricula, teaching, and governmental regulations are the main ways that this stigma is reinforced.

It is further reinforced by the fact that graduates of the aforementioned system typically lack the skills necessary to choose between domestic and foreign employment in the private sector, unless they receive vocational training or specialize at a private university.

Every year, graduates are employed in a number of sectors owned by the Cameroonian government. These include the Army core, the National School of Magistracy (ENAM), the Government Teacher's Training College (GTTC), the Higher Teacher's Training College (ENS, /HTTC), and numerous others. These organizations recruit and hire a sizable number of young people each year; admission to these professionalization institutes is determined solely by merit, notwithstanding some anomalies (bribery and corruption) in the system. notwithstanding these issues, the state continues to be a favorable employer.

These organizations recruit and hire a sizable number of young people each year; admission to these professionalization institutes is determined solely by merit, notwithstanding some anomalies (bribery and corruption) in the system. notwithstanding these issues, the state continues to be a favorable employer. Undoubtedly, for the reasons of job security, the majority of the unemployed youths especially those of secondary and higher education level preferred paid jobs from the public service NIS (2011).

The issue of graduate unemployment in Cameroon is undoubtedly a major worry for the state. In this light, she has been making many attempts in this domain to keep the adolescents employed. Since independence, a number of reforms have been implemented, which have decreased the trends in poverty. Cameroon has centered its policies since gaining independence on carrying out a five-year plan. This plan was satisfactorily achieved thanks to a conducive international environment, as a result, per-capital income doubled between 1960 and 1980, living conditions of the population greatly improved and several infrastructures were developed which are today considered as the basis of economic activity and social promotion (Vision 2035, 2009; p.8)

In 2003, the government founded the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in which the issue of unemployment was cardinal. Up until 2007, this paper was relevant, with both significant successes and disappointments. With a more dedicated focus on the battle against graduate unemployment, Vision 2035 emerged from 2006, a 25-year plan. In order to sufficiently enhance this most respected mission, for the first face, the Cameroon government created the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) for the period of 2010/2020 period so as to have a clear view and practical evaluation possibilities.

By producing about 10,000 formal jobs annually over the next ten years, the state is expected to lower the underemployment rate from 75.8% to less than 50% in 2020, according to the GESP 2010/2020. Furthermore, the government knows that achieving a high employment rate is the key to becoming wealthy and reducing poverty. Therefore, growth will be attained through effective unemployment management. In order to address this issue, the government plans to integrate informal sector actors into the formal sector. The overall goal is to decrease the informal sector's part of the country's economic activity. At the same time, the government hopes that by putting this approach into practice, it will generate roughly 10,000 job possibilities annually in the official sector.

In order to address this issue, the government plans to integrate informal sector actors into the formal sector. The overall goal is to decrease the informal sector's part of the country's economic activity. At the same time, the government hopes that by putting this approach into practice, it would generate roughly 10,000 new job possibilities annually in the formal sector.

Matching words with actions, the Cameroon government engaged in the mass employment process where in, the decision to employ 25,000 young Cameroonians taken by the president of the republic of Cameroon on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2011 (NIS, 2011) went a long way to inculcate a new and positive momentum in the Cameroon's job market and huge relieve on the few who met the conditions. The public, particularly the unemployed graduates who have been living in luxury in private jobs and unemployment, praised the president's choice. This occurred as a result of its intervention in a socioeconomic environment with a high need for jobs (the unemployment rate was 5.6%). This decision covered just 10% of the employment as stated by Employment and Informal sector Survey (EESI 2) in Cameroon and the private sector carries the burden. The age range that was targeted was 17–40 years old. This recruitment creates a significant demographic weight that accounts for approximately 37.4% of the total population in 2010, or 7,257,881 individuals, of which 50.4% are women and 49.6% are men. This population of this age group is more in Yaoundé amounting to 48.3%, 70.7% graduates (EESI 2) stated by the (NIS, 2011). Higher education graduates have historically been the most affected by unemployment and underemployment among this age group; of those who are employed, a portion have been absorbed into the most cherished public service. Unemployment is particularly concerning in the metropolitan towns of Douala and Yaoundé. Undoubtedly, for the evident reasons of job security, the majority of

unemployed youths especially those of the secondary and higher education prefer jobs in the public service or the modern private sector (NIS, 2011).

While MINJEC established PAJE-U and PIFMAS (Project d'insertion socioeconomique des jeunes par la création des Micro-entreprises de fabrication du matériel sportif) in November 2007, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training established PIAASI (Program Intégré d'appui aux Acteurs du Secteur Informel) in 2014.

In order to lower youth unemployment in Cameroon, the corresponding ministries established these organizations to train young Cameroonians in various fields of expertise and projects that support them during the accomplishment process. In addition to Cameroon's customary annual public examination launch, 400,000 new positions were established and made available in 2016 to hire young people. In Cameroon, the state is the most suitable work market.

On the other side, Cameroon's economy has suffered as a result of this choice. Many young people entering the workforce lack fundamental abilities and are overloaded with theories and unfounded information. Furthermore, the goal of individuals recruited from universities and placed in classrooms as teachers is to either "unteach" or "derail" the next generation. They are ignorant of teacher pedagogy, ethics, and deontology. As a result of this decision, master's students are also integrated into the university system to teach without receiving the pedagogy, lesson plan, ethics, and deontology training that all teachers must have, and bachelor's degree holders are taken and sent to colleges to teach.

The introduction of new and complex approaches, such as the Competence Base Approach (CBA), which aims to teach students fundamental skills that will enable them to solve basic problems on a daily basis, is a very difficult knot for many experienced teachers to untie, let alone those who have never had the time or opportunity to receive training in it. They instill the same theory in the following generation and bring it to class.

Secondary and university students suffer from this issue since teachers' incapacity to grasp curriculum and teaching pedagogy continuously pushes them into the predicament of unemployment as a result of their lack of skills. There is a good chance that the government is giving the Cameroon economy a very bad start. What will happen in the future if the younger generations are managed by inexperienced staff members? Unemployment and the shaky economy will reappear, and the same unskilled knowledge will be carried with it.

Before turning over the next generation to them, teachers who are hired in large numbers to teach in secondary and university education should attend mandatory remedial classes, seminars, and conferences hosted by the various schools, divisions, or the entire region. These sessions should cover pedagogy, ethics, and the deontology of the job. Another area where Cameroon's unemployment issue exists is the private or unorganized industry.

This sector is made up of industries (Brasseries of Cameroon, firms, enterprises, non-governmental organisation (NGO), parastetals (Camair-co, ENEO,) faming, and the list is endless giving the rich natural endowments of the country that baptised her as “Africa in miniature”. Despite having a wealth of natural resources, consistent economic growth, and a strategic location in central Africa, Cameroon's investment climate is hampered by widespread corruption and a slow, onerous bureaucracy. Profit maximization and cost reduction are hallmarks of the private sector. This indicates that individuals are either intentionally or inadvertently subjected to low pay and unfavorable working circumstances, particularly in our setting where there is no active labor law.

In spite of all of this, Cameroon's private sector offers fresh graduates excellent employment opportunities in a variety of sectors. It's important to note that when they post a job opening, they have a lot of trouble choosing the right candidates. Among other things, challenges include applicants' lack of abilities, skills mismatch, low capital and application volume, unfavorable trading conditions, and excessive taxes. This can be explained by the fact that university curricula generally conflict with what employers are looking for.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This section discusses a few theories that establish connections between professionalization and employability and lay the theoretical groundwork for employability education. For this investigation, the following framework theories were deemed pertinent:

- The Human Capital Theory, mostly through the lens of Gary Becker.
- The Experiential Learning Theory, with David Kolb as the foremost proponent.
- The Correspondence Theory initiated by Bowles and Gintis, but viewed in this work mostly from the neo-correspondence perspective of Saunders and Machell.
- The Boundaryless Career and Employability theory.

### **The Human Capital Theory (1964, 1993, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed, 2005)**

According to (Benedict. M & Peter N,2023) the idea that people gain skills and knowledge to raise their worth in the job market was first put forth by Nobel Laureate Theodore W. Schultz and developed by Nobel Laureate Gary Becker. The three basic methods for acquiring human capital are education, experience, and training, with education being the most important for most people. New knowledge and abilities can be acquired more easily through education, which boosts productivity. This rise in productivity frees up resources to produce new innovations, ventures, and riches, ultimately leading to higher economic growth. Education is a *public good* since it helps both the individual and society as a whole (Sebola, 2022). According to Wright (2021);

“The twentieth century can be thought of as the “human capital century”. The twentieth century became the human capital century because of wide-ranging changes in business, industry, and technology that increased the demand for particular cognitive skills. The early twentieth century rise of big business and large retail, insurance, and banking operations, for example generated increased demand for literate and numerate office workers” (p.88).

Gary Becker, an educator and sociologist, defined human capital as *the pool of skills, knowledge, and character traits that are manifested in the capacity to execute work in a way that generates economic value* (1964, 1993, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed, 2005). It is a skill that a worker develops via training and experience. It is a crucial idea in social and economic theory. The idea behind human capital is that investments in people may be at least as beneficial to the economy as those in buildings and machinery. This quickly introduces the idea that investing in education is a critical approach (Benedict. M & Peter.N,2023).

Becker (2005, p. 1), whose Noble Prize in 1992 was partly for his work on human capital, writes that *Education and training are the most important investment in human capital*. According to him, "the human capital approach takes into account how investments in education alter people's productivity in both market and non-market situations" (Benedict.M & Peter.N *ibid*).

Becker (2005, p. 1) notes that “the earnings of more educated people are almost always well above average” He asserts that it is evident that knowledgeable people are the

backbone of the economy, citing the US economy as an example, where the information sector generates the bulk of GDP.

According to Becker, schools are the key elements in human capital, developing and distributing knowledge, providing skills and attitudes for the labour market. This is because of rapid changes in technology, business, finance and industry, with a consequent need for employees who are highly professional (Benedict.M & Peter.N; *ibid*). According to Moghtader (2021), *many nations are beginning to realise and recognise this link between higher education and the national economy and are investing in a better higher education to be able to produce people with the skills and capabilities to fit the new knowledge economies.*

The theory of human capital is linked to According to Gary Becker, education produces skills that enable those with those talents to be more productive than those without them. Like every investment project, education is expensive, but it also has rewards that are comparable to its expenses. We notice from Becker's view of human capital that human beings can be viewed as capital and that one can invest in them through education and training so that their output can improve both qualitatively and quantitatively. Becker and other proponents of the human capital theory like Mincer (1994) believe that a worker's income increases as his level of education and experience in the field increases. The worker's salary should in other words reflect the amount of his input or contribution to the production of the goods and services that generate the general income of the company or enterprise where he works. Becker also distinguishes between 'specific' and 'general' human capital (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023)

The knowledge and abilities that are specifically relevant to a specific employer or industry are known as specific human capital; despite the fact that all employers can benefit from general human capital like literacy. If employees only possess a restricted set of skills and information, they run the danger of losing their value to other businesses and employers if the company to which they are helpful shuts down (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*).

Opportunity costs and the idea of the forgone alternative are other concepts used by human capital theorists. They contend that the price of education includes more than just the resources used to fund it. The opportunity costs associated with forgoing opportunities in order to devote time and pursue education can also be used to calculate the cost of education. People who are impatient and pass up possibilities do not advance to certain levels, and as a result, their incomes are poor, reflecting their educational backgrounds. The job market

reward individuals who can be patient and forsake other possibilities to gain particular skills and more specialized knowledge, particularly in terms of levels of employability and pay (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*).

Education also affects employment diversely. An individual's wages and the quality of his work are both impacted by the amount of education (further education) he receives. Jacob Mincer (1994) claimed in his book *Studies in Human Capital* that people with higher levels of education had three benefits over those with lower levels of education: higher pay, more stable employment, and more opportunities for income advancement. There are two reasons why workers with more education earn more money. First, as was previously mentioned, more human capital leads to more production, which enables employees to demand better pay. Second, more education lowers the likelihood of unemployment, boosts labor force participation, and lowers job turnover. The outcome is that workers with higher levels of education work more hours per year for higher hourly wages than their counterparts with lower levels of education (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*). Education and unemployment are negatively correlated because those with higher education levels have more job-specific human capital and are better at finding employment (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*). Mincer (1994) explains why more educated workers have lower unemployment. “The more informed the job search, the more likely is a successful job match, hence the longer are workers likely to stay on the next job”.

According to the same study, educated employees participate in more firm-specific training, increasing their value to their employers and lowering the likelihood of involuntary job turnover, particularly when the company, not the employees, initiates the training (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*).

In summary, human capital theorists such Gary Becker, Mark Blaug, Mincer, and numerous others contend that education produces abilities that enable individuals with them to be more productive than those without. Similar to every investment project, education has expenses, but it also has advantages that may be weighed against those costs. The human capital theory draws links between higher education and employability of graduates in terms of professional or more specialized skilled education that can or should lead to a higher employability of graduates in the sense that the more skills and knowledge graduates have in a profession, the higher the probability of being hired, and the higher the probability of maintaining work or finding new work where need be. The number of skills and knowledge the individuals have through education will directly affect the general level of productivity in

a country that is the gross national product (GNP), and lead to economic growth (Benedict.M&Peter.N, ibid)

Gruzina, Firsova&Strielkowski (2021) are of the opinion that the ability of a country to apply modern technology to agricultural and industrial production is determined largely by the quantity of its human capital. In spite of the great efforts made to improve on education in developing countries, there is still shortage of human capital because a large part of the adult population lack the skilled labour required for modern technology in agriculture and industrial production (Benedict.M & Peter.N, ibid) This according to Deming (2022) is due partly to “the impact of a diploma cult in many African countries to the detriment of the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge in science and technology to swell the ranks of poverty in villages and urban centres”. According to Benedict.M & Peter.N,ibid), the lack of professionalization in our higher learning institutes will lead to lack of the knowledge, skills and attributes required in the labour market, causing the level of unemployment and under employment to rise.Amin, (1999, p. 98) explains: *“the low earnings of the poor are partly due to their relatively lower capital investments in education and partly due to labour market discriminations. Education can help alleviate the first but other action is needed to minimize the effects of the second”*.

While concurring with Amin here, we think that it is not any kind of education that can lead to conspicuous rise in the levels of employability of graduates. In African countries and in Cameroon in particular, general formal education has proved or is proving inadequate in the world market in our world of advanced technologies and skills. This therefore means that in developing countries, from primary to higher education and even to alternative forms like non-formal education, priority should be placed on skill acquisition. Thus, capital investment in more professional higher education can be very useful as a strategy to fight against unemployment in Cameroon. Skills such as agricultural skills and capabilities, skills in new information and communication technologies, business skills such as in marketing and advertisement could become very relevant in enhancing the employability of graduates either in industries and companies or in self-employment and job creation (Benedict.M & Peter.N, ibid).

Amin, (1999) equally thinks that education has a direct bearing on the earnings of those who receive it. Psacharopoulos as cited by Amin (1999) found that while having very high returns to primary education, 27%, secondary education is only 15% and 17%, especially in developing countries, remains a highly profitable venture than in developed

countries. Education also has an impact on productivity. Amin, (1999) thinks that the level of earnings as seen above can be used as a direct measure for productivity which best illustrates the impact of education on economic growth. He notes that workers who have had more education are physically more productive than those with less education (Benedict.M&Peter.N, ibid).

In Cameroon, we believe that if more investment is done on professionalising higher education, especially on courses, the employability of graduates would have been enhanced and the situation of unemployment improved upon (Benedict.M & Peter.N,ibid) Lockheed, Jamison and Lau (1980) cited by Amin (1999), compared the agricultural output of farmers with different levels of education concluded that four years of primary education increased productivity of farmers by 8.7% generally and 100% in countries undergoing modernisation as in Asia. In Cameroon, primary education is almost attained nationwide with free primary education. The need now is to make good and valuable investment in higher education with emphasis on professionalization, and returns, in terms of employability of graduates could be tremendous (Benedict.M &Peter.N, ibid). According to Bendickson, Chandler, James & Taylor (2021), the more one learns the more he earns, when he says that *why are we so keen to raise standards in our schools?*

Earlier on, (Benedict .M & Peter.N, ibid) quoting Bendickson et al., (2021) seemed to have been suggesting that it is the role of the government to invest in its citizens in terms of education, so that they can acquire the necessary skills needed to work, when he says;

For 18 years the poorest people in our country have been forgotten by government. They have been left out of the growing prosperity... I want that to change.... We need to change because fatalism and not just poverty and unemployment is the problem we face, the dead weight of low expectations the crushing belief that things cannot get better. I want to give people back the will to win again. (Benedict & Peter.N 2023).

Higher education is funded in Cameroon in an effort to restore people's motivation to succeed. According to the human capital theory, an individual's optimal investment in human capital calls for a consideration of both human and financial capacities, and the prospective utilization of the capital that is being accumulated (Mincer and Polachek, 1974). Consequently, the expectations regarding future family and market activities of individuals play an important role in the determination of the levels and forms of human capital

investment, to the extent that labour market earnings are determined by the stock of human capital accumulated by individuals, a sequence of positive net investments results in an earning power that grows over the life cycle (Fix, 2021). Consequently, educational attainments such as in tertiary education are thought to be plausible causes of earnings differential between individuals. These ideas have given foundation to a huge number of studies on returns to schooling around the world (Benedict .M & Peter.N, *ibid*).

The primary goal of prior research was to examine how earnings were impacted by educational attainment, length of education, and work experience. Elbanna and Idowu (2021) conducted a thorough review of published research on the private returns on education investments in numerous sub-Saharan African nations. With a 24% return on elementary education, an 18% return on secondary education, and an 11% return on higher education, he came to the conclusion that the returns to education were diminishing over time. He believes that funding for elementary education should take precedence over funding for higher education. His results were put to question by Bennell (1996), revealing theoretical and empirical shortcomings in studies that deal with individual rate of return to education in African countries. Bennell's arguments undermined the validity of Elbanna and Idowu's (2021) aggregate estimates for the continent as a whole, but they also prompted numerous other studies of sub-Saharan African nations that refuted Elbanna and Idowu's (2021) finding that primary education consistently yielded higher returns than secondary or higher education. Manda and Bigsten (1998) and Ghi, Nguyen, Huan & Nguyen (2022) analysed the impact of educational expansion and returns on schooling in Kenya and found that private returns on secondary and tertiary education were high, but close to zero for primary education.

The analysis of the returns on education in Cameroon tends to be scarce, with little empirical evidence. Tafah-Edokat (1998) and Amin&Ntembe (2021), are some of the known studies on private returns to education. Primary education yields the highest returns, followed by secondary and tertiary education, according to Tafah-Edokat (1998), who came to the conclusion that primary education should be prioritized and that those who are willing to pursue higher education should be required to pay a larger share of the expenses associated with it because the majority of the people in his sample were civil personnel, his findings have drawn criticism. According to Amin and Ntembe's (2021) research on higher education and the economic growth of African nations, investing in higher education has several advantages for the individual, including increased earnings that could result in better health

and a greater standard of living. According to their findings, even if private returns on higher education are lower than those of basic education, it should be highlighted that both the individual and Sub-Saharan Africa benefit from higher education at an enticing rate of return (27.8% and 11.3%, respectively). (Peter.N. & Benedict.M.,2023)

### **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) Kolb (1984)**

In the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle claimed that we learn things by doing them before we can do them. This was around 350 BCE. (1908) By strongly referencing the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, David Kolb contributed to build the modern idea of experiential learning starting in the 1970s. Kolb (1984) defined learning as simply: *the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience* Experiential Learning therefore has its roots in constructivist perspectives of learning, which assert that experience gained through life, education and work, should play a central role in learning. We consider that an appreciation of the experiential learning theory through the lens of Kolb (1984), is a necessary underpinning to the kind of teaching and learning activity discussed in employability education, in terms of work-related learning or placement learning which form some of the main perspectives of this study.

The premise behind experiential learning is that understanding is not a fixed or unchangeable part of the mind, but can be shaped and reshaped by experiences. If we learn from the experience, it should alter or transform the information, ideas, beliefs, and behaviors that each of us brings to learning situations in different degrees. This process is ongoing. To explain the relationships between human developmental phases of maturation, learning processes, and experiences, he created the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). According to him, experience influences how students absorb information, which in turn influences how their cognitive growth develops. According to proponents of experiential learning theory, knowledge is dynamic rather than static and is constantly being created and reconstructed as it attempts to engage with outside context and information. For learning to be successful, the continually cycle model of learning, now referred to as the "Kolb Learning Cycle," necessitates four types of skills or endeavors.

The four stages of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory are experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. A learner experiences each stage to varied degrees. However, a learner will typically exhibit a predilection or strength in only one of the stages at the most fundamental level. A learner's selected learning stage dictates their preferred learning

method. Drawing from the works of 20th century experiential scholars like Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, Kolb (1984), develops a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development (Wijnen-Meijer, Brandhuber, Schneider&Berberat, 2022; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Gong, Kwon& Brock (2022) describe experiential learning as a process of constructing knowledge from a creative tension among the four learning modes that is responsive to contextual demands. (According to Kolb.A & Kolb.D,2015),this process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle where the learner experiences all four modes – experiencing (concrete experience or CE), reflecting (reflective observation or RO), thinking (abstract conceptualization or AC), and acting (active experimentation or AE) - in a recurring process that is responsive to the learning situation and to what is being learned. According to the experiential learning theory, the learning cycle varies depending on the learning situation and the individual's preferred method of learning.

Kolb (1984) proposes that learners, through their choice of experience, program themselves to grasp reality through varying degrees and then transform their reality. The degree to which the learner will prioritize the four learning modalities is determined by their experience-based self-programming. Kolb created the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) to measure how each person is oriented toward the four learning process types. (According to Kolb.A & Kolb.D, *ibid*). At this point, we also discover connections between this theory and the employability and professionalization factors in our job, as it is utilized to explain how we develop as career professionals, reflecting the four-stage experiential learning model, which is described as follows:

**Concrete Experience:** As unqualified career practitioners before students enter training. This is where we gained access to the position, either as an intern or as a student who is working in the field to finish coursework.

**Reflective Observation:** They start some formal training. For some it is via the placement agency of their university and for others it is by personal initiative. In any case, early in their training, the majority of practitioners are placed in a position where they watch skilled and knowledgeable professionals perform their duties. After that, they might do tasks like thought exercises, group discussions, and journals or diaries. That is, taking a step back and analyzing the event.

**Abstract Conceptualization:** Establishing the connection between theory-based practice. This would be the introduction to writing assignments and career and guiding

concepts in training. Comparing what is seen and experienced with what is now known would be one way to do this.

### **Active Experimentation:**

Additionally, this begins throughout training and may last the entirety of a person's professional career. This is the implementation of phases two and three. For instance, if the student is learning interviewing and communication techniques, doing guiding interviews with a deliberate approach and justification while adhering to interview paradigms. During the early phases of a career, one spends time observing, learning, and experimenting. A seasoned careers practitioner should be spending more time actively experimenting, or, to put it another way, doing what they are qualified to do. Despite the fact that this is a cycle, it is anticipated that we will continue phase shift as new experiences are added

### **The Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI)**

The Learning Style Inventory, which is used to evaluate individual learning styles and assist people in identifying how they learn from experience, is a key component of Kolb's study on the experiential learning theory. The Kolb experiential learning theory serves as the foundation for the LSI, which also incorporates a thorough philosophy of learning and development (Kolb & Kolb, 2005:2). The idea of learning style emphasizes individual differences in learning based on the learner's preference for employing different learning cycle modalities. According to Conner (2022), the demands of our current environment, our individual life experiences, and our inherited makeup all play a role in the development of our chosen learning method. They also suggest that humans resolve the contradiction between being active or reflective and tangible or abstract in one of four systematic, distinctive ways: divergence, assimilation, convergence, or accommodation. These four patterns are the defined learning styles in Kolb's LSI. Nguyen, N. N. (2022, p. 3) created the LSI to fulfill two purposes:

- To act as a teaching tool to improve people's comprehension of their different learning styles and the process of learning from experience.
- To offer a research instrument for examining the traits of individual learning styles and the notion of experiential learning.

A brief summary of the four learning styles presented by Kolb and Kolb (2005) is necessary to enhance understanding of the ELT as a whole before we begin to show cases of

best practice, drawing links with the theory and the variables of our work: professionalization in higher education and employability of graduates.

### **Diverging**

CE and RO are the two main learning modes of a divergent learner. This kind of learner is excellent at looking at concrete problems from multiple perspectives. They enjoy learning new things and have a wide range of cultural interests. They are drawn to people, have a propensity for emotion and imagination, and frequently have an interest in the arts. The divergent learning method includes aspects like receiving individualized feedback, cooperating in groups, and respecting other points of view (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 5).

### **Assimilating**

The primary learning styles for someone with an absorbing style are AC and RO. The finest learners are those who can comprehend a broad range of knowledge and organize it logically and succinctly. People who learn through assimilation pay less attention to others and are more interested in ideas and abstract concepts. In the fields of science and information, they frequently perform well. An assimilator prefers to learn through lectures, and readings, having time to consider things through and experimenting with analytical models (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 5).

### **Converging**

The primary learning styles for someone with a converging style are AE and AC. This sort of learner is the most adept at putting concepts and theories to work in real-world circumstances. They have the ability to think through challenges and come to decisions by looking for the best answers. Converging learners frequently do well in technical and specialized fields. They typically learn best when given the chance to engage in simulations, real-world applications, lab work, and new concept experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p.5).

### **Accommodating**

(According to Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005) CE and AE are the dominant learning capacities of a person with an accommodating approach. This learning approach allows people to learn mostly through "hands-on" experience. They take pleasure in executing plans and engaging in novel and demanding situations. They are more likely to follow their "gut"

instincts than reason. In action-oriented professions like marketing or sales, those with an adaptive learning style typically perform well. They enjoy setting goals, working with others, and using different approaches for completing a project (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 5).

### **Description of Kolb's Theory on Experiential Learning and Development**

According to Kolb (1984) there is a quality of learning that cannot be ignored. It is proactive, forward-thinking, and assertive. Curiosity about the here-and-now and anticipation of the future drives the learning experience (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005). Therefore, if higher education is not only for the sake of education but with the anticipation of working in the future for private returns, then the theory suits our dependent variable of education for employability which is futuristic. Kolb holds that learning is the process through which development takes place and that the two processes are interdependent, in contrast to some conventional ideas that claim that learning and growth are independent processes.

The experiential learning theory of development therefore focuses on the transaction between internal characteristics and external circumstances, between personal knowledge and social knowledge and context (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005). The knowledge learnt from school should logically lead to a societal service function and personal development through gainful employment.

### **The Three Stages of Development**

Kolb's ELT states that learning is the major determinant of human development and how individuals learn shapes the course of their personal development (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Three phases are identified by the ELT development model (1984): integration, specialization, and acquisition. Basic skills and cognitive frameworks are developed throughout the acquisition stage, which lasts from birth until puberty. From the start of formal education through early employment and personal experiences in maturity, specialization takes place, and social, educational, and organizational socialization factors influence how an individual's sense of self is developed. This happens when one gains the ability to handle the demands of a chosen career. Integration occurs in midcareer and later life, where non dominant modes of learning are expressed in work and personal life (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005). This stage often brings social security and achievement (Kolb, 1984:144). Here, again this theory is very appropriate in drawing links between professionalization and employability learning in higher education because most of the knowledge that learners started acquiring

from lower levels of the education ladder, begin to enter into specialization and professionalization at the higher education stage, in preparation for job integration upon graduation. This can easily be facilitated through internships and job placements between the university and the industry.

### **The Three Levels of Adaptation**

A simple registrative consciousness governs performance during the acquisition stage of development, while an increasingly interpretative consciousness governs learning during the specialization stage. Three levels of adaptation represent the acquisition, specialization, and integration stages of development, each of which represents progressively higher-order forms of learning. In the integration stage, adaptation occurs through the achievement of holistic *development* governed by a consciousness that is integrative in its structure (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005). The governing factors of the three levels of adaptation (registrative, interpretative, and integrative) define the three levels of consciousness (Kolb, 1984, pp. 145-146).

Kolb (1984) summarizes that each developmental stage of maturation is characterized by acquisition of a higher-level structure of consciousness than the stage preceding it, although earlier levels of consciousness remain; that is, adults can display all three levels of consciousness. The registrative, interpretative, and integrative levels of consciousness govern the process of learning from experience through the selection and definition of that experience (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005). This should normally lead to solving problems. Syaifullah, Harun, Izzah, Munawar, Roji & Arifin (2021) corroborate this by insinuating that: *the experiential cycle does not simply involve having an experience, or 'doing', but also reflecting, processing, thinking and furthering understanding, and usually 'improvement' the next time something is encountered or done.* (Kolb A & Kolb.D,2005).

### **Experiential Learning Theory and Cases of Best Practice in Higher Education**

From the above discussion, we notice that to talk about the ELT without given practical examples of how it can operate in a learning context, will only end in definitions without concrete testing, leaving it hanging. We will therefore proceed to give cases of best practice, especially in the context of employability education in the higher education context, which is our area of concern. Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall, in their Handbook for Teaching in higher education, suggest practical examples of using the experiential learning theory in practical ways like in the case of learning and reflection with first year medical students

learning patient-centered communication skills, backed by several chances for students to practice through role-playing. Students can learn in a safe setting through role-playing without worrying about hurting actual patients. The effectiveness of role play is maximized by taking time for briefing (to put the role play in context and identify students' individual needs) and debriefing (to provide opportunity for reflections and feedback) (Syaiyullah et al., 2021). Three opportunities for role-playing are offered towards the conclusion of Year 1, utilizing "concrete experiences" to promote experiential learning. Students interview a professional "simulated patient" (SP), conduct three five-minute interviews with volunteers, and role-play with one another.

Giving feedback encourages kids to think critically. In order for them to provide constructive criticism to one another, students are taught how to offer and receive feedback. The ideal opportunity for students to receive feedback and guidance in their reflections is after their interview with a professional SP, where each student spends 20 minutes with an experienced facilitator and an SP. Volunteers offer input on a quick rating form. Prior to getting evaluation from the SP, the student is asked to evaluate their own performance after interviewing the SP. In order to optimize benefits, SPs and facilitators are trained to provide feedback that is both challenging and supportive. The facilitator asks the students to consider how they would further refine their skills and apply them in future patient interviews after summarizing their reflections and the SP's remarks (Kolb's abstract conceptualization, active experimentation).

Students might be given the opportunity to reenact parts of the role play to determine whether a different strategy would have worked better in order to promote active experimentation.

The aim of encouraging reflection after role plays is to develop students' attitudes to reflective practice so that they will continue to use it in encounters with real patients, not only while they are studying, but throughout their professional lives (Mensah, Arthur & Mensah-Williams, 2022; Chiang, Wells & Xu, 2021).

Experiential learning can therefore help in increasing the employability of students. It is basically the knowledge you gain beyond the books. Let's consider a simple example, in a chemistry class where students are thought some formulae but their concepts of these formulae are still abstractions. For example, to say that the test for oxygen is that it relights a glowing splen is not enough. The students need a practical class in a chemistry laboratory

where oxygen is put in a test tube, brought near a glowing spleen which has been heated on a Bunsen burner, and the spleen is re-lighted to prove that it is oxygen (Radović, Hummel & Vermeulen, 2021). That is what experiential learning is about. You actually do what you read to make your base strong.

Theory dominates practice in Cameroonian institutions, and the current curricula place more of a focus on classroom instruction based on books. These curricula lack experiential learning, which weakens students' foundations because they rarely internalize what they have read without enough practice. If they are asked to implement their knowledge say in a job interview, they would have problems. Also, when students seek initial employment in an industry, their internship and practical marks are taken into serious consideration because the employer is seeking experience. Worsening the situation is the current teaching methodology. The lectures in the classroom are dull monologues that give the pupils very little opportunity to explore. Every bit of information they are given should ideally pique their interest. While most students just simply listen to what they are being told to eventually forget (Morris, 2020).

This has links with employability in the sense that when you are on the field during your job, you are expected to suddenly apply all the concepts you had learned in your class to deliver tangible results. But the current educational set-up doesn't prepare the students to understand the real-life implementation of what they listen to in the classroom. Normally, a prior experience to the live implementation of the concepts helps students to develop a deeper understanding. This could be achieved by activities like industry visits, live projects and most importantly constructive dialogues between the students and the professors.

The idea of experiential learning is to make students ready for employment purposes. This also helps the industry to shorten training periods. Hence through experiential learning, students gain experience that will help them gain initial employment and keep growing their employability once in the industry. Experiential Learning Theory is therefore an important theory to this study, considering its links with professionalization and employability as explained above. The idea behind experiential education is based on several educational axioms, such as "Give a person a fish and they can have a meal, teach the person to catch fish and they can eat fish for a lifetime." Proverbs like "I hear, and I forget I see," "I remember, I do, and I understand," and others that are ascribed to different cultures and have to do with

experiential learning. EL is a necessary and it absolutely boosts values, and thus employability as well.

Kolb's cycle of experiential learning is therefore considered a useful framework theory in this work, considering its connections with professionalization of courses and employability of graduates. Most educators understand the important role experience plays in the learning process. The role of emotion and feelings in learning from experience has been recognized as an important part of experiential learning (Lehane, 2020; Fewster-Thuente & Batteson, 2018). Even though they might increase the chances of experiential learning, it can still happen without them. Instead, the key to experiential learning is to encourage the learner to participate directly in the experience and then use analytical skills to reflect on their experiences. They will comprehend the new material more fully and retain it longer as a result. Like experiential learning itself, reflection is an essential component of the process and can be either independent or supported. Dewey wrote that "successive portions of reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another", creating a scaffold for further learning, and allowing for further experiences and reflection (Kolb, 1984).

It might be difficult to enable experiential learning and reflection, but a skilled facilitator can help open the door to powerful new thinking and learning by guiding reflective dialogue and asking the right questions before, during, and after an event. This strengthens the idea that experiential learning and reflective learning are interactive processes, and that the learning grows and develops with additional reflection and experience.

The business education sector is another example of best practices for experiential learning. As higher education continues to adjust to students' changing needs, experiential learning has grown in significance in business and accounting schools. For example, Clark & White (2010) point out that *a quality university business education program must include an experiential learning component*. According to this study, companies point out that students who are graduating must have "professionalism" abilities, which can be taught through hands-on learning. Students value this knowledge just as much as the industry does. In this kind of education, internships should become compulsory and be part of the graded course work.

Pamungkas, Widiastuti & Suharno (2019) emphasized that *business internships are in connection with the experiential learning model as it exposes students to live experiences in a structured environment*. They added that because students may assess their experiences, work

experience encourages reflective thinking and is participatory. Their opinion seems to be quite pertinent to this research because this can make courses more professional. Professional education applications, apply experiential learning techniques in training employees at all levels within the business and professional environment. In cases like this, interactive, role-play-based customer service training in addition to internships could also be used in class, like the case of medical students explained earlier on. Training board games simulating business and professional situations could also be used.

Furthermore, one of the ways universities could practice the experiential learning theory is by incorporating work experience programs in their curricula. This is because the business environment today is not static; it is dynamic. Research regarding transitioning from higher education into the workplace has indicated that with noticeable advancement in technology, the demand for skilled and experienced personnel in the workplace has increased significantly (Matsuo & Nagata, 2020, Falloon, 2019, Johnson, Khan & Saeed, 2020). To this aim, in order to perform successfully and efficiently in their positions, workers in today's competitive labor market require work experience. Students get the perfect chance to develop and hone their core skills and practical orientation through the work experience program, which facilitates their transfer to the workforce.

This view was advocated by Beukers & Bertolini (2021) who emphasized that the work experience program allows students to explore the work environment where they are able to work with others, thus improving their interpersonal skills as well as their understanding of systems through exposure to working with technology

Burke (2020) corroborating Beukers & Bertolini (2021) posited that various schools now incorporate compulsory work experience into their curriculum to enhance the traditional classroom setting. He further added that participating in experience programs gives students a competitive edge with employers and enhances their employment prospects. It is clear from the opinions stated that 21st century employability education students need to re-equip themselves by acquiring new research techniques and technologies in addition to new academic knowledge and abilities. Because students apply what they are learning while they are learning it, Hayden and Osborn (2020) stated that work experience is fundamentally developmental and that the main objective of the program is to support structured learning. The workplace and the educational institution are the two different locations where this takes

place. The educational institution and the workplace are the two different contexts in which this takes place.

According to Idris, Din & Tajuddin (2020), the work experience program is not limited to job placements, but allows for assessment, reflective thinking and integration of workplace experience and classroom learning. They describe work experience as practice-oriented education. Work experience allows students to learn about acceptable work habits. Kumar & Bhandarker (2020) described the work experience exercise as an educational opportunity for students to explore their employment goals. This allows them to make informed decisions about their career path. The ELT is therefore a very suitable framework theory for this thesis because it lays the ground work for employability education and if well applied in higher education institutions, can serve as a platform for the training of suitable human capital for the knowledge economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Correspondence Theory**

The Correspondence Theory of education, developed by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in their seminal work *Schooling in Capitalist America*, provides a structural explanation of the relationship between education systems and labour market outcomes. The theory posits that educational institutions mirror the hierarchical and social relations of production found in capitalist economies. According to Bowles and Gintis (1976), the organisation of schooling its authority structures, reward systems, discipline mechanisms, and evaluation methods corresponds directly to the organisation of the workplace.

### **Core Assumptions of Correspondence Theory**

Correspondence Theory rests on several central propositions:

1. **Structural Parallelism** Schools replicate workplace hierarchies through grading systems, authority structures, and competition.
2. **Reproduction of Labour Power** Education produces workers with the behavioural traits required by employers (punctuality, obedience, conformity).
3. **Social Reproduction of Inequality** Educational systems perpetuate class stratification by channeling students into differentiated labour market outcomes.

From this perspective, employability is not merely a function of skills acquisition but of how education socialises students into roles compatible with existing economic structures.

### **Relevance to Professionalisation of BMD Programmes**

In the context of Cameroon, reforms implemented under the BMD system aim to align higher education with labour market demands through competency-based curricula, internship requirements, quality assurance mechanisms, and policy-driven professionalisation initiatives under the guidance of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Correspondence Theory provides a critical lens through which to interpret these reforms. The emphasis on:

- Competency-based curriculum content
- Work-integrated learning
- Continuous assessment and practical evaluation strategies
- Strengthened university–industry collaboration

May be understood as mechanisms for ensuring stronger alignment or "correspondence" between university structures and labour market expectations.

### **Implications for Government Policy and Curriculum Reform**

The professionalisation agenda reflects a shift from purely academic knowledge transmission to labour market responsiveness. From a correspondence perspective:

- **Government policy** shapes the regulatory environment to produce labour-market-compliant graduates.
- **Curriculum content** increasingly mirrors industry competencies.
- **Teaching methods** emphasise behavioural and practical competencies valued by employers.
- **Evaluation strategies** assess not only cognitive knowledge but workplace relevant skills.

Thus, BMD professionalisation can be interpreted as a structural adjustment of higher education to meet economic production needs.

### **Critical Perspective**

While Correspondence Theory illuminates structural alignment between education and employment, it has been critiqued for its economic determinism. It underestimates agency, innovation, and the role of higher education in promoting entrepreneurship and social transformation elements central to contemporary employability discourse in Cameroon. Furthermore, the theory assumes a relatively stable capitalist labour market, whereas Cameroon's economy is characterised by a large informal sector and hybrid employment patterns.

Nevertheless, the theory remains valuable for explaining why governments prioritise employability reforms and why curriculum restructuring is often tied to economic competitiveness.

### **Boundaryless Career Theory and Employability**

In contrast to the structural determinism of Correspondence Theory, the Boundaryless Career Theory associated primarily with Michael B. Arthur and Denise M. Rousseau emerged in response to shifting global labour markets characterised by flexibility, mobility, and reduced organisational loyalty (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

#### **Core Assumptions of Boundaryless Career Theory**

Boundaryless Career Theory posits that careers are no longer confined within single organisations but unfold across multiple employers, sectors, and sometimes geographical boundaries. Key assumptions include:

1. **Career Mobility** Individuals move across organisational boundaries.
2. **Self-Directed Career Management** Individuals are responsible for developing their own employability.
3. **Transferable Skills and Networks** Career success depends on portable competencies and social capital.

Within this framework, employability replaces lifetime employment as the central organising principle of career success.

### **Employability as a Competency-Based Construct**

Employability theory conceptualises employability as a set of achievements skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations (Yorke, 2006). It extends beyond immediate job acquisition to include adaptability, lifelong learning, and entrepreneurial orientation. For BMD professionalisation, this implies that universities must go beyond narrow vocational training to develop:

- Technical competencies
- Soft skills (communication, teamwork, leadership)
- Digital literacy
- Entrepreneurial and innovation capacities
- Professional identity and self-efficacy

These competencies reflect mobility and adaptability within dynamic labour markets.

### **Application to the Cameroonian Context**

Cameroon's labour market is characterised by:

- High graduate unemployment
- A dominant informal sector
- Limited formal employment absorption capacity
- Increasing global competition

Within this context, the Boundaryless Career perspective suggests that professionalisation should not merely align graduates with existing formal jobs but should prepare them for:

- Self-employment and entrepreneurship
- Cross-sector mobility
- Informal-formal sector transitions
- Regional and international labour markets

Thus, **teaching methods** such as problem-based learning, internships, and entrepreneurship modules become essential in fostering adaptability.

Similarly, **evaluation strategies** must measure competencies beyond academic recall—such as innovation, teamwork, and project execution.

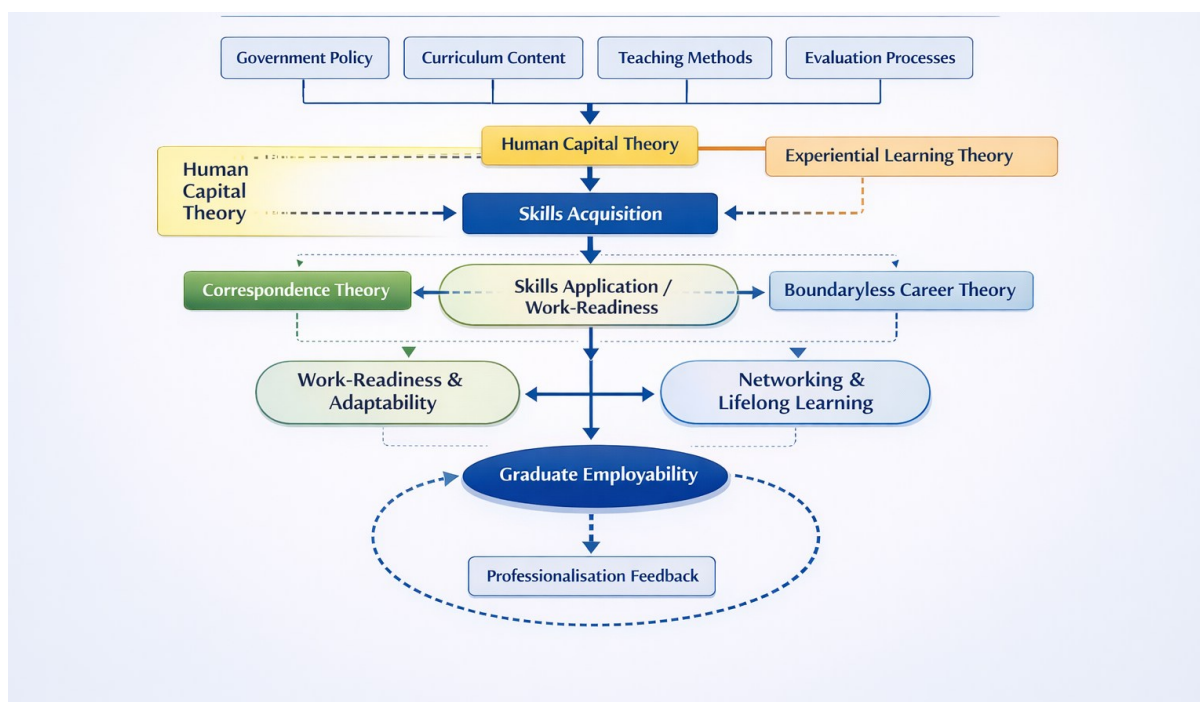
### Implications for Professionalisation Indicators

From a boundaryless career standpoint:

- **Government policy** should encourage flexible learning pathways and entrepreneurship.
- **Curriculum content** must emphasise transferable skills.
- **Teaching methods** must be experiential and reflective.
- **Evaluation strategies** should assess real-world problem-solving competencies.

The afore-mentioned theories thus strongly support a multidimensional conceptualisation of professionalization as represented in the diagram below

**Figure 2: Theoretical Diagram on Professionalisation of BMD Courses and Graduates Employability in Cameroon**



The conceptual diagram visually integrates **Human Capital Theory (HCT)**, **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**, **Correspondence Theory (CT)**, and **Boundaryless Career Theory (BCT)** to illustrate how the professionalisation of Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate courses in Cameroon translates into enhanced graduate employability.

### **Inputs: Government Policy, Curriculum Content, Teaching Methods, Evaluation Processes**

At the top of the diagram, four key inputs represent the structural and institutional levers of professionalisation. **Government policy** sets the regulatory and accreditation standards that ensure higher education programs meet national and international benchmarks. **Curriculum content** captures the knowledge, technical competencies, and professional skills embedded in courses, while **teaching methods** reflect pedagogical approaches, including theoretical instruction and practical/experiential learning opportunities. **Evaluation processes** ensure that assessment strategies measure not only theoretical knowledge but also applied competencies, reinforcing alignment with labor market expectations. Collectively, these inputs form the foundation upon which all subsequent learning, skill development, and employability outcomes are built.

### **Skills Acquisition (Human Capital and Experiential Learning Theories)**

The diagram positions **Skills Acquisition** as the first mediating mechanism, directly influenced by HCT and ELT. According to **Human Capital Theory**, education and training increase individuals' productivity by equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge, which are essential for employability. **Experiential Learning Theory** complements this by emphasizing the importance of learning through experience practical labs, internships, field projects, and work simulations which allows students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical, contextually relevant competencies. Together, these theories explain how students develop both cognitive and applied skills, forming the core human capital necessary for the workplace.

### **Skills Application/Work-Readiness (Correspondence Theory)**

Once skills are acquired, **Correspondence Theory** illustrates how education must align with the demands of the labor market. This theory suggests that the structure and content of education mirror societal labor needs, preparing students not just with abstract knowledge, but with behaviors, attitudes, and competencies expected in specific work roles.

In the diagram, this manifests as **Skills Application and Work-Readiness**, highlighting how graduates are socialized into professional norms, workplace ethics, and industry-specific requirements. By ensuring that what is taught in BMD programs corresponds to employer expectations, this stage directly enhances graduates' ability to transition smoothly into employment.

### **Networking, Adaptability, and Lifelong Learning (Boundaryless Career Theory).**

The diagram also incorporates **Boundaryless Career Theory** as a critical driver of graduate employability in modern, flexible career contexts. Unlike traditional career pathways, boundaryless careers emphasize adaptability, mobility, self-directed learning, and the capacity to navigate cross-sector opportunities. In the diagram, this is reflected in **Networking and Lifelong Learning**, showing that graduates must not only possess technical and practical skills but also the ability to continuously update their competencies, build professional networks, and manage non-linear career trajectories. This stage ensures that graduates remain employable in dynamic labor markets beyond their immediate academic training.

### **Outcome: Graduate Employability**

At the center-bottom, **Graduate Employability** serves as the ultimate outcome of the harmonized system. It integrates the effects of skill acquisition, work-readiness, and adaptability, demonstrating that professionalisation of BMD programs contributes to measurable employment outcomes job attainment, career progression, mobility, and resilience in the labor market. Employability is thus not only a product of knowledge acquisition but also of experiential learning, alignment with labor market demands, and personal career management capacities.

### **Feedback Loop: Professionalisation Feedback**

Finally, the diagram incorporates a **feedback loop** labeled **Professionalisation Feedback**, indicating that graduate employability outcomes should inform ongoing reforms in policy, curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation processes. This ensures a cyclical process where higher education continuously evolves to meet labor market needs, improve skills alignment, and enhance the professional readiness of future graduates.

This diagram demonstrates a **theory-driven, multi-layered model** linking inputs (policy, curriculum, teaching, evaluation) to outcomes (employability) through mediators shaped by four complementary theories. **Human Capital and Experiential Learning Theories** explain skills development, **Correspondence Theory** ensures market alignment, and **Boundaryless Career Theory** emphasizes adaptability and lifelong learning, culminating in a sustainable cycle of professionalisation that continuously enhances graduate employability in Cameroon.

### **Empirical Framework**

Empirical evidence on the link between professionalisation of higher education and graduate employability underscores persistent challenges in curriculum relevance, skills alignment, and labour market outcomes both globally and within the Cameroonian context. Although much of the literature originates from contexts outside Africa, these studies provide valuable comparative insights into factors shaping employability outcomes that remain relevant for Cameroonian higher education.

Several international empirical investigations demonstrate a strong association between professionalisation elements such as competency-based curricula, experiential learning, and employer engagement and graduate employability. For example, *Huang et al.* (2025) found that structured entrepreneurship education positively influences university students' employability outcomes by enhancing critical competencies sought by employers, suggesting that curricula integrating professional skills can bridge education-workplace divides (Huang et al., 2025). Globally, systematic reviews also emphasise that competency development remains central to employability, highlighting a need for higher education institutions to align skills provision with labour market needs (Tomlinson, 2017; cited in *Graduate Employability and Competence Development*, 2024).

In Africa, empirical studies consistently point to a mismatch between university training and labour market requirements. Iwara's (2025) work on graduate employability across African contexts argues that theoretical curricula and mismatch between skills and employer demands are significant barriers to employability, reinforcing the role of practical and professional skills in addressing unemployment challenges (Iwara, 2025).

Within Cameroon, empirical studies directly addressing professionalisation and employability remain relatively recent and limited in number, but they collectively reveal an observable skills gap and structural misalignment between higher education outputs and

workplace expectations. A mixed-methods study examining science graduates from the *University of Yaoundé I* revealed a clear disconnect between curriculum content and labour market needs, with graduates experiencing difficulty securing employment commensurate with their qualifications due in part to inadequate practical training and weak institutional linkage with industry (Nkoto et al., 2025)

Additionally, research that explores curriculum content from both student and teacher perspectives in two Anglophone universities found that while students perceive curriculum improvements as positively affecting employability, lecturers did not see a significant impact, highlighting institutional variations in prioritising professional skills and curriculum adaptation (Fokong, Ndamsa, & Ambei, 2024).

Another Cameroon-based empirical study examined the quality of partnerships between universities and industry among graduates of technical and professional schools at the *University of Ngaoundéré* and found a strong and statistically significant influence of such partnerships on employability outcomes (Ngesi, André, Kongnyuy, & Laoungang, 2024).

Evidence from archival academic dissertations also supports the importance of professionalisation in improving employability: one mixed-methods investigation at the *University of Yaoundé I* demonstrate that key components of professionalisation curriculum relevance, teaching methods, internship experiences, and entrepreneurship education correlate significantly with employability outcomes among graduates (Mukete, 2024).

Empirical research exploring education job mismatch in Cameroon highlights the broader context in which professionalisation operates. A qualitative study of social sciences and humanities graduates found that outdated curricula and lack of practical experience contribute to graduates securing jobs unrelated to their fields, underemployment, and economic instability a pattern indicative of broader systemic gaps between higher education and professional labour markets (Ntemngweh, 2025).

Collectively, the empirical studies reviewed indicate that while professionalisation initiatives such as curriculum reform, industry partnerships, and practical training are advocated, their actual impact on employability is mixed and context-dependent. Cameroon's empirical evidence is still emerging but tends to confirm the general international pattern of skills mismatch and weak higher education labour market linkages. Most studies reinforce the need for stronger empirical grounding of professionalisation strategies, including longitudinal

tracking of graduates, sectoral employability comparisons, and structured employer involvement, to establish more conclusive evidence on what aspects of professionalisation actually improve employment outcomes.

According to Bilola (2016), one issue to which higher education (HE) is increasingly expected to respond is graduate employability. Cameroon HE is intended to pursue priority objectives in addition to its conventional tasks. However, the saturation of the state machinery necessitated reforms and changed the organization's original goals, which were to train indigenous people to replace foreigners in state administration. A study that included interviewees from one state university and the ministry of higher education found that "professionalization for employability" was one of these goals. The selection of the respondents was based on their availability, desire to reply, and relevance to the subject. We talk about professionalization's beginnings and justifications both before and after the 1993 changes. The way professionalization is expressed as a new "objective" at academic institutions is one of its peculiarities.

We contend, using the Newmanian and Market-Model viewpoints, that the originality lies not in professionalization per se, but rather in the focus, stakeholder types, and methods. It was observed that some scholars disagree that colleges ought to care about their graduates' employability. This is a result of both uncertainty regarding the potential of the domestic labor market and the conviction in education for its own sake, independent of utilitarian goals. Although both the supply and demand sides of HE's products have been addressed, the supply side has not received enough attention. We come to the conclusion that professionalization, as it is now being approached, cannot improve graduate employment and the desired relevance of a university degree to the labor market. However, the present study differs this in that, it seeks to establish a link between professionalization of courses and graduates' employability in Cameroon. It was noticed that graduates under the BMD system in Cameroonian universities are unable to create jobs for themselves or fit into the labour market upon graduation.

According to Nyenty (2023) aimed to sought responses for two objectives which were: To examine the extent to curriculum content of programmes and infrastructural resources, affect graduates' acquisition of employability skills. Quoting (Nyenty.S, *ibid*),

The research was guided by two theories. The study used a survey research strategy that included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Data were obtained from 361

graduates, 385 final-year undergraduate students nearing the end of their degree program, and 56 academic staff at Buea and Bamenda universities. The study's equipment included a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. Graduates and final year undergraduate students from the University of Buea had dependability statistics of 0.876 and 0.827, respectively, while graduates and final year undergraduate students from the University of Bamenda had 0.871 and 0.894. Data from closed-ended questions were analyzed using SPSS 23.0, with descriptive and inferential statistical methods, whilst open-ended questions were analyzed thematically. The findings demonstrated that curricular content ( $r$ -value = 0.760\*\*,  $p$ -value = 0.000) and infrastructure resources ( $r$ -value = 0.782\*\*,  $p$ -value = 0.000) have a strong, favorable, and significant effect on graduates' acquisition of employability skills. Despite these considerable and favorable results, a significant proportion of graduates, final-year undergraduate students, and academic staff reported that infrastructural resources are insufficient and the curriculum is not professionally focused.

As a result, it was generally recommended that adequate measures be implemented to improve curriculum content and infrastructural resources for effective professionalization of programs in State Universities in order to improve graduates' acquisition of employability skills, while internships, practicums, and field work be intensified.

This paper ties with the present study in that it makes use of the questionnaire and semi structured interviews in the collection of data. It however differs with the respondents in that, it makes use of graduates who are on internship in the Ministry of employment and vocational training, employers of companies, and some administrative and teaching staff of universities in Cameroon.

Foche (2021) probes in to the problem of professionalization by assessing the impact of the teaching/learning programs on the professionalization of higher education in the University of Maroua, with emphasis on the integration of theory and practice in the programs of learning, qualification and competence of teachers, dissemination of information on the competences of each degree program and the learning infrastructure. In the same light with with (Asongwe.C,2021) the study is built on a survey design with a sample of three hundred and thirteen students of the University. A questionnaire using a five-modality Likert Scale was created. The data was examined using SPSS 20.0's multivariate regression analysis model. The findings show that there is minimal professionalization in teaching/learning programs, that teachers' qualifications and competency reflect professionalization on average, and that learning infrastructure does not support professionalization sufficiently. The study

strongly advocates for a higher education curriculum that is relevant to the nation's socioeconomic demands, providing a balanced curriculum that is responsive, culturally sensitive, and well-supported by appropriate teaching and learning materials. Finally, university-industry cooperation should be fostered through student internships and the signing of conventions and corporate agreements. Likewise, the present study had a questionnaire construct of five likert scale, the data was equally analysed using the SPSS. On the hand, this study does not only look at teaching programs and teachers' qualification in relation to professionalization of graduates but goes further to examine how the content of the curricular, government policy, evaluation processes and teaching methods as indicators of professionalization of BMD courses affect graduate employability in Cameroonian Universities.

According to Arshad (2014) in order to increase the understanding of Graduate Employability, we opted for an exploratory and qualitative approach. We were able to gather comprehensive empirical data through interviews that were based on the actual experiences and workplaces of five different companies. Our research provided a more nuanced picture of what employers want and expect from business graduates by illuminating Graduate Employability from a more practical standpoint. In addition to shedding light on the idea of graduate employability, we also emphasized how crucial it is to understand companies and their requirements. This equally ties with the present study as we went a long way to carry out an interview with employers of companies who have had time to evaluate the potentials of these graduates during the employment process in their respective companies.

Diane (2020) in his qualitative case study explores the perspectives of high school graduates on the effectiveness of the role of service learning and employment post graduation in the Cayman Islands.

This study was guided by the conceptual framework of experiential learning theory. Seven participants who had recently graduated from a prestigious Cayman Islands high school were interviewed using open-ended questions. Purposive sampling was used in the recruitment of the subjects, who ranged in age from 18 to 25. Thematic data analysis, which develops topics from the interviewees through a series of phases, was used to construct the themes. According to the results, the participants felt a sense of accomplishment, which is ideal for both academic and personal objectives. The study's main findings showed that service learning has a huge impact on student outcomes and is thought to be a useful tool for finding work. The results of this service learning study could be used to help students become

more independent through real-world experiences that could influence their lives for the rest of their life and inspire them to actively contribute to constructive social change. We on the contrary in the present study did not focus on how service learning can and may be applied in developing student's independence through authentic experiences that may have a permanent impact on their lives but on how the professionalization of University programs programs can have an impact on students upon graduation. We in the same vein used The Experiential Learning Theory as a guiding conceptual framework for this study.

In line with Mohamed Noor (2013), the primary goal of this study is to assess employers' and graduates' perspectives of the employability abilities required while entering the labor market. According to prior research, seven (7) characteristics are classified as employability skills or soft skills. Data were gathered using two separate sets of questionnaires designed to elicit employer and graduate perceptions. This study also looks into the ranking of employability abilities based on employer perspectives and what graduates require in the job market. This study will also provide information regarding the skills gap between employers' requirements and graduates' abilities. The study's findings reveal a discrepancy between employer perceptions and graduation characteristics. Finally, recommendations were included in the study.

According to Sarah Humayun (2022), this study used a mixed-method design. For the quantitative analysis, a purposive sample of 372 graduates and 71 companies was used. A factor analysis identifies four skill sets: particular talents, core skills, personal traits, and communication abilities. Using convenience sampling, a sample of six employers was selected. Semi-structured interviews are used to discuss the job market's requirements. Both findings indicate that essential skills are extremely useful in the employment market for business and social science graduates. Employers place high significance on academic prestige and past experience. Employers are dissatisfied with Pakistani graduates' lack of essential skills and personal traits. Both parties believe that industry-academia links should be expanded, and that work-based learning and practical courses should be included to prepare students for the labor market. Sarah Humayun (2022).

According to Richard Paterson (2020), this qualitative case study addresses the gap by drawing on reflections and observations on teaching and learning related to employability from students and lecturers on undergraduate degree courses at Westminster International University, Tashkent, a transnational university in Uzbekistan. Using activity theory as a tool for analysis, this study investigated lecturers' and students' understandings of employability

pedagogy, how employability pedagogy was integrated into undergraduate degree course curricula, how lecturers mobilised their perceptions of employability pedagogy to construct classroom activity systems, and how students interacted within learning communities to develop their employability skills.

The activity systems revealed tensions that arose out of interactions between participants and the community members, Sarah Humayun (2022) including colleagues, families and employers. Significant disputes arose over problems of gender discrimination, student participation in non-progressive activities, and how cultural norms influenced students' engagement with the labor market.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on higher education reforms and graduate employability in Cameroon, significant gaps remain in the literature on the professionalisation of higher education and its measurable outcomes. While studies acknowledge the persistent mismatch between university training and labour market demands, there is limited empirical investigation into the extent to which academic curricula in Cameroonian universities are systematically aligned with employer expectations. Existing research often relies on graduate self-reports or institutional claims, with insufficient incorporation of employers' perspectives, sectoral skill audits, and competency-based evaluations. Consequently, there is inadequate evidence demonstrating whether professionalisation initiatives genuinely translate into improved labour market readiness.

Furthermore, much of the available research adopts a generalized approach to employability across disciplines, without offering sector-specific or programme-level analyses. In a context where strategic sectors such as ICT, engineering, agribusiness, and health are central to Cameroon's development agenda, there is a noticeable lack of comparative studies examining differences in employability outcomes between STEM and non-STEM graduates, or between professionally oriented and academically oriented programmes. These limits understanding of how professionalisation operates within particular disciplinary contexts and how differentiated strategies may be required.

Another important gap concerns the depth of analysis of professionalisation practices within higher education institutions. Although policy reforms inspired by frameworks such as the Ministry of Higher Education and the harmonisation agenda linked to the CEMAC have emphasized competency-based training, internships, and university industry collaboration, few empirical studies document how these strategies are implemented at institutional level.

There is limited evidence on the quality, duration, supervision, and assessment of work-integrated learning programmes, and how such experiences influence employment outcomes.

The literature is also characterised by a shortage of longitudinal studies tracking graduates beyond immediate post-graduation employment. Most available data focus on first employment rates within a short time frame, neglecting longer-term indicators such as career progression, job stability, income mobility, and professional adaptability. Without longitudinal tracking, it remains unclear whether professionalised programmes enhance sustainable employability or merely facilitate short-term labour market entry.

Additionally, there is insufficient examination of employer engagement mechanisms in curriculum design and programme delivery. While partnerships between universities and industry are frequently recommended in policy discourse, little is known about the structure, effectiveness, and sustainability of such collaborations in Cameroon. The extent to which employers participate in curriculum review committees, provide mentorship opportunities, or influence competency standards remains underexplored. This gap weakens the evidence base for assessing the real impact of professionalisation reforms.

Another critical omission in the literature concerns the role of soft skills development and professional identity formation. Although employability is increasingly conceptualised as a combination of technical competencies and transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving empirical research rarely measures how Cameroonian universities intentionally cultivate these attributes. Moreover, few studies examine how professionalisation processes contribute to graduates' sense of professional identity, self-efficacy, and adaptability in dynamic labour markets.

The existing body of knowledge also pays limited attention to regional and institutional disparities. Research tends to focus on major urban public universities, particularly in Yaoundé and Douala, with less emphasis on emerging regional institutions and private universities. This creates a gap in understanding how contextual factors such as institutional capacity, funding levels, linguistic orientation (Anglophone/Francophone), and geographic location influence the effectiveness of professionalisation strategies and graduate employability outcomes.

Gender and inclusion dimensions further remain insufficiently examined. There is limited empirical analysis of how professionalisation policies affect female graduates, persons with disabilities, or students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Given persistent inequalities in access to employment opportunities, research that integrates equity considerations into the professionalization employability nexus is notably scarce.

Finally, while national policies and reform agendas promote professionalisation as a driver of economic transformation, there is a lack of critical assessment of the gap between policy design and implementation. Few studies interrogate the institutional, financial, and structural constraints that hinder effective operationalisation of competency-based education and employability-oriented reforms. Similarly, the impact of digital transformation, e-learning systems, and emerging technological tools on graduate employability within Cameroon remains underexplored.

In light of these identified gaps, there is a compelling need for comprehensive, empirically grounded research that examines professionalisation not merely as a policy aspiration, but as an operational process within universities and a measurable determinant of graduate employability outcomes. This study therefore seeks to bridge these gaps by providing context-specific evidence on how professionalisation of higher education influences employability in Cameroon, taking into account institutional practices, employer engagement, sectoral dynamics, and long-term graduate trajectories.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**

This chapter describes the method and procedures that were used in carrying out the study. It equally reports the methods that were used to obtain data for the study. The chapter presents the following sections; research design, area of study, population of the study, the sample, sampling techniques, instruments used for data collection, procedure for data collection, method of data analysis and ethical considerations.

#### **Research Design**

According to Luma et al (1999), a research design refers to all procedures selected by researchers to aid in the understanding of questions or hypothesis. According to Amin (2005) a research design is the conceptual structure within which the quantitative research is conducted and constitutes the blue-print for the measurement of variables collection and analysis of data. Research design is equally the researcher's plan on how to carry out his/her study. Mbua (2003) defined research design as a blue print or the methodology in which the researcher employs to carry out his/her investigation in a given area of problem. In the same light with Fossimock. B (2017), this study was carried out using the combined quantitative and qualitative research approach or triangular research approach. These research methodologies were utilized to study cause-and-effect linkages, as well as the importance of perfect variable control. For these reasons, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative tools (questionnaires and an interview guide) to gather and analyze the data in this work. This research design allowed the researcher to characterize the state of affairs of the social phenomena by defining relationships between variables, collecting data, and confirming hypotheses to either support or refute their ideas on the specified state of things.

We chose to use a mixed method approach, which is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study (Hirose& Creswell, 2022). In essence, this study employed a sequential explanatory strategy, with quantitative data collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data. Typically, quantitative data was prioritized, and the two methodologies were combined during the study's interpretation phase.

The reasoning behind mixing both types of data was that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods were sufficient to analyze the data. The interviews were evaluated to explain the quantitative analysis results and provide thorough descriptions to compensate for the survey's limitations. Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis also contributed to the production of substantial and well-validated discoveries.

The Spearman rank correlation and the multiple regressions were used to analyze quantitative data while the qualitative data was analyzed through an interpretative-qualitative approach, deemed appropriate in enhancing part of the conduct of the study and in analyzing the meaning made by the participants about the phenomenon of employability of graduates and the researcher making meaning from the participants' views. As regards the qualitative aspect of this research, the researcher as in other forms of qualitative research was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. According to Creswell (2022), it is an inductive investigative strategy and the end product is richly descriptive, where the researcher is focused on understanding how participants make sense of a phenomenon or situation; in our case, employability of graduates, is the instrument of which the construction of meaning is mediated, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive.

Some researchers called this approach to research *triangulation of method*. Åkerblad, Seppänen-Järvelä & Haapakoski (2021) assert that *triangulation is the idea of looking at something from multiple points of view*. On his part, Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri (2021) define triangulation as *the term for the use of multiple methods, data collection strategies, and or data sources*. Creswell (2021) says *the basic principle underlying the idea of triangulation is that of collecting observations or accounts of a situation from a variety of angles or perspectives and then comparing them*.

Amin (2005, p. 64) points out that *the aim of triangulation is to map out or explain fully the richness and complexity of a study from different points of view and involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a particular study under investigation*. According to him, *the presentation or use of only qualitative or quantitative approaches often presents only a myopic view of things* (Amin, 2005, p. 63). Kimmons (2022) confirms that relying exclusively on a quantitative or any single form of research restricts researchers' understanding of the problem. Onwuegbuzie & Johnson (2021) postulate that the two approaches are combined frequently in research. (According to Eric. L, 2014), the basis of using quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination is to provide a better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. This improved

comprehension is due to combined techniques' strengths, which offset the drawbacks of independently applied quantitative or qualitative research approaches. It also fosters the collecting of more thorough data for research problems, assists in answering questions that quantitative or qualitative approaches alone cannot answer, decreases antagonistic relationships among academics, and promotes teamwork. Mixed techniques encourage the utilization of diverse perspectives. It is a pragmatic and natural approach to study. This research approach is crucial today because of the intricacy of the problems that must be addressed.

In the same light, Harrison, Reilly & Creswell (2020) support that the idea of looking at something from different angles or viewpoints improves accuracy. Qualitative and quantitative representations are complementary (Stern et al., (2020).

Qualitative research is viewed as a research study that explores the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. According to Onwuegbuzie & Johnson (2021), a qualitative research approach provides a holistic picture of what goes on in a particular situation or setting rather than just comparing the effects of a particular analysis. Amin (2005, p. 43) states that the qualitative research approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (that is the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or participatory perspective (collaborative). It supports the findings of quantitative research (Eric. L, *ibid*) This technique has the potential to provide a comprehensive picture of the professionalization of BMD courses and graduates' employability in Cameroon. It is worth noting that qualitative research can occasionally serve as a prerequisite for quantitative research. Furthermore, qualitative research helps to build quantitative knowledge that was not previously available.

On the other hand, Quantitative research is a research approach that investigates how well, how much, to what extent, or how accurately different learning, attitudes, or ideas are being developed (Eric. L, *ibid*). Amin (2005, p. 55) points out that quantitative research involves the collection of numerical data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri (2021) assert that quantitative data are obtained when the variable being studied is measured along a scale that indicates how much of the variable is present. Higher scores suggest that more of the variable is present than lower scores (Eric. L, *ibid*).

Kimmons (2022) postulates that *quantitative researchers emphasize precisely measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general causal explanations*. The quantitative approach also supports the construction of qualitative knowledge. Its findings support qualitative research. The use of this approach in this study is to investigate the extent to which the professionalization of BMD courses influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon (Eric. L, *ibid*).

### **Area of the Study**

The study region refers to the location where the study was conducted. This study was conducted in Cameroon. Cameroon has a surface area of 475,440 square kilometers with an ethnically and linguistically varied population of around 27,943,840 million people, divided into approximately 200 linguistic ethnic groupings. It is surrounded to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo; to the southwest, it overlooks the huge Atlantic Ocean; to the west, by Nigeria; to the east, by the Central African Republic and Chad; and to the north by Lake Chad. Cameroon has two official languages, English and French (Erick.L, 2014). The country is subdivided into ten regions (North West Region, South West Region, West Region, Littoral Region, Centre Region, South Region, East Region, Adamawa Region, North Region, and Far North Region) Each region is further broken down into Divisions and Sub-Divisions. These regions are overseen by appointed Governors, as well as Divisional and Sub-divisional officers, while executive responsibilities are vested on the President of the Republic. The economy is basically Agricultural and commonly described as Africa in miniature or the basket of West Africa (Erick.L, 2014).

The choice of the study area was first of all because the researcher is a Cameroonian, next, the multiplicity of universities in Cameroon and the interest of many graduates and the great need for these young Cameroonians aspiring to become employees to acquire the necessary academic and professional skills, attitudes, and values suitable for learning in the 21st century (Erick.L, *ibid*).

Moreover, the study was carried out from a cross-section of Cameroonian University graduates who are registered with the NEF in The Centre Region of Cameroon as job seekers or who gained their first employment through the Graduate Employment Programme (PED) in the NEF. In all, graduates from the following universities took part in the study: The universities of Yaounde I, Yaounde II, Douala, Ngoundéré, Dschang, Siantou Higher Institute

of Business and Technological Sciences, the Institut Africain de l'Informatique, the University of Buea and the Catholic University of Central Africa.

### **Population of the Study**

According to Amin (2005, p. 6) population is *the complete collection (or universe) of all the elements (units) that are of interest in a particular investigation*. The population of the study defines the limits within which the researcher's findings are applicable or generalized (Moussy, 2022). Thus, the population of the study was made up of: university graduates employed or currently seeking employment through the national employment fund, lecturers and heads of department from Universities, employers, Minesup and Minfop officials.

#### **Total population**

The total population of this study is made up of graduates from Public and Private Universities in Cameroon.

#### **Target population**

According to Amin (2005, p. 6), a target population is that which the researcher ultimately wants to generalize the results. He further explains that this target population may not be accessible to the researcher. The target population of this study consisted of all first-degree graduates from Public and Private HEIs in Cameroon from the inception of the BMD reform.

#### **Accessible population**

This is the population from which the sample is actually drawn (Moussy, 2022; Amin, 2005, p. 6). In the same light with (Benedict.M & Peter.N, 2023), the accessible population constituted the selected participants, in terms of unemployed graduate job seekers, graduates who have been employed in Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs), graduates who are registered with the NEF and employed by the PED, employers of SMEs and large companies in the following sectors: IT, Services & Consultancy, Communication, Microfinance, Environment and Health sectors (Companies employing graduates from the PED), who accepted to participate in filling the questionnaire in the case of the graduates or being interviewed as in the case of the employers and some content lecturers and administrators in the Ministries of Higher Education, Employment and Vocational Training. This is because

workers in the aforementioned sectors can best represent the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that formed the background from which this research emanated.

### **Description of Respondents**

The poll was provided to graduate job seekers each day as they poured into the National Employment Fund during our internship there (1st to 30th June 2021) in search of a job. The entire poll was conducted on paper (print). This was due to the fact that it was suitable to provide it to job seekers following their counselling sessions with the NEF's job counsellors. Additionally, the employed graduates who received employment through the NEF in the Graduate Employment Program were contacted via phone and email from the database provided by the NEF's central branch, and with their consent, rendezvous were set up at their convenience, most frequently at their places of employment, for them to complete the questionnaire. Although there was the option for them to complete it online, everyone who agreed to do so wanted to get the printed questionnaire in person. An additional qualitative study was created with the use of quantitative data.

Although university graduates in Cameroon served as the primary focus of this study, interviews with some graduates, employers, MINESUP and MINFOP officials, who worked on the PED and PRIADES as well as some Lecturers from The University of Yaoundé1 and department heads, were also conducted during the study phase to provide a more complete picture of the transition from higher education to the workplace. Taking into consideration that educational output in this case, employability, depends on employers' beliefs, the employers' point of view was significant (Malhotra, Iyer & Dave, 2022).

The interview questions for graduates were created in order to better understand their educational and professional paths. The graduates elaborated on their suggestions for HEIs to improve education for employability in addition to providing more information about their studies, integration, job search, and graduate employment experiences. Interview subjects were chosen from a pool of survey respondents who consented to be questioned, taking into account the variety of disciplines, present employment situation (employed/unemployed), institution type (public or private), gender, and nationality. We looked for representatives of both small and large businesses when choosing respondents for interview in the following industries: IT, services and consulting, communication, microfinance, environment, and health. All of the representatives of companies that were questioned employed graduates from HEIs. The interviews took place face-to-face and at the respondents' convenience.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique of the Study**

In this study, the selection of the sample was done through a purposive sampling technique which consisted in selecting:

1. Graduates who gained their first employment through the PED in the Centre Regional Branch of the NEF and working with the afore-chosen sectors, who could give relevant information on how their university education helped them in getting work for the first time and how they are managing their employability.
2. Unemployed graduates who are finding it difficult to get work because their degrees have no or very little market value.
3. Employers in these sectors who could best inform us about what they require from higher education and their graduates and how they do work placements for students seeking internships for work experience while still at school, (university).
4. Content lecturers and university administrators involved with the BMD reform measure, who could give relevant and valuable information on how employability education is being embedded into the curricula.

Also, the NEF was selected purposefully as a place to carry out this research because many graduates from a cross section of Cameroonian universities come there in search of work and also because the NEF runs the Graduate Employment Programme (PED), as well as the Programme for the Insertion of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES).

There were 532 grads overall, 319 of whom were looking for work as graduates, 143 of whom were already employed by the SMEs indicated, and 70 of whom felt underemployed. The table below shows the distribution of the employed participants according to: enterprise, speciality, gender and number.

**Table 1: Distribution of participants according to enterprise, speciality, gender and number**

Enterprise	Speciality	Participants		Total
		Men	Women	
CPAC	Microfinance	8	/	08
CCC	Microfinance	8	3	10
NFC	Microfinance	2	3	5
BICEC	Microfinance	5	1	6
MTN	Communication	4	2	6
Orange	Communication	1	6	7
Le Jour Quotidien	Communication	3	/	3
CRTV	Communication	4	/	4
SATCOM	Communication	5	3	8
Television Evangile	Communication	7	3	10
Cabinet Lucas Nguimbous	Consultancy	6	4	10
Cabinet FidaConseil	Consultancy	5	4	9
Cabinet Me Kouing	Consultancy	10	2	12
Express Assistance	Consultancy	6	3	9
MIB Services	Electricity	7	1	8
Ste Nga et Fils	Electricity	7	/	7
G7P Cameroun	Services Providers	4	6	10
Colina la Citoyenne	Services Providers	7	1	8
Betra International	Services Providers	5	6	11
SOS Medium Yaounde	Services Providers	6	4	10
Les Petit Trucs	Industrial Engineering	12	/	12
WWF CCPO	Environment	4	1	5
Mega soft	Information Technology	9	/	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>213</b>

## **The Research Instruments**

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was seen as the best research instrument to gather quantitative information for the study. It was created with some of the graduates who are employed and unemployed in mind. The questionnaire was selected since it is quick to code and saves time.

An immediate reason for selecting the questionnaire, as the instrument for data collection in this study was the ease and speed of data collection associated with the use of the questionnaire (Erick.L, 2014). As cited by Anderson, (1990, p. 207): "A well constructed questionnaire permits the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data relatively simply, cheaply and in a short space of time." The questionnaire was also chosen for data collection due to its evident advantage of contacting a large number of respondents in many regions in a short period of time without requiring the researcher to travel significant distances. It takes less time and is relatively cheaper than conducting interviews.

Another important dimension for using the questionnaire for collecting data in this study was its capacity to measure the variables reflected in the research questions (Erick.L, 2014). According to Stroull, (1995, p. 167) a questionnaire "is the only way to elicit self reports of people's opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values" and this study is concerned primarily with people's perceptions, attitudes and values. Therefore, the tools used in this study aimed to gauge attitudes and perceptions. The act of measuring attitudes is inherently tied to the definition of attitudes, yet it must be appreciated that not all definitions of attitude have clear measurement implications (Ajzen and Krells, 1994, p. 251).

In accordance with the arguments given above, the questionnaires used to gather data in this study contained Likert-scale items, with responses evaluated on a five-point multiple choice agreement scale. The tools were based on the Canadian International Agency (CIDA) Graduates Questionnaire (Anderson, 1990, pp. 218-220), with the first section requiring demographic information on characteristics such as gender, age, location, and kind of institution.

Items evolve from descriptive information to more complicated attitudes and opinions. Items related to the orientation of the school and industries toward entrepreneurial dynamism were adopted from Miller and Friesen (1982) and the Hogan and Champagne Personal Style Inventory (1990), while items measuring achievement motivation and locus of control were adopted from the Smith Motivation Potential Measure (1973). The items were

chosen based on their established content validity and dependability, as well as their relevance to the research issues under consideration.

It must be acknowledged that although attitudes are significant indicators of behaviour towards the attitude objects, there are changeable and are often useful for short-term predictions and exploratory work (Stroull, 1995, p. 186).

These are intended to make it easier to identify links between perceptions and attitudes. The order in which questions on the same topic are asked is a common point of contention in questionnaire design. The question is whether to order questions on the same topic consecutively or to spread them out throughout the questionnaire. In this study, questions about the same topic were grouped together. This is consistent with Anderson's (1990, p. 214) argument that because item questions are based on research questions, they are already categorized to some extent, and so "questions on the same topic should be grouped together and questions of similar form should be grouped". This also decreases the need for repeated instructions (Erick, 2014).

Additionally, grouping items gives the questionnaire a cleaner, more organized appearance. When selecting the questionnaire, the researcher was aware of the weaknesses inherent in using questionnaires for collecting data Cohen and Manion, (1989:308) and Stroull, (1995:194) mention among many others, lack of opportunity for respondents to ask for explanations, the inability of the investigator to probe and the lower response rates often associated with postal questionnaires. However, on lower response rates, Cohen and Manion (1989: 111) hasten point out that:

"Response levels to postal surveys are not invariably less than those obtained by interview procedures; frequently they equal, and in some cases, surpass those achieved in interviews."

The questionnaire may occasionally provide insufficient information, and responders may leave out certain sections. It may also have inherent errors such as items that lead the respondent to specific responses resulting in lower data validity (Stroull, 1995: 166). However, the instrument and sample are primarily the only causes of error in surveys. It has no flaws like prejudice in the interview or impacts on the answers. It also doesn't contain any bias brought on the interactions between interviewees.

## Interviews

The interviews with the content lecturers, employers, and administrators from the MINESUP and MINEFOP, on the other hand, used proper structured interview questions to gather pertinent information. This information was important for confirming and supporting data from the questionnaire and for making it simpler to verify the hypotheses.

At their various workplaces and at their convenience, the employers, content lecturers, and MINESUP and MINEFOP administrators participated in face-to-face interviews (Benedict.M& Peter.N,2023). Interviews were digitally recorded and immediately after each interview, a transcription was made by the researcher. Each transcript was then read and reread to ensure data accuracy before being sent to the specific participants for member checking. This was done to make sure the transcripts accurately reflected the views of the participants and to see if any modifications, corrections, or clarifications of comments were required. The qualitative data was then analyzed using Creswell's (2007) inductive investigative methodology, which produces a richly descriptive final output.

Here, the researcher is the main source of information gathering and takes the following actions: 1) focuses on understanding how participants make sense of the phenomenon under study, in this case, employability, 2) is the instrument of which the construction of meaning is mediated, 3) carries out the inductive strategy, 4) and describes the final outcome.

Also, in terms of interview questions, it was very important to ask a variety of question types to obtain in-depth information (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview was structured by combining main questions, follow-up questions, and probes. Main questions were used to get the information necessary to answer the research questions, while probes were used for regulating answers, clarifying the information, and maintaining the topic of the interview (Thach.N,2015).

The interview was organized into three parts: key questions, follow-up questions, and probes. Main questions were used to gather information needed to answer research questions, whereas probes were used to regulate answers, clarify information, and keep the interview on topic.

Follow-up questions were used to clarify and explore topics discussed in more depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview questions corresponded to the research questions. Main and probing questions were intended to provide a description of each participant's

perception of curriculum; curriculum development and to obtain their insights about the procedures of curriculum development at the University. The interviews also explored the difficulties, problems, or constraints participants encountered when adopting the prescribed curriculum frameworks (Thach.N,2015).

### **Documents**

Archival records and documents are a secondary source of information for case studies. These sources help ensure multiple sources of information are used to provide multiple perspectives (Yin, 2009). According to Thach.N. (2015), the necessity of using papers is stressed as follows:

- To support and supplement evidence from other sources.
- Provide additional details to support information from other sources.
- Researchers draw conclusions from documents (Yin, 2009, p. 103).

Thus, acquiring relevant papers was a critical component of my data collection strategy).

The public documents collected and analyzed were:

- National policies including decisions, decrees, and guidelines related to curriculum and curriculum development issued by The Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon.
- Statistics on the employment of graduates from the ministry/delegations of employment and vocational training in Cameroon.
- Institutional documents such as decisions, guidelines, and existing adopted curriculum

### **Validation of Instruments**

Gathering multiple sources of evidence, or the triangulation of data sources, is important in collecting data for a case study (Patton, 2002). Studying the same phenomenon using different sources of information is a powerful way of enhancing the validity or trustworthiness of data interpretation (Yin, 2009). Triangulation requires the researchers "to bring together data from different sources, or from the same source but different methods of inquiry, or by using different observers, to strengthen the confidence in a statement" (Bassegy, 1999, p. 76). This study employed questionnaires and interviews as the primary data and documents as secondary data. Individual interviews were conducted with: employed and unemployed graduates, Minesup and Minfop officials, employers of some large scale, small and medium size enterprises, lecturers and human resource managers of companies; while questionnaires were issued to graduates who were seeking employment through the NEF. Several steps were taken to guarantee the caliber of the interviews. We used open-ended

questions within a semi-structured interview in order to elicit information from participants unconstrained by my perspectives or knowledge of past research findings (Creswell, 2005). Second, an interview protocol was employed to structure the interview. The interview protocols contained the interview process and note-taking spaces to record participants remarks (Creswell, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), and served as a method to check that the participant was being briefed. The interviews used in this study included briefing and debriefing phrases to provide the interviewees a context (Kvale, 1996). The goal of the interview, the usage of media for recording, and the use of data were all briefly introduced during the briefing. We used debriefing at the end of the interview to address any issues that occurred during the course of the interview, and to end in a relaxed manner (Kvale, 1996).

The researcher was determined if the questions and material were properly worded so that the respondents could comprehend what information was being requested after creating the questionnaire and interview guide. He did this by presenting the initial versions to his affinity peer group, who recommended him to refrain from using technical or jargon-filled terminology and that, even when they were used, the respondents should be informed of their meanings before being asked to answer. He afterwards turned them in for an evaluation by his two managers. They advised the researcher on the importance of asking insightful questions during interviews after making some changes to the guides and discouraging the use of leading questions. They then confirmed the build, face, and content validity of the instruments after the adjustments had been made and submitted once more to each of them.

### **Pilot Study**

Pilot studies are important for a good study design because they can provide useful insights for the researcher, and can improve the possibility of success in the main study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). We conducted a pilot study to pre-test the research instruments, namely questionnaires and interview protocols, and to improve my interview skills to ensure that responses yield rich information in a practical research environment, which is quite challenging for a novice researcher (Baker, 1994; Welman and Kruger, 2001).

A pilot study was done to gauge the effectiveness of the instruments prior to the administration of the questionnaire and the interviews. The primary benefit of pilot testing was that it allowed researchers to identify potential issues before they occurred in the main study by determining if the questionnaire or interview questions were well-articulated and suitable for answering the research questions of the study.

Three graduates working at The NEF's center regional branch completed the questionnaire as part of the pilot project, and one participant, the head of the department of training was interviewed when I was an intern there. In order to find any potential issues or ambiguities, these pilot participants were asked for input on the questionnaire and interview questions. To ensure that all questions could be answered in an hour, the time it took to complete the interview was recorded. All pointless or ambiguous interview questions were eliminated, reworded, condensed, or altered based on comments from the pilot participants. To refine the questionnaire, the researcher visited with his pilot subjects, who provided the following suggestions:

1. Due to the length of the questions, the questionnaire was challenging to finish and would take more than 30 minutes to complete.
2. Use a format like a checklist if you could in order to take less time (15 minutes) to complete questionnaire.
3. To move questions about problems from the questionnaire to the interview.

Additionally, the researcher had one of the pilot participants practice answering interview questions. This was done in order to inspect my recorder. He had the chance to hone his interviewing abilities during the pilot interview.

It was discovered that practically all of the questions could be answered by the population once the pilot tests for the questionnaire and the interview were finished. Additionally, the data required for the investigation was gathered. This inspired the administration of the questionnaire and interview guide questions to the sample moving forward.

### **Reliability**

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials.

When an instrument measures a variable precisely and produces consistent results throughout time, it is called trustworthy. However, random errors have an effect on research reliability.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_{\bar{k}}^2}{\sigma^2} \right)$$

Where:

$\sum \sigma_k^2$  is the sum of the variances of the k parts which are the items of the test or instrument.

$\sigma$  = standard deviation of the test or instrument.

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on	
	Standardized Items	N of Items
0,886	0,836	64

Looking at the table above on reliability test, we realize that the calculated Cronbach Alpha is 0.8 thus implying that the instrument of our study is reliable for the study.

### Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first sought approval from National Employment Fund officials before distributing the first tool (the questionnaire). He initially requested permission for an internship from the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training by submitting a research attestation from his university, which was approved. The researcher was given permission to complete his internship at the NEF through ministerial approval for internship at the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. This permission was given by The General Manager of the NEF and he was assigned to The Regional Branch of the NEF.

Here, he was permitted and helped by The Director through the assistant Director of The Regional Branch not only to do his internship but also to administer the questionnaire together with the help of the job counselors to the graduate job seekers. Also, with the permission of The Chief of Service of the training department of The Regional Branch of the NEF, he could access the database of the graduates who gained employment through the NEF in the Graduate Employment Programme (PED). The graduates were contacted by phone and through the company phone numbers in cases where their numbers were not going through (these companies are NEF partners in the PED) as explained before. Those who accepted to participate gave time convenient for them, but all of them accepted to fill out the questionnaire at their places of work. The researcher later went around collecting the filled questionnaires on agreed dates. This was done to save time and reduce the risk of the questionnaires getting missing in the hands of other people while in transit.

The researcher then went on to conduct the interviews. The researcher was able to conduct the interviews after receiving permission from each of the carefully chosen participants. In particular, when he was doing an internship for those in MINEFOP, he met most of the participants in their offices. All interviews took place in person. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Each interview lasted for a little under an hour. The researcher digitally recorded the interviews and immediately began typing up the transcriptions. After they were finished, the transcripts were read again to make sure the information was accurate before being sent to the specific participants to be checked to see if they accurately captured their perspectives and to see if any modifications, corrections, or clarifications of comments were required.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Concerning the quantitative data, the appropriate statistical technique used to verify and analyse the data was the Spearman Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis. These tests are used when testing the association between two variables.

**Spearman Correlation is expressed as:**

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6\sum D^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

D is the difference between the ranks of X and the corresponding ranks of Y

n= the number of paired ranks

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

A multiple regression analysis was generated to examine the degree government policy implementation, content of HE curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation processes as predictor variables that can predict a criterion variable which is graduate employability. We equally intended to assess which of the predictor variables could predict graduate employability the most. Multiple regression is expressed as:

$$\hat{Y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_p X_p$$

Where the  $\beta_s$  are a set of coefficients in the population whose values are to be determined.

The qualitative data was done following (Creswell, 2022), which is an inductive investigative strategy where the end product is richly descriptive. Here the researcher is the

primary source of data collection and does the following: 1) focuses on understanding how participants make sense of the phenomenon under study, in this case of employability, 2) is the instrument of which the construction of meaning is mediated, 3) carries out the inductive strategy, 4) and describes the final outcome.

### **Variables of Study**

This study is focused on two main factors, the independent and dependent variables. The Professionalization of BMD Courses is the study's independent variables as such: government policy in HE, the substance of HE curriculum, pedagogical methods, and evaluation processes emerged when this variable was operationalized. The employability of graduates, which is the assumed effect, is the dependent variable. Basic competency abilities, communication abilities, adaptability (problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity), developmental abilities, group effectiveness abilities, influencing abilities, a smooth transition from university to the workplace, and a shorter length of time spent looking for a job are some of its indicators. Thirdly, we can discuss the extraneous variables, such as: socioeconomic status, gender, age, and career goals. These factors may compete with the professionalization of BMD courses to explain differences in the dependent variable.

#### **The Independent Variable**

The assumed cause of a phenomena is the study's independent variable. It is sometimes referred to as the explanatory variable or predictor. This is the variable that accounts for variations in the dependent variable when it is manipulated (Kelle, 2022; Amin, 2005). In the case of this study, the independent variable is professionalization of BMD Courses. In order to get indicators for the study this variable was operationalized to have the following indicators: government policy, contents of curricula, pedagogic and evaluation processes.

Government policy here concerns all laws and government documents of the country that are put in place by the government to create an enabling environment for the right functioning of the universities for the benefit of the entire nation. For example, the law of orientation of 2008, the mainstreaming of HE in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), the New University Governance Policy, the Sectorial Policy Document (SPD), the Bachelor Master Doctorate (BMD), reform among others. It is in the light of these policies that the professionalization agenda of HE was developed. These policies also give the green

lights for individual universities and higher education institutes to begin carrying out the government's plan at institutional levels.

Curriculum contents in this work were treated in terms of courses taught in the universities, which embed work related and work-based components in them so that graduates will not face the world of work powerless and unable to find work because they lack skills which facilitate and shorten their job search. In this case, cases of best practice are presented so that replication in other universities can be possible. The main focus was on the development of employability skills in graduates so that they can respond commensurately to labour market needs, find gainful employment, grow their employability and bring about economic development and growth to the country.

Pedagogic processes are very essential in the success of any education. There are various teaching methods such as the direct teaching, lecture, indirect teaching, demonstrative teaching, drill, illustration, demonstration group work, the use of ICTs, laboratory testing, internships amongst others. In terms of teaching method, we focused on the student-centred approaches which place the students at the centre of the teaching and learning process while the lecturer himself adopts the position of the facilitator. For these methods to be effectively applied in universities a lot of things have to be taken into consideration. The use of student-centered teaching begins with the setting of objectives and the determination of learners' readiness. The selection of contents for teaching is done and the situational context (infrastructural adaptability, equipment) is well defined. This is the pre-teaching stage. This stage is then followed by the teaching stage which is really that of curriculum implementation in which case the student has to be placed at the center of learning and the lecturer is only a facilitator of the process. The teaching process ends up with the post-teaching stage where the teacher assesses and determines the attainment of pedagogic objectives, and does preparation for the next encounter with learners. This kind of teaching will lead to skill development and a smoother and shorter transition time from university to the world of work.

Finally, evaluation processes are the methods used to assess learning. These are feedback mechanisms conceived by the lecturer to measure what has been taught. Evaluation tasks can be used strategically to motivate and engage students and develop employability attributes in them. These include formative assessments while the teaching process is going on, such as group assignments to be presented, and summative assessments such as end of term or year exams.

### **The Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is known as the presumed effect. It is that variable whose outcome is measured by the researcher. Its values change when the independent variable is manipulated. The dependent variable in this case is employability of graduates, which can be measured via the percentage of graduate unemployment in the country or the number of graduates from a particular university who find gainful employment within a short period of time after leaving university.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Madges (2006), ethical research is defined as one that "does not harm," obtains informed consent, and upholds the rights of the subjects. Concerns about ethics played a significant role in this investigation. At every level of this investigation, the researcher had to carefully consider ethical considerations. As a result, the researcher properly advised the study's participants that participation was entirely voluntary and that they might choose not to respond to any specific questions. This was consistent with Trochim (2006), who maintained that respondents must not be forced to participate in the survey in order for it to be voluntary. According to Punch (2003), who hinted that the participants should remain anonymous throughout the study, the researcher additionally secured their identity and confidentiality by using numbers.

All respondents provided informed consent to answer the questions; the researcher was open and honest with them; respondents who wished to withdraw from the study were given the option to do so in order to avoid involuntary responses; and, finally, the researcher avoided information fraud and plagiarism by properly citing all sources used in the study.

**Table 3: Recapitulative Table of Hypotheses, Variables, and Indicators**

<b>G.H</b>	<b>Specific hypothesis</b>	<b>Independent variable</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Research Tools</b>	<b>Statistical tool</b>	<b>scale</b>
	RH <sub>1</sub> : Government policy on professionalization of higher education courses influence the employability of graduates in Cameroon.	Government Policy	Mission of the NEF. Graduate employment Program. The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper. Sector Wide Approach	Employability of graduates	Basic competency skills (reading writing computation) Communication skills speaking, listening skills Adaptability (problem solving, critical thinking, creativity) skills. Developmental skills, (self-esteem, motivation goal	High Low	Questionnaire Oral interview	Spearman correlation Multiple Regression Analysis Spearman correlation	Ordinal Scale
	RH <sub>2</sub> : Content of courses in Cameroonian higher education influence graduate employability	Content of the curricular	Skill based curriculum. Curriculum and employers' demand. Curriculum and job market			High Low	Questionnaire Oral interview	Multiple Regression Analysis Spearman correlation	

		demands.		setting career			Multiple
		Curriculum and		planning).			Regressio
		internship.		Group			n Analysis
RH <sub>3</sub> : Teaching		Training of		effectiveness	High	Questionnaire	
methods of the	Teaching	lecturers.		skills.	Low	Oral interview	Spearman
courses in higher	Methods	Teaching		Interpersonal			correlation
education		methods.		skills.			
influence graduate		Control/		Organizational			Multiple
employability.		Supervision of		skills			Regressio
		lecturers.		Leadership			n Analysis
RH <sub>4</sub> : Evaluation		Type of		skills.	High	Questionnaire	
processes in		evaluation.		Skills match job.	Low	Oral interview	
Cameroonian		Objective of		Job satisfaction			
higher education	Evaluation	evaluation.		-Smooth			
influence	Processes	Manner of		transitions from			
employability of		evaluation.		university to			
graduates.		Criteria of		work.			
		evaluation		-Shorter duration			
				of work search.			

## Conceptual Framework and Research Model

This section presents and explains the conceptual framework underpinning this study on **Professionalisation of Bachelor Master Courses and Graduates' Employability in Cameroon**. The chapter articulates the theoretical foundations of the model, defines the study variables, clarifies their interrelationships, and justifies the proposed structural pathways to be empirically tested. The model is situated within the context of reforms introduced under the Bachelor Master Doctorate (BMD) system implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education, aimed at strengthening labour market relevance of higher education programmes.

### Theoretical Foundations of the Model

The proposed framework is anchored on three complementary theoretical perspectives:

1. **Human Capital Theory** which posits that investment in education enhances productivity through acquisition of marketable skills.
2. **Employability Theory** which conceptualises employability as a multidimensional construct involving skills, adaptability, identity, and career agency.
3. **Professionalisation Theory in Higher Education** which emphasises alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, industry standards, and labour market needs.

Together, these perspectives support the assumption that professionalisation embedded within Bachelor and Master programmes enhances graduate competencies, which in turn improve employability outcomes.

### Conceptualisation of the Study Variables

#### Independent Variable: Professionalisation of Bachelor–Master Courses

In this study, professionalisation refers to the systematic integration of labour market-oriented practices within Bachelor and Master programmes. It is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising:

1. **Curriculum Alignment** the extent to which course content reflects industry standards and competency-based learning outcomes.

2. **Pedagogical Approaches** the adoption of experiential, problem-based, and project-based teaching methodologies.
3. **Internship and Industrial Attachment Integration** – structured work-based learning components embedded within programmes.
4. **University Industry Linkages** – active collaboration between academic institutions and employers in curriculum design, supervision, and mentoring.
5. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation Training** – inclusion of self-employment and enterprise development skills within the curriculum.
6. **Professional Assessment Mechanisms** – competency-based evaluation methods such as portfolios, capstone projects, and industry-reviewed assessments.

These dimensions collectively operationalise the latent construct: **Professionalisation of Bachelor Master Dotorate Courses**.

#### **Mediating Variable: Graduate Competencies**

The model assumes that professionalisation does not automatically lead to employment; rather, it enhances graduates' competencies, which then influence employability. Graduate competencies include:

- Technical and discipline-specific skills
- Soft skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability)
- Digital literacy and ICT competence
- Entrepreneurial competence
- Professional identity and career self-efficacy

These competencies represent the mechanism through which educational reforms translate into labour market outcomes.

#### **Dependent Variable: Graduates' Employability**

Graduates' employability is conceptualised as a multidimensional outcome variable comprising both objective and subjective indicators:

- Employment status
- Time-to-first employment
- Job–field alignment

- Income level
- Job stability
- Career progression
- Self-employment or enterprise creation

This comprehensive operationalisation recognises employability as more than mere employment; it captures quality and sustainability of work outcomes.

### **Moderating Variables**

To reflect contextual realities of Cameroon, the model incorporates moderating variables that may influence the strength or direction of relationships between professionalisation and employability:

- Institutional type (Public vs Private universities)
- Field of study (STEM vs non-STEM)
- Gender
- Regional labour market conditions
- Informal sector dominance

These moderators acknowledge structural inequalities and differential institutional capacities within the Cameroonian higher education system

### **Structural Relationships in the Model**

The model proposes the following pathways:

#### **Direct Effect**

Professionalisation of Bachelor–Master Doctorate Courses → Graduates' Employability

This relationship assumes that labour market-oriented reforms embedded in academic programmes directly enhance employment outcomes.

#### **Indirect (Mediated) Effect**

Professionalisation → Graduate Competencies → Employability

This pathway posits that competencies serve as the mechanism linking educational reform to labour market success.

### **Moderation Effects**

Institutional and contextual factors may strengthen or weaken the impact of professionalisation on employability outcomes.

### **Justification of the Model**

The model is particularly appropriate for this study for several reasons:

1. It aligns directly with national higher education reforms under the BMD system.
2. It operationalises professionalisation using measurable institutional indicators.
3. It integrates competence development as the explanatory mechanism.
4. It incorporates contextual factors relevant to Cameroon's labour market structure.
5. It allows empirical testing through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM).

### **Model Specification**

In statistical terms, the structural model may be expressed as:

$$GC = \beta_1 P + \varepsilon_1$$

$$GE = \beta_2 GC + \beta_3 P + \varepsilon_2$$

Where:

- P = Professionalisation
- GC = Graduate Competencies
- GE = Graduates' Employability
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$  = Path coefficients
- $\varepsilon$  = Error terms

Moderating variables will be incorporated through interaction terms.

### **Hypotheses Derived from the Model**

H1: Professionalisation of Bachelor Master Doctorate courses significantly predicts graduate competencies.

H2: Graduate competencies significantly predict graduates' employability.

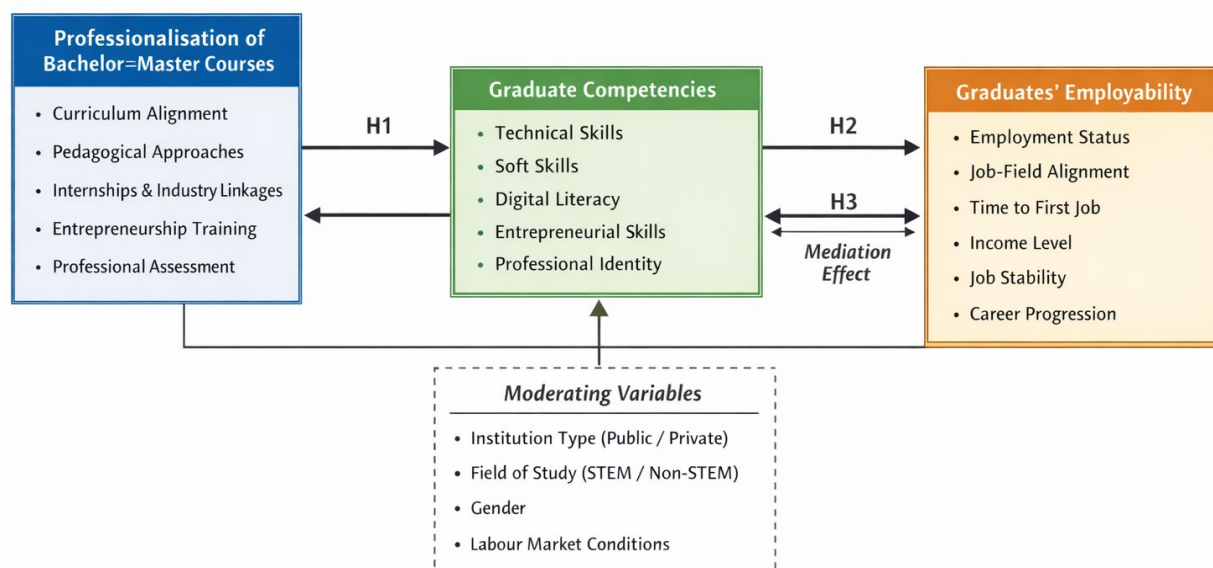
H3: Professionalisation of Bachelor Master Doctorate courses has a significant direct effect on graduates' employability.

H4: Graduate competencies mediate the relationship between professionalisation and employability.

H5: Institutional and contextual factors significantly moderate the relationships within the model.

This section has presented a multidimensional conceptual framework linking professionalisation of Bachelor Master Doctorate courses to graduates' employability within the Cameroonian context. The model integrates institutional reforms, competency development, and labour market outcomes while accounting for contextual influences. It provides the analytical structure upon which the study's empirical investigation will be conducted in the subsequent sections of this study.

**Figure 3: Academic Model**



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data obtained from the field. It is divided into two sections: section one deals with the presentation of results using descriptive statistics while section two deals with the analysis of results using inferential statistics. The Spearman Correlation and multiple regression analyses were the main statistical tools used. The information collected from the informants has been presented in grouped tables. The questionnaire is constructed on a five-point scale, (The Likert Scale) from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), uncertain, (UN), disagree (DA), and strongly disagree (SDA). Each item is endowed with frequencies, percentages, and the mean, to ease d

escriptions. Table 4 presents the demographic data with items such as: age range, gender, language, university attended, specialization, employment status, and professional experience.

## Descriptive Statistics

**Table 4: Demographic Data**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Modalities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
<b>Age range</b>	21-25years	143	26,9	
	26-30years	126	23,7	
	31-35years	98	18,4	
	36-40 years	97	18,2	
	40 years and above	68	12,7	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	224	57,9	
	Female	308	42,1	
<b>Language</b>	English only	208	39	
	French only	261	49	
	Bilingual	75	14	
<b>University Attended</b>	Siantou University Campus	40	7,5	
	The University of Yaounde I	201	37,7	
	The University of Yaounde II	102	19,1	
	The University of Ngoundere	33	6,3	
	The University of Dschang	42	7,9	
	The University of Douala	27	5	
	Institut Africaine d'informatique	30	5,6	
	Catholic University of Central Africa	46	8,6	
	University of Buea	12	2,2	
	<b>Specialisation</b>	BiomedicalStudies	100	18,8
		Humanities	208	39,2
		Business, economics, law	104	19,5
		information technology and engineering	120	22,6
		<b>EmploymentStatus</b>	Employed	143
	Unemployed		319	60
Underemployed	70		15,4	
<b>Professionalexperience</b>	Less than 5 years	98	46	
	5 to 10 years	85	39,2	
	10 years and above	30	14	

The whole study was made up of 532 respondents, ranging from 21- 40 years and above, making up a percentage of 100. The highest population in the study came from the age range 21-30 years. This implies that the incidence of unemployment is highest with youths in Cameroon. Item two presents the distribution of respondents according to gender. 224 respondents were male while 308 were females. This could be explained by the fact that female graduates are more challenged by unemployment than the male because the male are more ferocious in job search. Item three is the distribution of the respondents according to language. 196 were English- speaking while 261 were French speaking and 75, bilingual. This could be self-explaining due to the fact that the study was carried out in Yaoundé which is predominantly a French speaking region. Thus, most of the respondents, even though expressed themselves in both languages to some extent, were mostly French speaking.

Item four is the distribution of the respondents according to the higher education institute attended. The highest population was the University of Yaoundé I with 201 respondents, followed closely by Yaoundé II with 102 respondents. 33 respondents came from the University of Ngoundéré, 42 from Dschang, 27 from Douala 18 from the Institut Africain d'Informatique (IAI), 40 from Siantou, 46 from the Catholic University of Central Africa and 12 from the University of Buea. The high demand of the Universities of Yaoundé I and II could be explained by the fact that open access to state Universities at very low costs has caused the massification of higher education with consequent employment challenges. Also, not every household can afford the expensive private universities like IAI, Siantou and Catholic University of Central Africa. Even though these universities are located in Yaoundé, very few of their students demand the services of the NEF to look for jobs. From the results of the questionnaire as will be seen later, these universities oblige their students to do internship with enterprises where most of them end up being employed. So, the unemployment challenge is not as high as with graduates from state universities. The few respondents from IAI and Catholic Universities maybe indicative that demand for private education is low due to high fees in the supply of private higher education explaining why poor and relatively poor families prefer state universities.

Item five is the distribution according to the specialization of respondents. Most of the graduate job seekers who responded were from the Humanities. Unemployment seemed higher with these specializations may be due to the lack of professional skills among graduates. With the next group of respondents, the biomedical graduates, it was discovered that even though they come to the NEF in search of jobs, most of them are either self-

employed or underemployed somewhere and are only looking for greener pastures. This is due maybe to their more professional studies. Those in the specialization of information technology, and engineers were also found to be less unemployed. They equally come to the NEF for better employment opportunities since their services are highly needed and appreciated in enterprises. Finally, the smallest group of respondents came from business, law and economics graduates. It was noticed that they happened to be the most employed in the sample because they are needed in almost every private sector especially in the domains of consultancy and services. Item six was based on the employment status of the respondents. 319 out of 532 respondents were unemployed, 143 gainfully employed and 70 responded that they are underemployed. This only explains the fact that the incidence of unemployment in Cameroon is serious, since under-employment is itself a form of unemployment.

Finally, item seven shows distribution according to the professional experience of employed respondents. 98 out of 213 of the working group have only worked for less than five years. This explains the youthfulness of the respondents and that they might just be in their first job after university. 85 have worked for 5-10 years while only 30 have been working for 10 years and above. This could be suggestive of the fact that they keep losing their jobs and need to look for new ones.

**Table 5: Government policy and Professionalization of Higher Education Courses**

Item	Statement		SA	A	Un	DA	SDA	Mean
1	I am aware of the Bologna process reform in Europe and of its influence on the Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate (BMD) reform in Central African Countries	<i>fi</i>	93	230	145	21	43	
		%	17,4	43,2	27,2	3,9	8,0	2,45
2	I believe my university started implementing the BMD after its adoption in 2007.	<i>fi</i>	95	208	165	---	64	
		%	17,9	39,0	31,0	---	12,0	2,53
3	I know why Cameroon adopted the BMD reform.	<i>fi</i>	62	113	232	61	64	
		%	11,7	21,2	43,6	11,4	12,0	2,93
4	I understand the academic, political and economic objectives of the reform	<i>fi</i>	96	143	211	61	21	
		%	18,0	26,9	39,7	11,4	3,9	2,60
5	I understand how the BMD credit system works.	<i>fi</i>	103	262	85	61	21	
		%	19,3	49,2	16,0	11,4	3,9	2,32
6	I know about the mission of the National Employment Fund in Cameroon.	<i>fi</i>	209	178	42	61	42	
		%	39,2	33,4	7,9	11,4	7,9	2,16
7	I know about the Graduates Employment Programme (PED) and the Support Programme for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRIDES), Programmes geared towards the Employment of graduates initiated in partnership between MINESUP and NEF.	<i>fi</i>	21	33	122	229	127	
		%	3,9	6,2	22,9	43,0	23,9	2,19
8	Cameroonian Universities work in partnership with the National Employment Fund.	<i>fi</i>	37	---	330	64	101	
		%	7,0	---	62,0	12,0	19,0	3,12
9	I am aware of the partnerships between Cameroonian Higher Education and enterprises.	<i>fi</i>	55	19	148	188	122	
		%	12,2	3,6	27,8	35,3	22,9	2,83
10	The partnership between Cameroonian Higher Education and entrepreneurs is very effective	<i>fi</i>	42	56	64	188	182	
		%	7,9	10,5	12,0	35,3	34,6	3,83
11	The partnership takes into account the outcome of the needs analysis of all	<i>fi</i>	33	64	146	127	162	
		%	6,2	12,0	27,4	23,9	30,4	3,66

	stakeholders reflecting labour market needs.							
12	Because of the partnership between higher education and enterprises, internships have become regular and are effectively carried out in our university	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	95	42	105	103	187	
		%	17,9	7,9	19,7	19,3	35,1	3,52
13	The implementation of the BMD and the partnership between higher education and entrepreneurs, facilitated my acquisition of labour market skills	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	26	69	149	56	232	
		%	4,9	13,0	28,0	10,5	43,6	2,61
14	Because of the implementation of the policy of internships, my transition from school to work was easier and smoother	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	69	24	143	215	81	
		%	13,0	4,5	26,9	40,4	15,2	2,66
15	I am aware of the Growth and Employment strategy paper (GESp) in Cameroon	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	59	131	227	39	76	
		%	11,0	24,6	42,7	7,3	14,2	2,91
16	I am also aware that higher education was mainstreamed in this paper as a driver of economic growth and the employability of graduates	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	89	55	242	109	37	
		%	16,7	10,3	45,4	20,4	7,0	2,74
17	The implementation of the GESp mainstreaming higher education as an economic growth driver, is effectively leading to higher employability of graduates	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	36	55	154	80	207	
		%	6,8	10,3	29,0	15,0	38,9	2,49
18	There are adequate infrastructures to facilitate the implementation of all the above policies	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	53	58	74	184	162	
		%	10,0	10,9	13,9	34,6	30,4	2,30

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**Source : Field statistics**

Figure 4: Chart on Government Policy

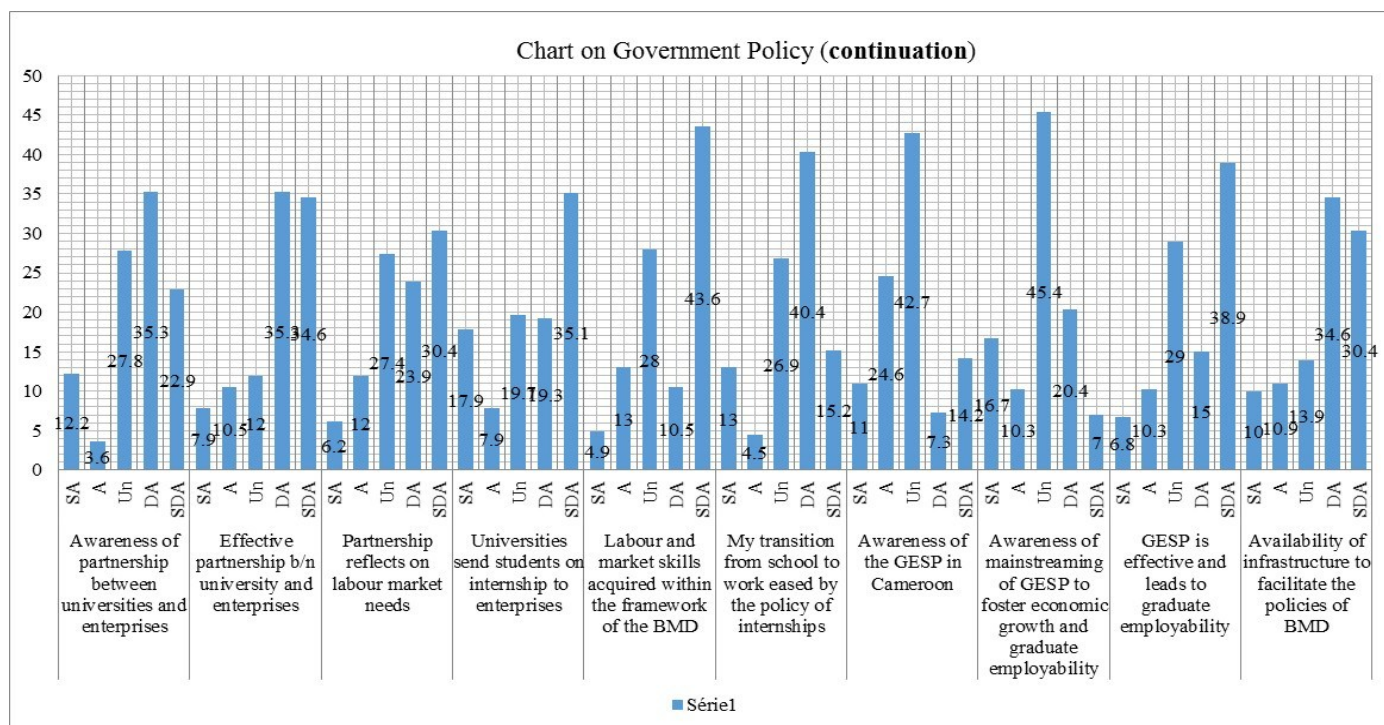
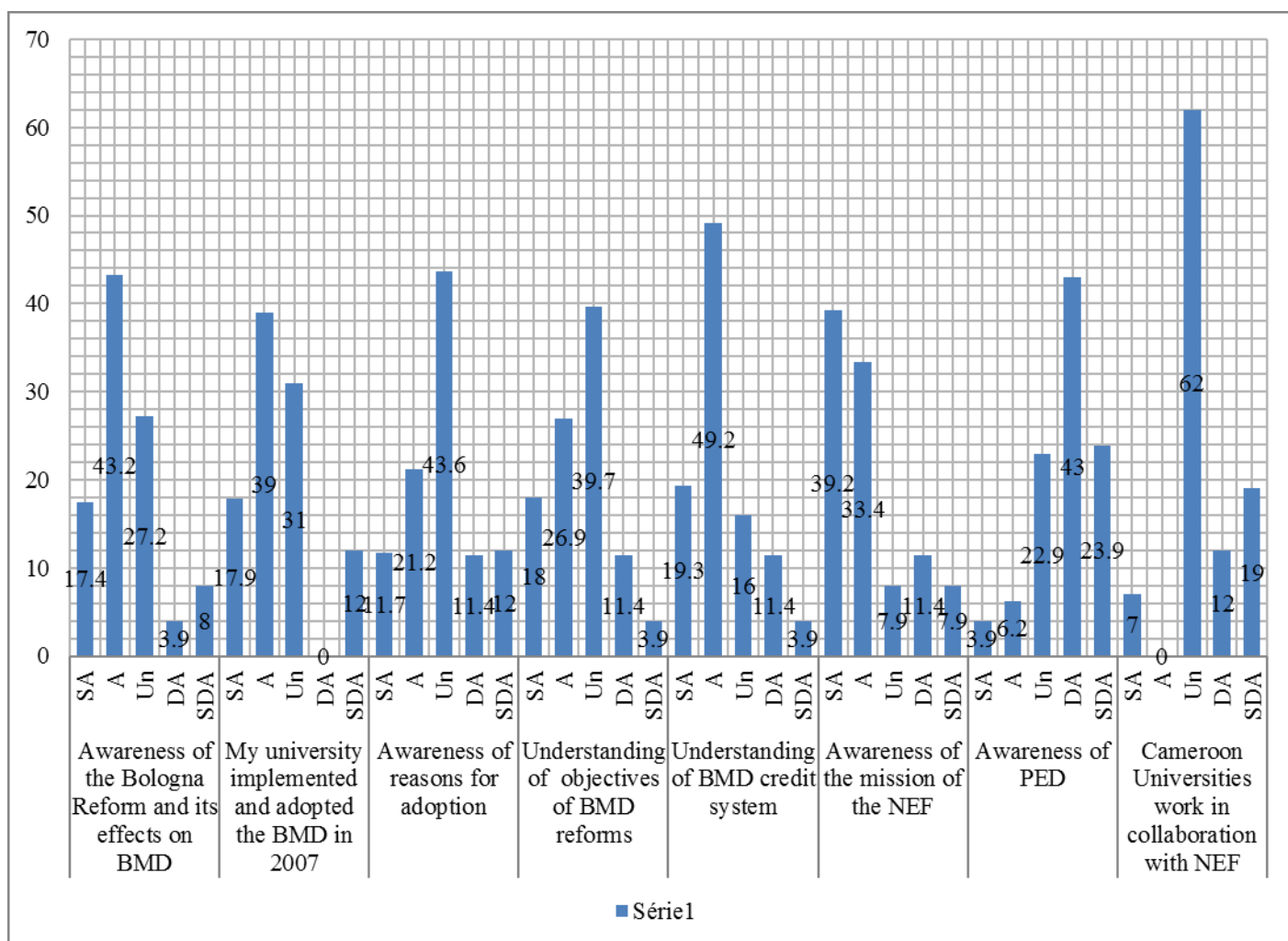


Table 5 and the charts above present the information respondents gave on government policy on professionalization of higher education.

The first item focuses on awareness of the European Bologna process reform and how it has affected the reform of the Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate (BMD) programs in Central African nations. While 27.9% (145) were unsure and 4% (21) and 8.3% (43) were wholly ignorant about the Bologna Reform, 17.4% (93) and 44.2% (230) agreed with the assertion. The majority of respondents accepted the statement, as indicated by the mean (2.45), which is inside the acceptance region. Nevertheless, 41.3% of those surveyed did not know about the Bologna reform or how it affected the BMD. This implies that the objectives of the BMD might hardly be attained to a greater extent because a great number of students who are supposed to have been beneficiaries were not aware. Item two shows the distribution of respondents according to whether university began using the BMD after it was approved in 2007. 31.7% (165) were unsure, however 17.9% (95) and 40% (208) strongly agreed and agreed with this statement, respectively. However, 64 people, or 12.3%, disagreed. Despite 31.7% being unsure, the mean (2.53) indicates that their universities were implementing the BMD change because it falls within the acceptable range.

Item three is the distribution of respondents according to being aware of the rationale for Cameroon's BMD reform. The mean of 2.93, which falls within the accepted region, indicates that the majority of respondents agree with the statement. Of the respondents, 11.9% (62) and 21.2% (113) knew why, indicating strong agreement and agreement, respectively; 44.6% (232) were unsure, and 11.7% (61) and 12.3% (64%) did not know the grounds for implementing the BMD change, indicating disagreement and extreme disagreement.

The respondents' distributions based on their awareness of the intellectual, political, and economic objectives of the reform are shown in item four. 143 respondents (27.5%) and 96 respondents (18%) concurred that they understood the BMD's goals. Item five depicts the respondents' distribution depending on their understanding of how the BMD credit system operates: 19.8% (103) and 49.2% (262) agreed with the statement, while 16.3% (85) were unsure; 11.7% (61) and 40.0% (21) disagreed with 176 4 comprehending how the BMD credit system works.

However, the mean 2.60 still falls within the acceptance region. The majority of respondents approved the statement, as indicated by the mean of 2.32, which is still within

the acceptable range. The respondents' distribution based on their knowledge of the National Employment Fund's (NEF) goal is seen in item six. 8.1% (42) of respondents were unsure, 40.2% (209) and 33.4.9% (178) agreed that they were aware of the NEF and its mission, while 11.7% (61) and 8.1% (42) disagreed. The 2.16 mean is likewise within the acceptable range. According to this, the majority of respondents acknowledged knowing about the NEF and its objectives.

Item seven shows the distribution of respondents according to the awareness of the Graduates Employment Program (PED) and the Support Program for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRIDES), two initiatives developed in collaboration between MINESUP and NEF with the goal of helping graduates find employment. 23.5% (122) were unsure, whilst 4.0% (21) and 6.2% (33) agreed with the statement. 24.4% (127) disagreed with 44.0% (229). Nonetheless, the acceptability threshold is where the mean of 2.19 is found. Therefore, the statement was endorsed by the majority of responders. though the number disagreeing is relatively high, there is an indication that since they are only graduate job seekers registered with the NEF, they are yet to discover Graduate Employment Program (PED), and other graduate opportunities at the NEF. Item eight presents the distribution of respondents according to whether Universities in Cameroon collaborate with the National Employment Fund. 7% (35) strongly agreed with the statement. None merely concurred. In contrast to 12.3% (64) and 19.4% (101) who disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, 63.4% (330) expressed total uncertainty. With a mean of 3.12, the majority of respondents agreed with the statement, which is also within the acceptability level. In spite of this, 63.4% of the respondents said they were unsure. This implies that even if the universities were collaborating with the NEF, the collaboration did not trickle down to benefit the graduates because so many of them were uncertain about such collaboration.

Item nine shows the distribution of the respondents according to graduates' awareness of the partnerships between Cameroonian Higher Education and enterprises. 28.5% (148) were not aware of this statement, whereas 12.2% (55) strongly agreed and 3.7 (19) agreed. This remark was disapproved with by 36.2% (188) and strongly disagreed by 23.5 (122). Even though a large number of respondents were unsure, the mean of 2.83 falls within the acceptable range, indicating that the majority of respondents agreed with this statement.

The respondents' distribution is shown in item ten based on Cameroon's higher education and entrepreneurship partnership. 10.5% of respondents agreed, 12.3% were unsure, 8.1% strongly agreed, 36.2% disagreed, and 35.45% strongly disagreed. The data

indicates that the mean, 3.83, is within the acceptable range. This suggests that the majority of those surveyed agreed with the statement. However, a sizable portion of respondents believe that university-business collaborations are still ineffective.

Item eleven is the distribution of the respondents according to whether partnership takes into account the findings of all stakeholders' need analyses that represent labour market needs. Once more, the data indicates that the mean is 3.66, which is within the acceptable range. This indicates that the majority of those surveyed agreed with this assertion.

The distribution of respondents by whether internships have become more widespread and are successfully carried out at our university as a result of the connection between businesses and higher education is displayed in item twelve. The majority of respondents agreed, as indicated by the item's mean score of 3.52, which falls within the acceptable range. Nevertheless, it was found that a sizable portion of respondents (105) were unsure. Additionally, 10.3 and 187 pupils, respectively, disapproved and strongly disagreed. This means that universities are not effectively doing this. Item thirteen presents the distribution of the respondents according to whether the ability to acquire skills for the labour market was made possible by the BMD's execution and the collaboration between higher education and businesspeople.

The mean, as determined by the data, is 2.61, falling inside the acceptable range. This indicates that the majority of respondents agreed with this assertion. However, 56 and 232 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, while 149 respondents were unsure. This means that the reform needs more practical implementation to acquire required results in the labour market.

Item fourteen is the distribution of respondents according to the easier and more seamless to transfer from school to work as a result of the establishment of the internship policy. Despite 144 respondents being unsure and 215 + 81 disagreeing and strongly disagreeing, the statistics show that the mean is 2.66, which is at the acceptance level. This may be because they haven't even succeeded in finding their first jobs. So, they are still graduate job seekers. Item fifteen is the distribution of the respondents according to the awareness the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) in Cameroon. 24.6% (131) and 11.3% (59) knew about this policy. In contrast to 7.5% (39) and 14.6% (76), 227 (43.7%) were unsure. Nonetheless, the data mean of 2.91 indicates that an appropriate proportion of respondents agreed with the statement, placing it at the acceptance threshold.

The distribution of respondents based on their awareness of whether higher education is a driver of economic growth and graduate employability, as stated in The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper, is item sixteen. The data indicates that the mean, which is at the level of acceptance, is 2.74. This indicates that the majority of those surveyed agreed with this assertion. The distribution of respondents on whether the GESP's mainstreaming of higher education as a driver of economic growth has improved the employability of graduating students is seen in item seventeen.

According to the data, the majority of respondents agreed with the statement, as indicated by the mean of 2.49, which is within the acceptable range. The distribution of respondents by the presence of the facilities required to facilitate the implementation of the aforementioned policies is item eighteen. The statistics show that the mean is 2.30. Even though a sizable portion of the respondents do not appear to agree, this is also within the acceptable range.

**Table 6: Information on the Contents of the Curriculum**

Item	Statement		SA	A	Un	DA	SDA	Mean
1	Syllabuses and study programmes are made available to students at the time of admission in to university	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	154	208	86	39	45	2,21
		%	28,9	39,0	16,1	7,3	8,4	
2	I chose what to study purposefully after studying these programmes and I knew what I could do in terms of work after graduation	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	69	65	171	171	56	2,79
		%	13,0	12,2	32,1	32,1	10,5	
3	I understand the curricula implications of the BMD, the GESP and the partnership between my university and the world of work	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	189	171	60	27	85	2,87
		%	35,5	32,1	11,2	5,0	16,0	
4	Relevant work-related skills are embedded in the curricula	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	50	96	125	137	124	3,36
		%	9,3	18,0	23,4	25,8	23,3	
5	There are enough extra-curricula activities and opportunities in my university to keep students abreast with the demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	73	83	107	153	116	3,32
		%	13,7	15,6	20,1	28,8	21,8	

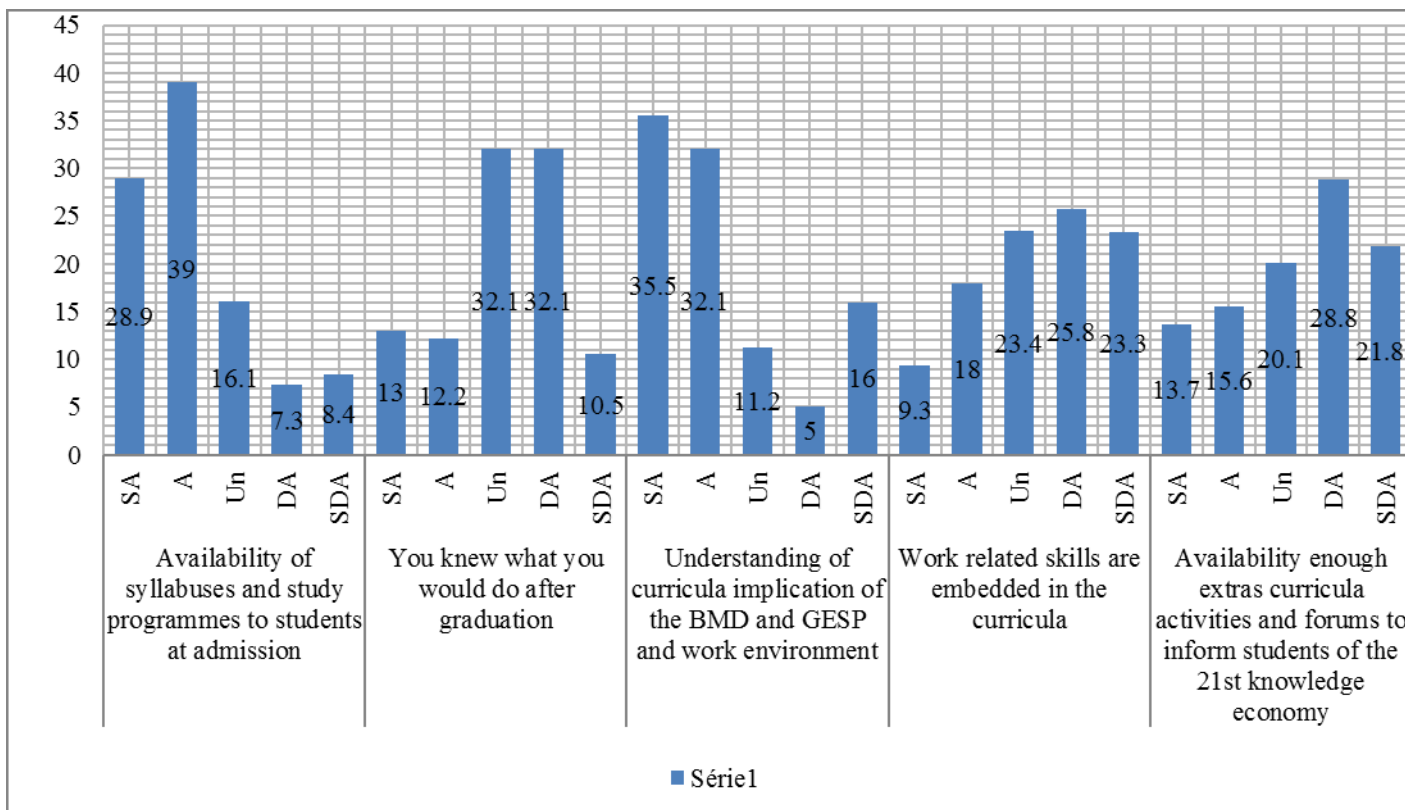
6	Course contents in my university reflects the needs and demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	88	95	---	197	152	2,92
		%	16,5	17,9	---	37,0	28,9	
7	Course contents enable students to acquire relevant marketable skills that enable them to become more employable and self-reliant	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	30	71	---	170	261	2,87
		%	5,6	13,3	---	32,0	49,0	
8	Course contents lead to effective specialization and professionalization	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	63	95	118	106	150	3,38
		%	11,8	17,9	22,1	19,9	28,1	
9	Based on relevant course contents, my transition from university to the world of work was facilitated	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	84	70	131	116	131	3,14
		%	15,8	13,1	24,6	21,8	24,6	
10	Course content in school helped me to develop employability skills which are now enhancing my job performance	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	61	89	---	255	127	3,03
		%	11,4	16,7	---	47,9	23,9	
11	Internships were compulsory and effective on the curriculum and were arranged by the university and industry for students' placements	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	94	75	---	254	109	3,08
		%	17,7	14,0	---	47,7	20,4	
12	I believe our university library has not received enough additional furnishing to help students and lecturers meet with the research component of the reform	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	52	128	139	88	122	2,86
		%	9,8	24,0	26,1	16,4	22,9	
13	Students need more professional development activities such as seminars, conferences and workshops to enhance professionalization and employability	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	201	255	76	---	---	2,58
		%	37,8	47,9	14,2	---	---	
14	Greater partnership between our university, National Employment Fund, professional associations and employers (enterprises) in designing curriculum will improve quality of programmes and enhance employability of graduates	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	197	134	80	37	84	3,45
		%	37,0	25,1	15,0	7,0	15,8	
15	I think that in the higher education curricula in Cameroon, there is a need	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	196	233	103	---	---	3,62
		%	36,8	51,1	19,3	---	---	

	for more practical application in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice							
16	I think that there is a need for more dialogue and interaction between universities and the business world, in order to increase students' exposure to the working environment	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	213	263	56	---	---	
		%	40,0	49,4	10,5	---	---	2,64
17	I also feel that more professional extra-curricular projects need to exist in the universities to help students gain practical work experience and develop new skills – including project management, soft and communication skills	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	250	173	67	42	---	
		%	47,0	32,5	12,6	7,9	---	2,49

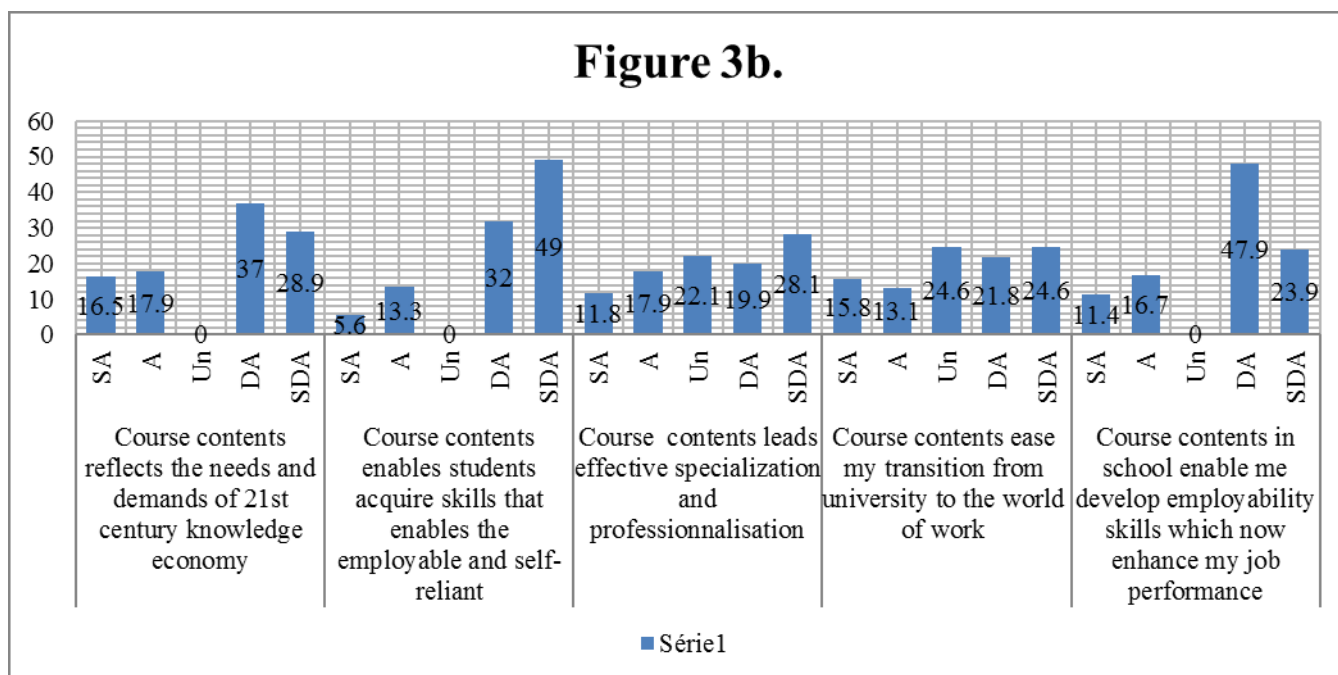
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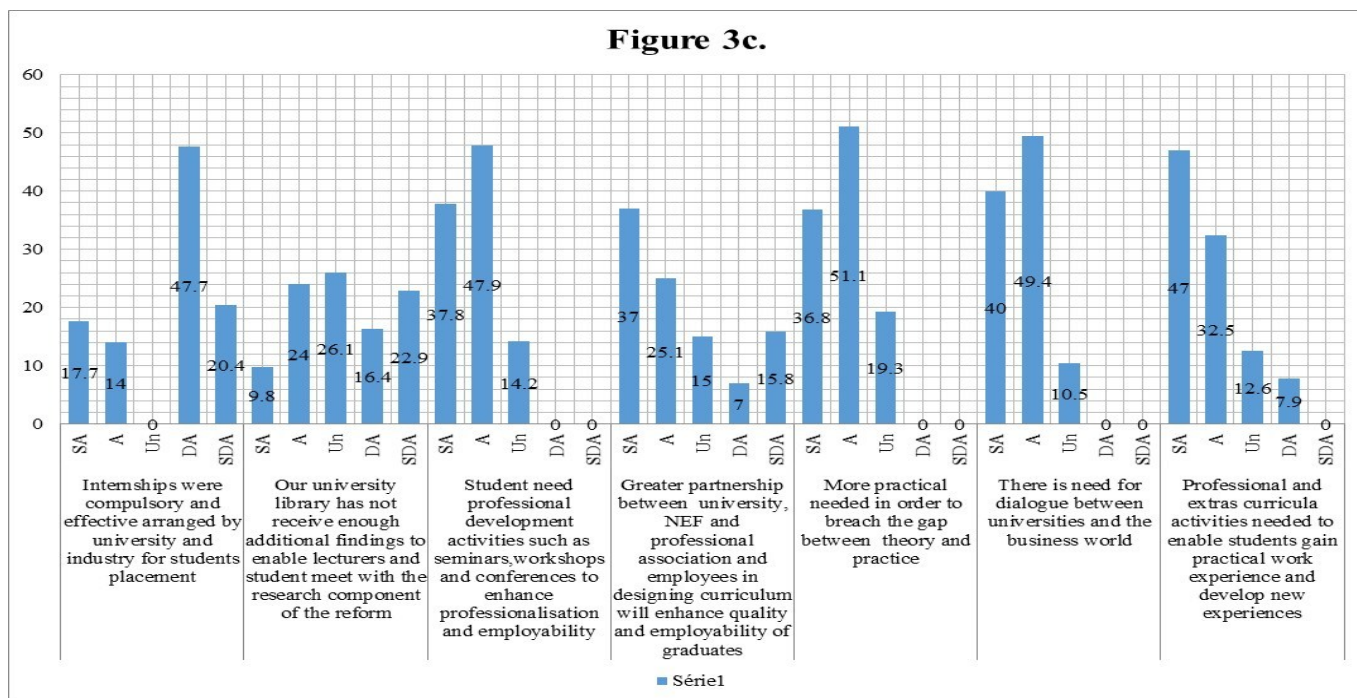
**Source :** Field statistics

**Figure 5: Chart on Contents of Curriculum**



**Figure 3b.**





The items on table 6 are also graphically represented on the charts that follow the table. Item one on this table is the distribution of respondents according to students who are given access to study plans and syllabuses after they are admitted to the university. 29.6% (154) 40.0.(208) agreed with the statement, whereas 16.5 (86) were unsure. 7.5% (39) and 8.4% (45) disagreed with this statement. This gave us a mean of 2.21, which is within the acceptable range. Item two shows the distribution of responses based on whether they actively picked what to pursue after completing these programs. After graduation, they were aware of their professional options. 13.0% (69) and 12.5% (65) accepted. 32.9% (171) were uncertain while 32.9% (171) and 10.8% (58) did not know what they would do after graduation. The mean, 2.79 falls in the acceptance zone. Even so, many graduates from Cameroonian universities do not know what they would do after graduation. This means that unemployment is high and will continue to grow until measures are taken. Item three presents the distribution of respondents according to whether they are aware on how the GESP, the BMD, and the collaboration between university and the working world will affect courses. 36.3% (189) and 32.9% (171), understood. 11.2% (60) were unsure, whereas 5.2% and 16.3% of respondents disapproved or strongly disagreed with the proposition. Based on the data, we obtained a mean of 2.87, which is within the acceptable range. This signifies that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement.

Item four represents the distribution of responders based on whether the curriculum content is work-related. 9.6% (50) and 18.5% (96) agreed, while 23.4% (125) were doubtful, and 26.3% (137) and 23.8% (124) disagreed. The mean was 3.36 accepting the statement. This is indicative of the fact that work related skills are supposed to be embedded into HE curricula so that graduates acquire skills that can help them transit smoothly to work and increase their employability chances. Item five shows the distribution of respondents according to university, there are enough extracurricular programs and activities to keep students current with the needs of the information economy of the twenty-first century. Based on the statistics, the mean is 3.32, which is within the acceptable range. Most of the responders agreed. Despite this, a large percentage of respondents (107) were unsure, while 153 and 116 disapproved or strongly disagreed. This indicates that there is still a need to incorporate extracurricular activities into higher education curricula in order to prepare students for the knowledge economy after graduation.

Item six is the distribution according to whether the requirements of the knowledge economy in the twenty-first century are reflected in the course curriculum at the university. Based on the statistics, the mean is 2.92, which falls within the acceptable range. This signifies that the majority of respondents endorsed the statement. Item seven describes the distribution of respondents based on students who can obtain valuable skills from the course contents, boosting their employability and independence. The data yields a mean of 2.87, which falls in the acceptable zone. Despite this, 170 and 261 strongly disagreed with this statement.

This could mean that a lot still needs to be done in terms of modifying the course contents to reflect the needs of labour market so that graduates leave HE with the required skills to face the world of work. Item eight presents the distribution of respondents according to whether effective specialization and professionalization are as a result of course content. The data leads to a mean of 3.38 which is accepted. Yet 118 respondents were not sure while 106 and 150 disagreed and strongly disagreed. This implies that even though an accepted number of respondents agreed with the statement, a lot of work still needs to be done on the content of the curriculum to achieve an accepted level of specialization and professionalization.

Item nine presents the distribution of respondents according to whether the transition from university to the working world was aided by the pertinent course material. The

statistical results yielded an acceptable mean of 3.14. However, a sizable proportion of respondents remained unclear (131), with some disagreeing (116) and severely disagreeing (131). This suggests that, even if the mean is accepted, colleges must adapt and continue to revise material to meet market needs in order to assist their graduates in transitioning from university to employment more smoothly.

Item ten distributes respondents according to whether academic coursework aided in the development of employability abilities that are currently improving job performance 11.7% and 16.7% of respondents supported this statement. 49% and 14.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Again, we notice that, despite the fact that the mean of 3.03 is within the acceptable range, HE courses contents are considered to be lacking in terms of work skills.

Item eleven distributes respondents to whether the university and industry collaborated to establish internships, which were required as part of the curriculum and provided placement opportunities for students. From the data, the mean is 3.08 which fall at the level of acceptance. Even so, a very large number of respondents (254 plus 109) disagreed and strongly disagreed. This indicates that internships were not effective especially in state universities from where the bulk of our respondents came.

Item twelve is the distribution of responders based on the addition of furniture to the university library to assist students and instructors in meeting the reform's research requirements. Based on the statistics, the mean is 2.86, which is within the acceptable range. Most respondents agreed with the statement. However, 139 were unsure, while 88 disagreed and 122 strongly disagreed. Although the mean is accepted, there are significant indicators that higher education libraries need to be modernized.

Item thirteen distributes respondents according to graduates' professional growth and employability; they need more opportunities for seminars, conferences, and workshops. The data gives us a mean of 2.58, which is found at the level of acceptance. Curiously, no respondents disagreed with this fact. Only 76 were uncertain. Therefore, students seriously need professional development activities to enhance their employability chances.

Item fourteen distributes respondents according to the quality of programs that will increase, graduates' employability, with more collaboration between our universities, National Employment Fund, professional groups and companies (enterprises).

The data gives us a mean of 3.45, which is within the acceptable range. This suggests that the majority of respondents agreed on the importance of these collaborations in the design of higher education curricula.

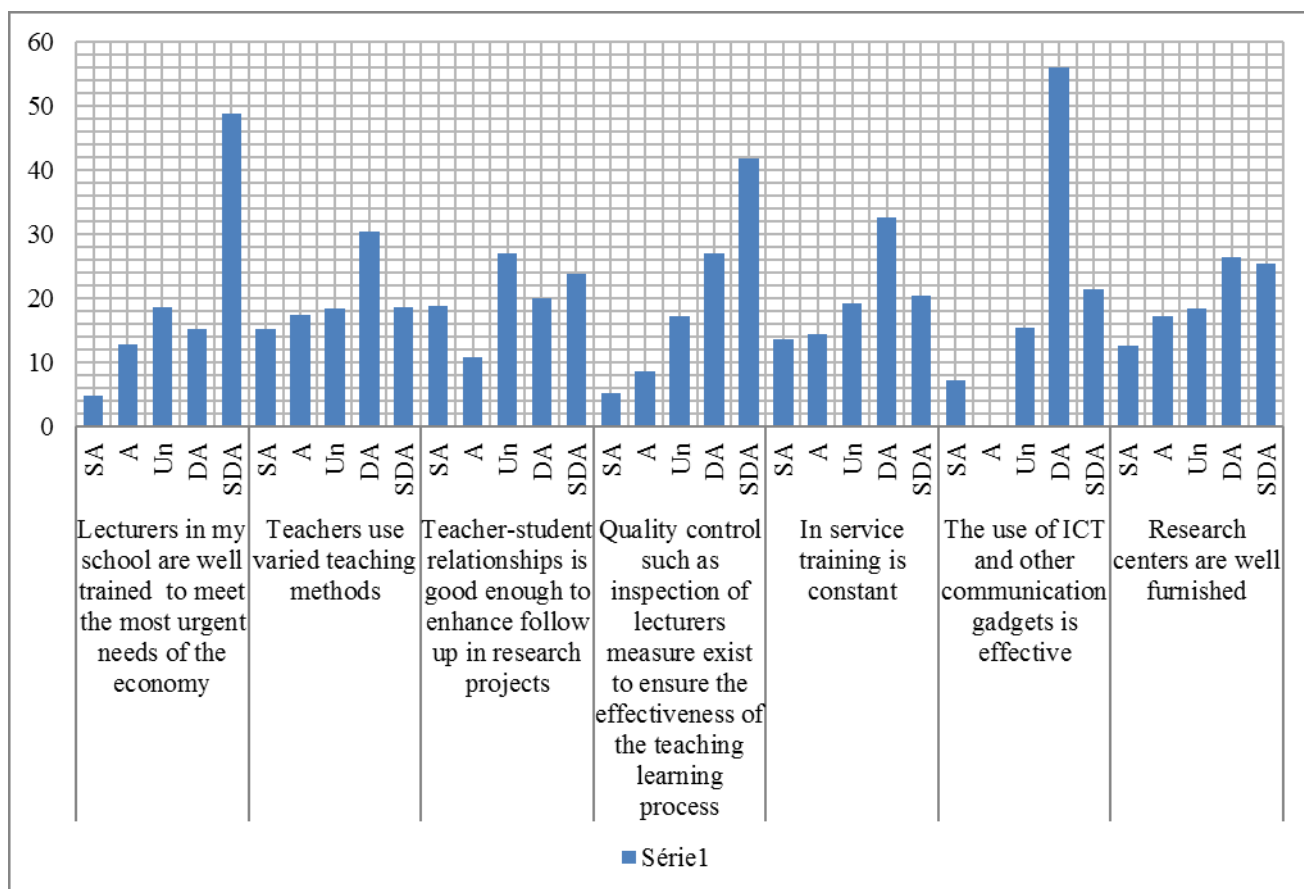
Item fifteen is the distribution of respondents according to whether greater practical application is required in Cameroon's higher education curricula in order to close the gap between theory and practice. Based on the data, the mean is 3.62 found in the acceptance zone. This leads to the conclusion that most of the respondents supported this statement, especially because no respondents disagreed. Only 103 of them were uncertain. Item sixteen distributes the respondents according to the provision of students with more exposure to the workplace, they believe there is a need for increased communication and contact between universities and the business world. The statistics show a mean of 2.64, which is also observed at the acceptability level. This signifies that the majority of respondents agreed with this statement. None of the respondents disagreed in anyway. Only 56 of them were uncertain. This implies that more practical dialogue between universities and the business world is needed. Finally, item seventeen presents the distribution of respondents according to the believe that universities should offer more professional extracurricular projects to help students obtain real-world work experience and learn new abilities, such as project management, soft, and communication skills. Based on the data, the mean is 2.49, falling within the region of acceptance. Therefore, most of the respondents supported this statement.

**Table 7: Information on the Teaching and Learning Process (the Pedagogic Process)**

Item	Statements		SA	A	Un	DA	SDA	Mean
1	I think the Lectures in our university are well trained and qualified to meet the most urgent demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy	<i>fi</i>	25	68	99	81	259	2,78
		%	4,7	12,8	18,6	15,2	48,7	
2	Teaching methods are varied (including, lectures, tutorials, seminars, online deliveries, workshops, directed activities and group projects)	<i>fi</i>	81	91	98	162	99	3,39
		%	15,2	17,1	18,4	30,4	18,6	
3	Teacher – student ratios are good enough to facilitate effective follow-up of students especially in research projects	<i>fi</i>	99	57	144	106	126	3,22
		%	18,6	10,7	27,0	19,9	23,7	
4	There exist effective quality control measures such as teacher inspection, to ensure effective teaching and learning	<i>fi</i>	28	46	92	144	222	3,13
		%	5,2	8,6	17,2	27,0	41,7	
5	Teachers constantly undergo in service training to keep them abreast with the ever increasing demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy	<i>fi</i>	72	77	102	173	108	2,98
		%	13,5	14,4	19,1	32,5	20,3	
6	There is effective and proper use of modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and gadgets in the teaching and learning process	<i>fi</i>	38	---	82	298	114	2,59
		%	7,1	---	15,4	56,0	21,4	
7	Research centers are well furnished to facilitate research for students and lecturers	<i>fi</i>	67	92	98	140	135	2,93
		%	12,6	17,2	18,4	26,3	25,3	

**Source :** Field Statistics

**Figure 6: Chart on the Teaching and Learning Process (Pedagogic Process)**



Items on table 7 are presented graphically on the bar charts that follow for a better understanding. Item one on this table presents the distribution of the respondents according to whether lecturers at the university, in their opinion, are well-educated and capable of addressing the pressing needs of the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century. The data gives us a mean of 2.78 implying that most of the respondents agreed with this statement. Even so, 259 of them strongly disagreed. This could mean that there is a need for more and frequent retraining of lecturers through seminars on the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the knowledge economy no matter the discipline. Item two distributes respondents according to whether teaching methods are varied (including, lectures, tutorials, seminars online deliveries, workshops, directed activities, and group projects). 15.6% (81) and 17.5% (91) strongly agreed and agreed respectively. 18.8% (98) were uncertain while 30.4% (162) and 19.0% (99) disagreed and strongly disagreed. Based on this data, we have a mean of 3.39 which is within the acceptance range. Yet a great number of the respondents who disagreed with the statement could be indicative that lecturers need to review their teaching methods in HE. There is need for variety to produce employability skills in the students.

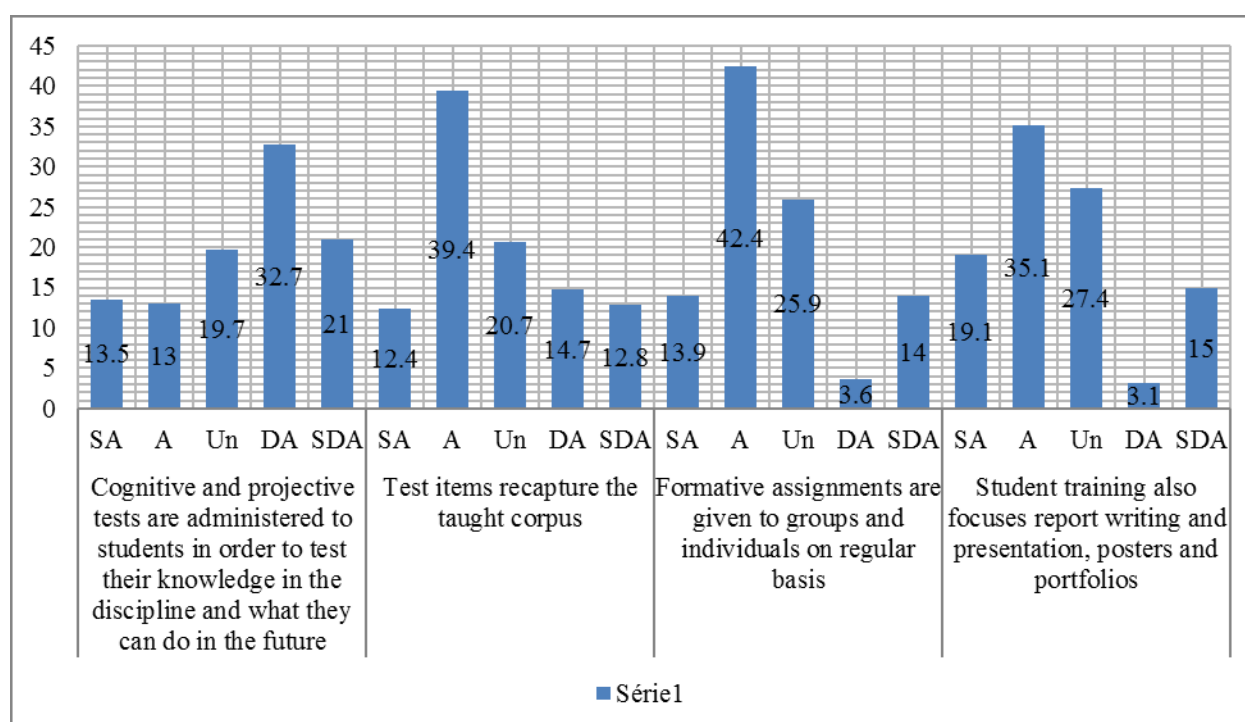
Item three is the distribution of respondents according to whether lecturer-to-student ratios are adequate to allow for efficient monitoring of students, particularly during research projects. Based on data, the mean is 3.22. This is found within the acceptance region. Yet 144 respondents were uncertain, 106 and 126 disagreed and strongly disagreed. This implies that student population may be in state universities are out of control implying that project follow-up is impaired and hardly effective. Item four is the distribution of respondents according to the fact that there exist effective quality control measures such as teacher inspection, to ensure effective teaching and learning. 5.2% and 8.8% agreed while 17.9% were uncertain. 27.7% and 42.7% disagreed. So even though the mean of 3.13 is within the region of acceptance, HE should have a rethink on quality control of lecturers. Item five distributes respondents according to lecturers constantly undergo in-service training to keep them abreast with the ever-increasing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century knowledge economy. Based on the statistics, the mean is 2.98, which is within the acceptable range. This signifies that the majority of respondents endorsed the statement. However, given the amount of people who disagreed (173 plus 108), there is a need for ongoing training.

Item six is the distribution of respondents according to an effective and proper use of modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and gadgets in the teaching-learning process. Based on the data, the mean is 2.59. This falls within the accepted range and implies that most respondents agreed with the statement, that there is need for effective use of ICTS in the pedagogic process in HE. This is because 298 and 114 think that ICTs are not yet effectively in use. The final item (seven) distributes the respondents according to research facilities and whether they are well-equipped to support students' and teachers' research needs. The data gives us a mean of 2.93 which is acceptable. Even so, some 26.9% and 26.0% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This implies that even though the mean is accepted, the objectives of research which is foremost in HE could be impaired in some universities due to the lack of well-furnished research centres and laboratories.

**Table 8: Information on Evaluation Processes**

	Statements		SA	A	Un	DA	SDA	Mean
1	Varieties of tests such as cognitive and projective tests are administered to students in order to test their knowledge of the discipline and what they can do in the future	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	72	69	105	174	112	3,13
		%	13,5	13,0	19,7	32,7	21,0	
2	Test items reflect the taught corpus	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	66	210	110	78	68	2,80
		%	12,4	39,4	20,7	14,7	12,8	
3	Formative assignments are varied and regular, from individual to group work	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	74	226	138	19	75	2,58
		%	13,9	42,4	25,9	3,6	14,0	
4	Group projects trained students in doing presentations, writing reports, posters and portfolios	<i>f<sub>i</sub></i>	102	187	146	17	80	2,57
		%	19,1	35,1	27,4	3,1	15,0	

**Source :** Field statistics.

**Figure 7: Chart on Evaluation Processes**

The items on table 8 above are further presented on the bar charts that follow the table. Item one presents the distribution of respondents according to students who take a variety of exams, including cognitive and projective assessments, to gauge their understanding of the subject and their potential. Based on the data, the mean is 3.13 which is found within the range of acceptance. Yet, the large number of those disagreeing (286) could be suggestive of the fact that there is need for more variety in testing. Item two distributes the respondents according whether test items reflect the taught corpus.

The statistics showed that the mean, which was at the acceptable threshold, was 2.80. This suggests that the majority of those surveyed agreed with the statement. The distribution of responders by formative tasks, including whether they are frequent and diverse, from individual to group work, is displayed in item three.

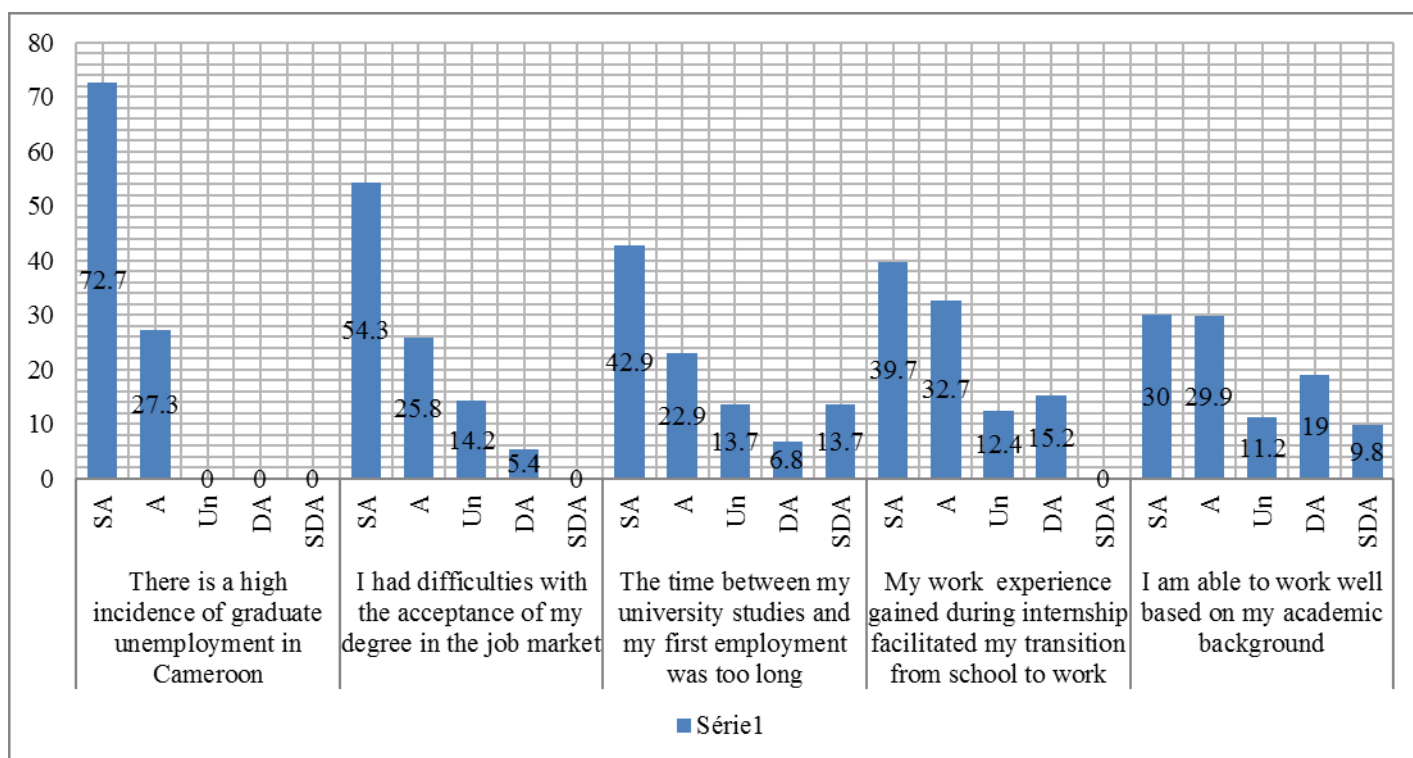
The data gives a mean of 2.58, found at the level of acceptance. This implies that most respondents agreed with this. Item four is the distribution of respondents according to whether group projects trained students in doing presentations, writing reports, posters and portfolios. The data produced a mean of 2.57 which falls within the range of acceptance. Even so, some 146 respondents (28.1%) were uncertain about whether this type of evaluation is done in their universities. Therefore, they could leave university without acquiring these skills which are highly appreciated in the labour market of the knowledge economy that they are supposed to face after graduation. Item five presents the distribution of respondents whether evaluation was oriented on employability. The data gives us a mean of 2.95 which is acceptable. Even so, some 37,8% and 49.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement.

**Table 9: Information on Employability**

Item	Statements		SA	A	Un	DA	SDA	Mean
1	There is a high incidence of graduate unemployment in Cameroon	<i>fi</i>	387	145	---	---	---	2.07
		%	72,7	27,3	---	---	---	
2	I had difficulties with the acceptance of my degree in the labour market	<i>fi</i>	289	137	76	29	---	1,96
		%	54,3	25,8	14,2	5,4	---	
3	The time between my universities studies and my first employment was too long	<i>fi</i>	228	122	73	36	73	2,57
		%	42,9	22,9	13,7	6,8	13,7	
4	My work experience gained during internship facilitated my transition from school to the world of work	<i>fi</i>	211	174	66	81	---	2,57
		%	39,7	32,7	12,4	15,2	---	
5	Based on my academic background and the skills acquired, I am able to sustain my employability	<i>fi</i>	160	159	60	101	52	2,50
		%	30,0	29,9	11,2	19,0	9,8	
6	None of my university skills are applicable in my work now	<i>fi</i>	130	189	68	63	82	2,60
		%	24,4	35,5	12,8	11,8	15,4	
7	My employability is mostly enhanced by my present work experience and in-service training	<i>fi</i>	124	139	83	92	94	3,19
		%	23,3	26,1	15,6	17,2	17,7	
8	I am not afraid of losing my job because I am sure to pick up another one in a very short time because I am a multi skilled worker	<i>fi</i>	48	83	170	164	67	2.89
		%	9,0	15,6	32,0	30,8	12,6	
9	There are opportunities for me to develop my employability in my present work and stay in it for a very long time	<i>fi</i>	97	174	145	66	50	2.63
		%	18,2	32,7	27,2	12,4	9,3	
10	There is a need for greater and more innovative responses from higher education in providing students with opportunities to improve their skills portfolios and over all employability	<i>fi</i>	258	355	---	---	---	2.26
		%	48,4	66,7	---	---	---	
11	Opportunities for student mobility and exposure to other cultures is very relevant in graduate employability	<i>fi</i>	208	196	43	47	38	2.08
		%	39,0	36,8	8,0	8,8	7,1	

**Source :** Field statistics.

**Figure 8: Chart on Employability of Graduates**



**Figure 6b.**

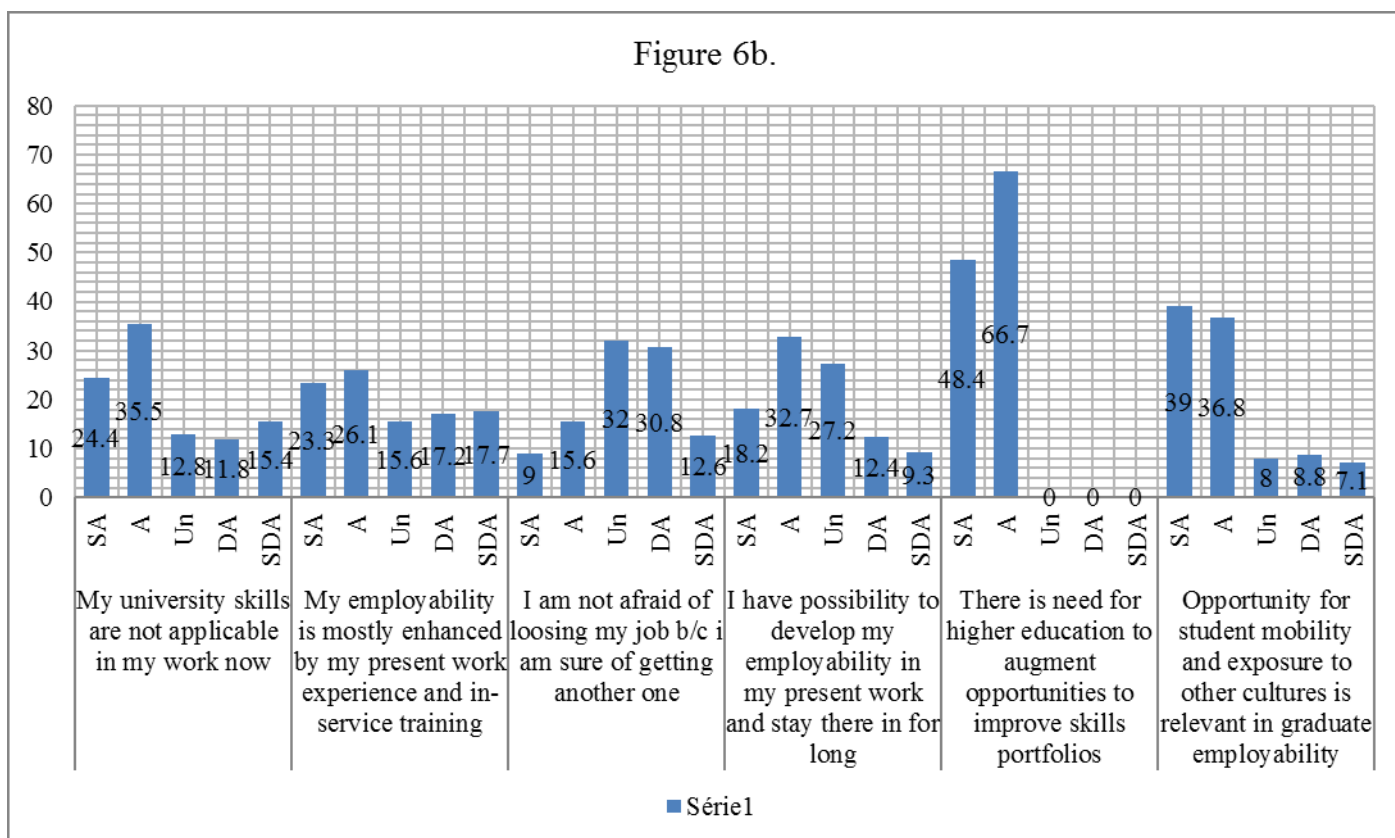


Table 9 is graphically presented on the bar chart following it. Item one on this table presents the distribution of respondents according to whether there is a high graduate unemployment rate in Cameroon. Based on the data 387 (74.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed with this fact while 145 (27.3%) of them simply agreed. None disagreed and none was uncertain. Based on this data the mean is 2.07 it could be concluded that graduate unemployment in Cameroon is an undisputed fact. Item two distributes the respondents according to the issues they encountered to getting their degree recognized by employers. 289 respondents strongly supported this statement, while 137 supported it. 76 were uncertain and 29 disagreed. The mean is 1.96 which is accepted. This implies that most graduates' certificates have very low market values, and still supports the fact that unemployment is high and will continue to rise until such a time when HE degrees will reflect labor market values. Item three is the distribution of respondents according to whether the time between university studies and first employment was too long. 340 respondents found the waiting time to first employment too long. 73 were uncertain while only 109 got work immediately. Based on this data, the mean is 2.57 which is accepted. This implies that most of the graduates took long to move from universities to their first employment. Item four is the distribution of respondents according to whether the transition from education to the world of work was facilitated by the work experience acquired during the internship. Based on the statistics, the mean is 2.57. This means that most respondents who actually did internship supported the statement, because the internships helped them to transit from university to work more smoothly.

Item five presents the distribution of respondents according to whether academic background and learned skills facilitated employment. The figures show that the mean, which is at the acceptable threshold, is 2.50. The statement was endorsed by the majority of people employed. The distribution of respondents based on whether their university education is currently applicable to the workplace is shown in item six. 130 plus 189 strongly agreed and agreed respectively that their university skills were not applicable in their work. The mean is 2.60 which falls within the accepted range. This implies that the skills they learned from school were scarcely useful at work. Item seven is the distribution of the respondents according to whether their current employment history and in-service training have had a significant positive impact on employability. 263 respondents agreed with this statement while 186 disagreed. The mean is 3.19 which is within the acceptance area. This implies that employability for graduates working is mostly developed at work. Item eight is the

distribution of the respondents according to being a multi-skilled worker; they have no reason to fear losing their job because they will undoubtedly find another in a very short period of time. The mean, as determined by the data, is 2.89, falling inside the permissible range. This suggests that the majority of those surveyed agreed with the statement.

The sample distribution by current job is shown in item nine, along with information on whether there are chances to increase employability and stay on the employment for an extended length of time. The data brings out the mean of 2.63, which is found at the acceptance level, implying that most respondents accepted and supported this statement. Item ten shows the distribution of the respondents according to higher education that needs to do a better job of responding to this issue by being more creative and giving students more opportunity to develop their skill sets and overall employability. All the respondents supported this statement with 258 strongly agreeing and 355 agreeing. Based on this, the mean is 2.26 implying that HE should step up opportunities for students to improve their skills portfolios. Item eleven distributes the respondents according to the fact that, in order to be employable after graduation, opportunities for student mobility and exposure to other cultures are crucial. Based on the data, 208 strongly agreed, 196 agreed while only 43 were uncertain. 47 plus 38 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The mean is 2.08, falling within the acceptance range. This implies that opportunities for mobility and exposure to other settings and cultures are highly needed because they are relevant in graduate employability.

## **Inferential Statistics**

### **Hypothesis one**

***H<sub>a1</sub>***: There is a relationship between government policy implementation and employability of graduates of higher education.

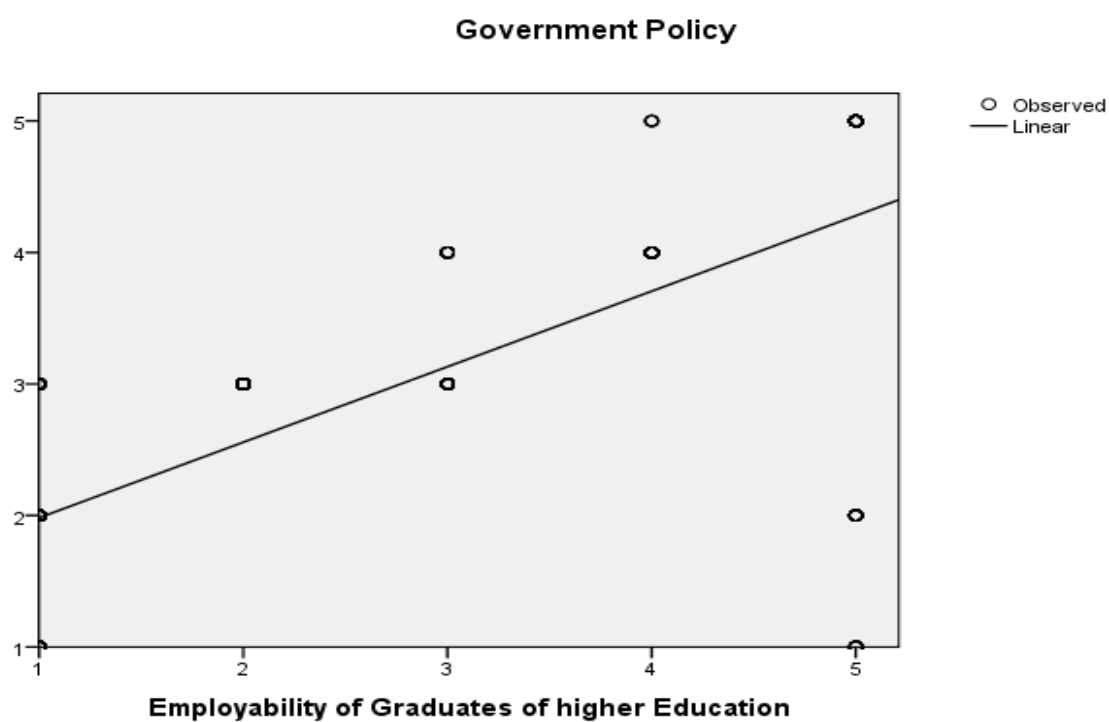
***H<sub>o1</sub>***: There is no relationship between government policy implementation and employability of graduates of higher education.

**Table 10: Government policy implementation and employability of graduates of higher education**

Correlations			Government Policy	Employability of Graduates of higher Education
Spearman's rho	Government Policy	Correlation	1,000	,721**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
		N	532	532
	Employability of Graduates of higher Education	Correlation	,721**	1,000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
		N	532	532

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

**Figure 9: Government Policy**



According to the correlation table above, there is a favorably significant association between government policies and college graduates' employability. This is predicated on the fact that the alpha, or standard error margin, is smaller than 0.05, and the level of significance is 0.00. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient (0.07) is within the usual range and has a positive value. It is close to 1 and high, suggesting a strong correlation between the variables being studied. The findings show that if we believe that there is a relationship between the factors, we have no probability of making a mistake. Therefore, we may say that government policies have a big impact on Cameroonian higher education graduates' employability.

### Hypothesis Two

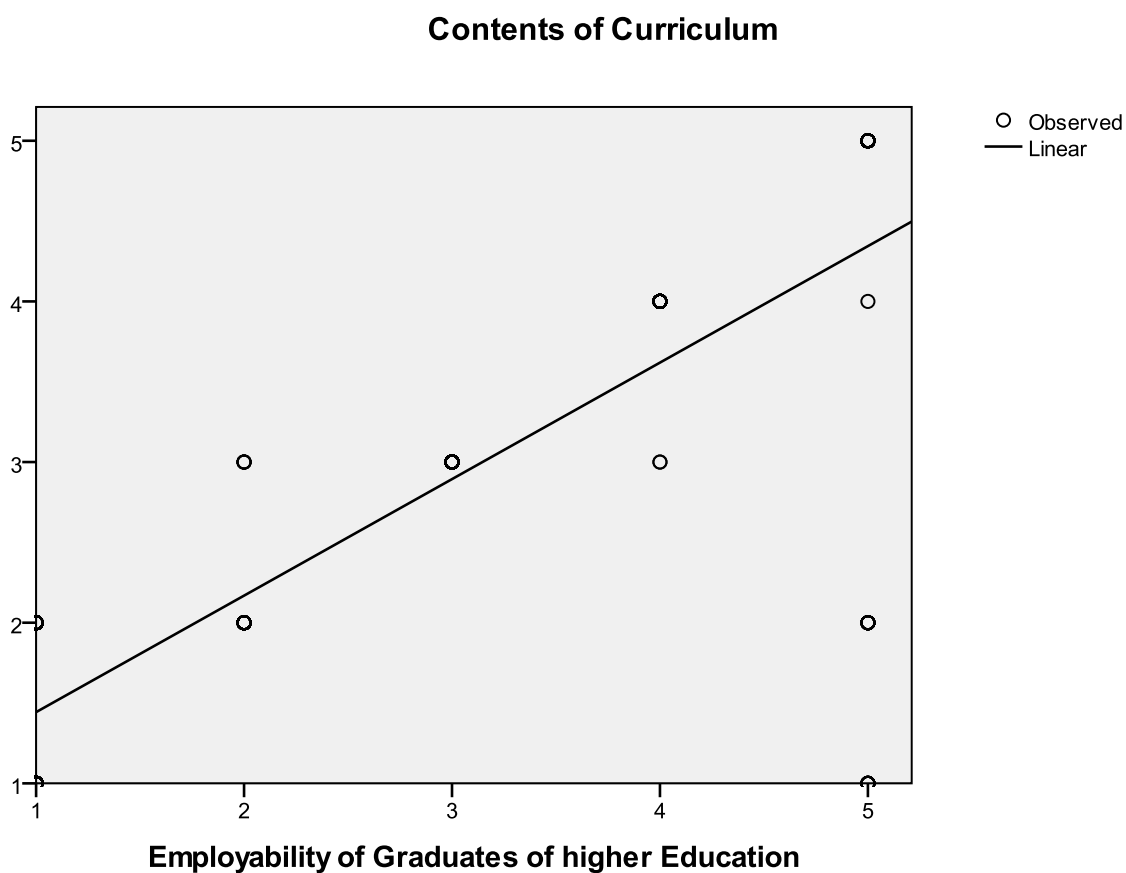
***H<sub>a2</sub>***: The Contents of Curricula determine employability of graduates of higher education.

***H<sub>o2</sub>***: The Contents of Curricula do not determine the employability of graduates of higher education.

**Table 11 : Curricula and employability of graduates of higher education**

		<b>Correlations</b>		
			<b>The Contents of Curricula</b>	<b>Employability of Graduates of higher Education</b>
Spearman's rho	The Contents of Curricula	Correlation	1,000	,807**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	532	532
	Employability of Graduates of higher Education	Correlation	,807**	1,000
		Coefficient		
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	.	
	N	532	532	

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

**Figure 10: Contents of Curriculum**

The relationship between the employability of college graduates and the content of their curricula is seen in the correlation table above. The level of significance is 0.000, and the correlation coefficient is 0.807 as well. The alpha and standard error margin are less than 0.05, which is the level of significance. The findings show that curriculum contents have a major impact on Cameroonian higher education graduates' employability.

### **Hypothesis Three**

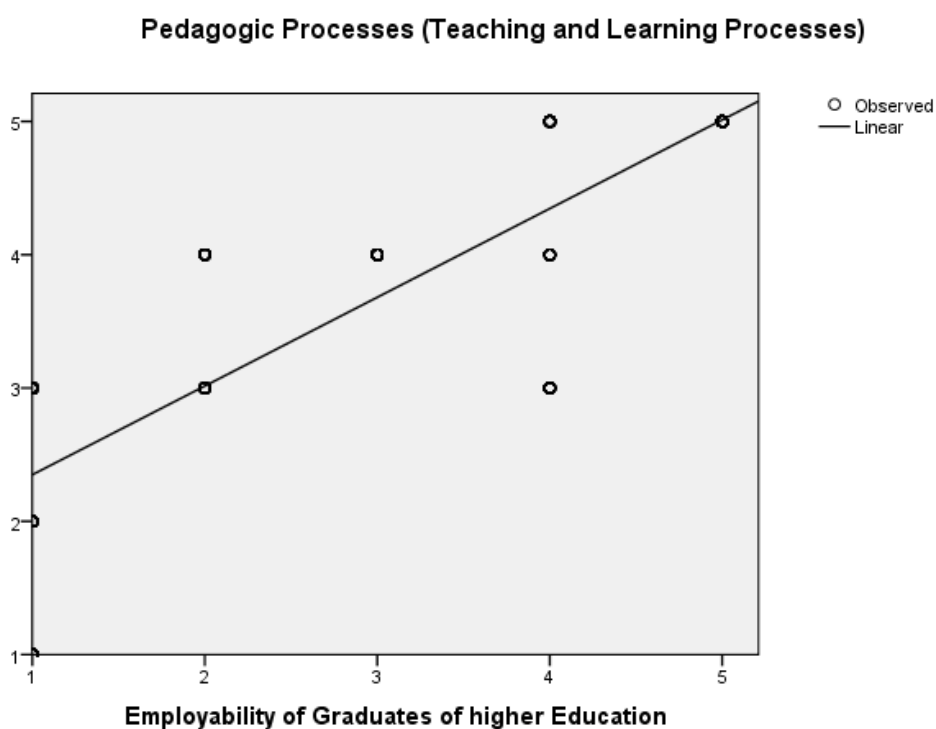
***H<sub>a3</sub>***: The teaching methods influence the employability of graduates of higher education

***H<sub>o3</sub>***: The teaching methods do not influence the employability of graduates of higher education.

**Table 12: Teaching methods and employability of graduates of higher education**

<b>Correlations</b>			The Teaching and Learning Process (the Pedagogic Process)	Employability of Graduates of higher Education
Spearman's rho	The Teaching and Learning Process (the Pedagogic Process)	Correlation	1,000	,931**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	532	532
	Employability of Graduates of higher Education	Correlation	,931**	1,000
		Coefficient		
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	.	
	N	532	532	

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

**Figure 11: Pedagogic Processes**

According to the correlation table above, there is a considerable relationship between graduates' employability and the pedagogic process the teaching methods used in higher education. This is predicated on the fact that the alpha, or standard error margin, is smaller than 0.05, and the level of significance is 0.00. The findings show that if we believe that there is a relationship between the factors, we have no probability of making a mistake. Thus, we can draw the conclusion that teaching strategies, or the pedagogic process, have a big impact on how employable Cameroonian university graduates are.

#### Hypothesis Four

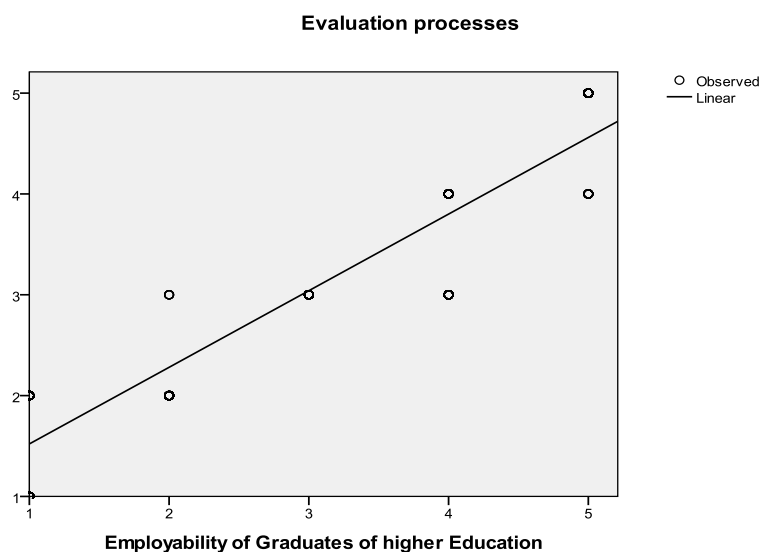
*H<sub>a4</sub>*: There is a link between evaluation processes and employability of graduates of higher education.

*H<sub>o4</sub>*: Evaluation processes do not determine the employability of graduates of higher education.

**Table 13: Evaluation processes and employability of graduates of higher education**

		<b>Correlations</b>		
			Evaluation processes	Employability of Graduates of higher Education
Spearman's rho	Evaluation processes	Correlation	1,000	,938**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	532	532
Employability of Graduates of higher Education	Employability of Graduates of higher Education	Correlation	,938**	1,000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	532	532

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

**Figure 12: Evaluation Processes**

The statistical data on the relationship between higher education graduates' employability and evaluation procedures is shown in the correlation table above. The threshold of significance is 0.000, and the correlation coefficient is 0.938. The significance threshold is below 0.05. The findings show a strong correlation between Cameroonian higher education graduates' employability and evaluation procedures.

**Table 14: Correlation coefficient**

**Summary table**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Alpha</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Level of Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Ha1		0,721	
Ha2	0.05	0,807	0.000
Ha3		0,931	
Ha4		0,938	

The first column on the summary table above presents the various hypotheses that were tested within the framework of this study. The second shows the alpha (0.05) while columns 3 and 4 show the spearman correlation coefficient index and level of significance

respectively. A comparative look between the alpha and the level of significance statistically reveals that all four alternative specific hypotheses have been retained. Based on this we can therefore retain the main hypothesis which stipulates that professionalization of courses in higher education significantly influences the employability of graduates in Cameroon; and reject the statistical or null hypothesis that professionalization of courses does not influence the employability of graduates of higher education in Cameroon. From the findings of our study, we discovered that, Government Policy, The Contents of Curricula, the Teaching Methods (the Pedagogic Process) and Evaluation processes are predictors of graduates' employability. The regression analysis was carried out to ascertain the degree of prediction per variable.

**Table 15: Multiple Regressions Analysis**

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,951 <sup>a</sup>	,905	,904	,487

*a. Predictors: (Constant), Evaluation processes, Government Policy, The Contents of Curricula, The Teaching and Learning Process (the Pedagogic Process)*

**Table 16: Regression Effective**

<b>ANOVA<sup>b</sup></b>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1162,527	4	290,632	1224,799	,000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	122,204	515	,237		
	Total	1284,731	519			

*a. Predictors: (Constant), Evaluation process, Government Policy, The Contents of Curricula, The Teaching and Learning Process (the Pedagogic Process)*

*b. Dependent Variable: Employability of Graduates of Higher Education*

		<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>				
		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>		
<b>Model</b>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	(Constant)	-,606	,065		-9,401	,000
	Government Policyimplementation	,125	,025	,101	4,907	,000
	The Contents of Curricula	,272	,026	,239	10,494	,000
	Pedagogic Processes	-,141	,038	-,114	-3,702	,000
	Evaluation processes	,960	,038	,781	25,279	,000

*a. Dependent Variable: Employability of Graduates of higher Education*

Looking at table of coefficients, we found out that all the predictors are statistically significant. Government Policy implementation is significant ( $p=0.000$ ;  $b=0,125$ ). The coefficient is positive indicating that the better the government policies on higher education the more the employability of graduates of higher education would be optimized. The Contents of curricula in higher education are also significant predictors of graduate employability ( $b=0,272$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The coefficient is positive, thus indicating that the better the curricula are defined to target professionalism and students' socio-professional integration, employability will be enhanced. Teaching methods (Pedagogic Processes) are significant ( $b=-0,141$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Even so, the coefficient is a negative one indicating that if the teaching learning processes are not well carried out, graduates' employability will not be optimized and education will not necessarily meet its objectives. Evaluation processes are also salient higher predictors of graduate employability. ( $b=0,960$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). This figure is positive thus portraying that if evaluation processes match with the objectives of the LMD, graduate employability will certainly be enhanced to a greater extent. Conclusively it can be stated that all the variables under investigation predict Employability of Graduates of higher Education at the same degree.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTEPRETATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter deals with the interpretation and discussion of results with reference to the hypotheses, theories and review of related literature. It also includes some conclusions drawn from the study on the question of professionalization of higher education and employability of graduates. Following this, some suggested areas of follow up research are mentioned.

#### **Discussion of Results**

##### **Hypothesis I (Ha1): Government Policy and graduate employability**

Government policy on professionalization of HE can influence graduate employability.

Data collected on this was tested using the Spearman rank correlation and multiple regression, analyses. Concerning this first hypothesis, it was discovered that government policy implementation significantly influences the employability of graduates. The spearman rank correlation index was 0.721 in terms of statistics. This coefficient is positive, indicating a strong and favorable correlation between the application of government policies and graduate employability. Alternatively, if we acknowledge that the implementation of government policies has a beneficial impact on graduate employability, then might infer that there is no possibility of error at the level of significance of 0.00.

From the statistics we got from the field, most of the respondents confirmed this hypothesis. 95 of them strongly confirmed, while 208 confirmed that their universities were implementing the government policy on the BMD reform. Even though many of them (232) seemed to be unaware of the reasons for the implementation of this reform, it does not cancel the fact that the reform is being implemented. Also, most of our respondents (209, strongly agreed while 178 agreed) that they understand the mission of the National Employment Fund (NEF). This could also be explained by the fact that the research was carried out at the NEF centre region branch. On the contrary, the fact that 330 out of 532 of our respondents were actually uncertain whether their universities work in collaboration with the NEF is self-explanatory of the fact that the university administrations do not communicate the benefits of this collaboration to their students. These students go to the NEF on their own initiative. We

therefore conclude that even though government policies such as the one linking the NEF and universities through the Graduate Employment Programme (PED) are good, implementation is problematic because most students are not well sensitized so that they can get maximum benefits from the government policies being implemented in the domain of graduate employability.

Worthy of note from our statistics was also the fact that most graduates seemed unaware of the existence of the GESP and of the fact that HE was mainstreamed in this growth and employment strategy paper as a driver of economic growth in reducing unemployment. That may be why most of them (207) strongly disagreed with the question that the GESP was effective and was leading to graduate employability. From our responses, 184 disagreed and 162 strongly disagreed of the availability of adequate infrastructure to carry out the policies. Even though there are attempts by universities to implement government policies on graduate employability, infrastructural inadaptability could impair effectiveness of this process.

Our literature review corroborates the fact that government has been making great strides towards policy implementation in HE in a bid to solve the problem of graduate unemployment. Since 1993, the government of Cameroon started implementing the policy of decentralisation of the then one university (the University of Yaoundé). This led progressively to the creation of eight state universities, with a marked orientation towards privatisation, leading to the creation of a host of private universities and many institutes of higher learning. This created the platform for high competition amongst the universities in terms of quality and employability of graduates. This government policy also had in it the professionalisation agenda. Many professional programmes saw the light of day both in the state universities as in the private ones, where most students have been trained and are being trained to directly respond to the changing needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century labour market. It was in this light that one of our respondents, an interviewee at the central administration of MINESUP said:

The task to create knowledge and expand access to information lies in the hands of the government. It is the duty of government through policy, to hone the promotion of knowledge and indigenous technological capabilities, and create a favourable environment for HE graduates to transit to work and be successful there.

Another policy implementation in HE to support the above view was the 2007-degree structural change, based on the Bologna harmonised structure, comprising the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate (BMD) as discussed in literature. According to this policy, a new emphasis was laid on rationalisation of the credit system, a new focus on student-centred learning, quality assurance, transparency transferability as well as easy mobility. All these new emphases are indicators of the market friendliness of the professionalization policy, with all the positive effects on graduate employability imaginable. With all these policies in place, it is therefore the place of individual universities to institutionally implement them in their universities through curriculum content and the pedagogic processes so that their graduates can be equipped with the right market skills to be able to compete in the graduate labour market. Failure to do this will mean high graduate unemployment for their graduates and low employability for those who manage to get work.

A giant step in policy taken by government concerning HE which has greatly and is still influencing graduate employment and employability is the mainstreaming of HE as a driver of economic development through its employment policy in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP). In this policy, the first ten years (2010-2020) were to see Cameroon becoming an emergent nation. “Growth”, is seen in this paper in terms of wealth creation, jobs, concrete reduction of poverty through the reduction of unemployment and underemployment by HE (through universities and HE institutes). This emphasis was clarified in the Sectorial Policy Document (SPD) for HE to:

- i) *“Bring pertinent responses to the projects and challenges of economic growth”* in Cameroon, and
- ii) *“Play a leading role for Cameroon becoming an emergent nation and its sustainable development”* as well as to the overall
- iii) *“Long term vision up to 2035”* (SPD 2010).

The government seemed to have so desired the accomplishment of this policy that views higher education as a driver of economic growth to the extent that it made some major changes in the internal administration of universities. This is confirmed by the establishment of the PCA (Chairperson of the Managing Council) position and the participation of members from government ministries, businesses, and the private sector in university governing councils. This enables the government to carry out the task entrusted to universities through its representatives.

In this way, the PCA will make sure that the administrators of the institution are fulfilling their duties in a logical manner. Additionally, he will ensure that the rectors are carrying out the council recommendations and has the authority to interrogate them about specific management issues (05/0005 of 17 October 2005).

Another recent change in the domain of government policy was the creation of the office of the “*Vice Rector in charge of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the Business World*” (VR/RCB) (Decree No.2007/317 of November 2007). Previously, this was known as the Vice Rector in charge of research and Cooperation. This was done to validate the new mission given to universities. According to some respondents from the MINSUP, the inclusion of the business component to the position of the vice rector was to ensure that the cooperation with the business world which forms a large part of the labour market in Cameroon was seriously implemented to accomplish the socio-economic and socio-professional orientations of universities. This was also to open the university to the external socio-economic environment. In the opinion of this respondent, these changes in the central administration of universities were governmental strategies to emphasize what they were expecting from universities and higher education institutes in the country.

Also, the creation of the “*Strategic Orientation Committee*” (SOC), in all Cameroonian universities, which is separate and different from the university governing board, composed of stakeholders from the socio-professional milieus, who are highly qualified, was another way of opening up the universities to the external socio-economic environment especially to the private business sector. Our main respondent from MIESUP, made us to understand that fifty percent of the members were to come from the socio-professional milieus whiles fifty from the university. This respondent also added that “*it was the responsibility of the SOC to come out with the strategies and nature of university programmes especially in terms of how they reflect the needs of the labour market in the country*”. But from our statistics from the field, 36.2% and 23.5% of our respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed of being aware of the existence of such partnerships between the universities and the socio-economic and socio-professional stakeholders. Also, asked whether these partnerships reflect market needs, 146 out of 520 were uncertain, while 162 strongly disagreed. 187 out of 520 of the respondents equally strongly disagreed with the fact that because of the involvement of the business world in the university, students could be sent to enterprises for internships. These statistics call to question the effectiveness of the

implementation of the government policy on professionalization in higher education with the intention of enhancing graduate employability. It is therefore not the lack of policy but the ineffectiveness in their implementation that can constitute obstacles to graduate employability.

Effective government policy implementation to achieve the objectives of the GESP in the domain of higher education with the human capital theory because it highlighted HE as a long term human capital developer, seeing the role of HE in Cameroon in this dispensation of knowledge and economic development as going beyond that of a mere supplier of human capital, but of human capital (graduates) who “*must be adapted to being the knowledge...workers that the new economy demands*”, and their productivity must be evident from their ability to translate research into innovations (SPD:2). This policy gives room for each university to:

Be able to define its future, implement appropriate growth plans, and recognize the connection between economic advancements, technological and scientific advancements and research, as well as to generate knowledge that is economically beneficial for the growth of regional economies.

The policy also gives room for university autonomy and the ability to implement it to bring about results. It is therefore not the lack of policy that can limit or impair professionalization and employability of graduates, but the inability or reticence of universities to implement policy correctly to achieve desired results which will be beneficial to all stakeholders of this sector.

Ajayi (1996) underscores the importance of this when he says that higher education has traditionally been the fulcrum point and essential element in the professionalization of service trades worldwide. While supporting this hypothesis, Ajayi's view also ties with the human capital theory of Becker (1993), which views human beings as capital on whom investment can be done through training and education, so that their output can improve both qualitatively and quantitatively, thereby increasing earnings. In this case, if government could make investment in HE in the domain of training and retraining of lecturers on the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy, on ways of embedding these needs into the curriculum of HE through work related or work based learning, as discussed in literature, graduate employability will continue to grow.

On this, Lockheed and Veerspoor as cited by Teneng (2011) go further to give a practical example that the ability of a country to apply modern technological practice in professional agricultural education for example in view of industrial production is largely determined by the professional quality of its human capital. In most developing countries like Cameroon, a large part of their graduate populations remains unemployed or at best underemployed because they lack the skilled labour in modern technology. This calls not only for government policies but policy implementation geared towards educating its university human capital according to the needs of the time (Knowledge and technology). From our literature review related on this, we discovered that earlier research in this domain in Cameroon (Tafah-Edokat 1998, Psacharopoulos, 1994) concluded that private returns were higher for primary and secondary education, calling on government to invest more on primary education.

The result of this was the mounting pressure brought to bear on the universities in terms of skyrocketing enrolment rates as graduates from secondary education sought further education when they failed to get jobs or gainful employment. But looking at the growing rate of unemployment in the country (15.5%) and underemployment (71.9%), especially among graduates (African Economic Outlook, 2012), we think that it is wisest for government to invest more in higher education, in terms of professionalization, considering the fact that unemployment and underemployment is highest with youths and especially graduate youths given the open access to universities in the country as discussed above.

Also, it is not just any kind of HE education, but that which focuses on skill and competency development that can facilitate smoother and easier transitions from school to work, and a continuous employability growth while in the labour market. It is this kind of HE education that we believe will yield maximum returns in terms of first employment and employability while at work. This will in turn bring returns to the national economy by provoking economic development for the country. The World Bank Report (2006) substantiates this when it noted that many nations are beginning to realise and recognise this link between HE and the national economy, and are investing in better HE to be able to produce human capital (graduates) with the skills, attitudes and capabilities that make them fit for the new knowledge economies of this century. It is in this light that the implementation of the government policy concerning HE in the GESP as operationalised in the New University Governance Policy (NUGP) which was accompanied by recent programmes harmonisation reforms along the BMD, is expected to yield returns in terms of solving the

graduate unemployment and employability challenges the country is facing. The objective of the NUGP is to acquire a modern, professionalised higher education that can meet the needs of knowledge production through the production of the right graduates who are necessary to drive Cameroon forward to becoming an emergent nation.

The problem of unemployment and subsequently employability of HE graduates will remain unresolved even with the existence of good policies until such a time when these policies are implemented at individual university or institutional levels, for the desired solutions to these challenges to be foreseeable. In the words of one of our respondents, a head of department in the University of Yaounde I:

It is true that there are good government policies in our country concerning HE. Yet we are supposed to create favourable institutional environments for the generation, adoption and dissemination of knowledge. There should be appropriate quality control measures from central administration of MINESUP to see to it that universities and HE institutes are implementing government policies correctly in their various institutes. Otherwise, the policies are useless.

This opinion underscores the fact that good government policies are very important but that it is appropriate implementation of these policies especially at institutional levels that can influence right graduate destinations of HE graduates in terms of finding employment and growing through employability development.

As we saw in our literature review, one of the ways that HE in Cameroon is trying to implement policies that can influence graduate employment and employability is by signing agreements nationally and internationally with employment agencies. A practical example here is our case study; the agreement between MINESUP and the National Employment Fund (NEF) under MINEFOP. In this agreement, HE students could go to the NEF for internships, to be trained on the techniques of job search (TRE). Graduates could also benefit from the Graduate Employment Programme (PED) which was an off shoot of the agreement between MINESUP and NEF. Interestingly the agreement through the Support Programme for the Insertion of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES) also provided for the training of orientation officers who could guide students during entry into university to be able to choose what to study with knowledge of what they could do later after graduation. These orientation workers could also help graduate jobseekers in guiding them on the techniques of finding work. Our respondent at the NEF, in an explanation of the function of the PRAIDES said:

The PRAIDES was aimed at helping students get orientation towards the nature of the labour markets in relation to their field of study, making them to know their possible graduate destinations in the labour market so that they can be consciously armed with the necessary professional tools as they visit the information and orientation centres in national universities, or as they visit our various NEF centres in the country.

During my internship at the NEF, it was discovered that even though this cooperation between the NEF and MINESUP was good and workable, it could be better if NEF were to take part in HE curriculum design. That is, instead of just publishing information about the new jobs in the job market, such as the case presented in our literature review with the jobs on the stock ex-change market, the NEF could actually participate more in curricula and extra curricula activities in the university on invitation, to train final year students on techniques and skills of job search for example. The NEF could also collaborate with universities in developing classifications of occupations in the labour market with the corresponding skills required, so that upon entry into university, students can already choose what they wish to study depending on their desired graduate destinations in terms of employment.

It was in this light that Elias and Parcell (2004) developed the classification of occupations to be used in research into long term career paths of graduates to record jobs by their skill level and content. Their classification divided graduate jobs in Britain into five groups: traditional, modern, new, niche and non-graduate occupations. Elias and Purcell (2004) argued that the labour market was changing and it was no longer just traditional graduate occupations such as law and medicine that required a degree; many different areas of the labour market are growing and demand a highly skilled workforce. Therefore all of these other types of jobs are deemed appropriate for graduates to enter. It is in this light that we think policy implementation in HE such as the one with the NEF should stretch and expand. It should not end at the surface level of signatures or at the basic level of publishing the new occupations as was seen in our literature review in the case of PRAIDES in the National Employment Fund. Policy should transcend into curriculum and curriculum into institutional and departmental syllabuses which actualize the training of human capital with the needed skills for these new professions.

This also falls in line with the neo correspondence theory from the perspective of Saunders and Machell (2000). These theorists argue that the type of curriculum taught should

correspond to the kind of work that relates to the skills that were embedded in what was taught. For instance, well-known professions like law and medicine typically have extremely straightforward pathways from higher school to their graduate employment, which involves either highly professional or academic courses.

Graduates in these professions typically need to be experts in a particular topic or body of information. This demonstrates how knowledge is crucial to obtaining these traditional occupations.

We believe that through policy implementation in higher education institutes and universities, new and niche occupations could also be developed into degree courses with their related skills and attributes embedded into their curricula pointing to their graduate destinations. The example given in literature where the PRAIDES only publishes a list of new jobs in the stock-exchange market could have continued in the development of full-fledged courses with professional and work related skills embedded in them and institutionalised in universities so that graduates can come out ready to work in such professions, thereby filling the pending demand in the stock-exchange market in Cameroon and the CEMAC zone. In this way, policy implementation will lead to the production of skilled human capital where HE provides enhanced opportunities for graduates to get corresponding returns to their degrees as they get gainful employment in the right graduate jobs.

Government policy in HE affecting the employment and employability of graduates also extends to partnerships with the business world or entrepreneurs. This aspect focuses on what employers want and what could make graduate employees successful at work. This policy led to the creation of a forum where the business world and entrepreneurs partner with universities through MINESUP with the aim of assessing what employers are looking for in graduates and universities could use this information to improve the employability of their graduates by embedding employer needs in their curricula. This could mean that policy implementation in the domain of curriculum design should do a need analysis of all stakeholders involved in the educational process in HE, especially employer needs. This is because graduates end up with employers.

After the needs analysis, employer needs will be embedded in to higher education curricula in the way the different HE institutes deem necessary and adapted to their institutes. Examples of such partnerships have been experimented elsewhere with success such as the

Enhancing Graduate Employability (2012), presented in our literature. The fruit of such partnerships are the creation of university programmes that bring together universities and organisations to create new learning opportunities in work places for the students. Little and Hanay (2006), report that the result of these partnerships can most positively impact student employability through work-based learning opportunities which lead to the development of work skills and experiences. The case of the Liverpool John Moores University which set up a work-based forum involving employers, lecturers and students that could draw together the views of all the stakeholders in a bid to produce a curriculum that could make student employability a reality is an example. In this same light, Cameroonian university must operationalise policy like the NUGP in such a way that partnerships with the business world become realities in their universities with results of these partnerships trickling down to students in terms of work-based learning opportunities such as internships or extra-curricula work activities.

The loophole in the SOC discussed earlier, was the absence of students in the committee. When opinions of students for whom the curriculum is meant and who are supposed to be the end products of the teaching learning process in the universities are not considered, resolutions become top down and not bottom up and can hardly be of maximum benefits to those for whom they were meant.

The high degree of graduate unemployment and underemployment in Cameroon could mean that implementation of existing policy in HE to address these problems have been inadequate or slow at moving the employability agenda of HE forward. A cursory overview of available HE employability or work-based programmes in some of the state universities indicates that responses have been slow and somewhat isolated. The case of the National Incubator programme called technipol, hosted in the Advanced School of Engineering in the University of Yaoundé I is isolated and is in a school which is already professionally inclined. This programme could be multiplied in all state universities so that many more students could benefit from it. Otherwise, universities in Cameroon could copy and contextually adapt the examples found in other African universities like those of the Universities of Witwatersrand and Kwazulu Natal in South Africa found in the literature of this work, which we found more elaborate and successful.

Universities in Cameroon could equally partner with business organisations like the National Federation of Industries and Enterprises (GICAM) in more practical and realistic

ways to create work based learning opportunities such as the one in the university of Kwazulu-Natal and give work experience opportunities to their students, so that what is learned theoretically in class can be practiced during internships in partner industries. This will be putting into practice the principles of the experiential learning theory of Kolb (1984), who theorises that experience shapes the way learners grasp knowledge, which then affects their cognitive development (skills).

From the discussions, we therefore conclude this hypothesis by saying that there is no chance of making an error in admitting that government policy positively influences graduate employability, but that good policies can be marred at the level of implementation, especially when concrete implementation strategies are not conceived and carried out so that implementation results trickle down to all stakeholders, especially to students.

**Hypothesis2 (Ha2):** Content of Curriculum and employability of graduates

Content of the curriculum in higher education under the BMD system can influence the employability of graduates.

Multiple regression and the Spearman rank correlation were used to assess the data gathered for this hypothesis. The findings support the idea that HE curriculum content can affect graduates' employment. The Spearman rank correlation index was 0.807 in terms of statistics.

This positive coefficient indicates that there is a substantial correlation between graduate employability and the substance of the higher education program. To put it another way, we can declare with certainty that there is no mistake in acknowledging that the substance of higher education curricula influences graduate employability at the significance level of 0.00.

From our field statistics, most respondents (154, strongly agreed, and 208 agreed) that syllabuses are available to them during admission, yet majority (171) are uncertain about their graduate destinations while (171) totally disagreed that they knew where they could work after graduation. This shows that the orientation centres which exist in all state universities are not very effective because they are supposed to guide and orientate entering students in their choice of what to study in consonance to what they expect to get in terms of work, at graduation. Most students just enter into university departments out of excitement or peer influence. Even though syllabuses and study programmes are given to them at the time of admission, almost nothing or very little is done to expose them to work-based or work-

related learning activities during the course of their study. They leave the university loaded with theoretical and discipline specific knowledge that can hardly be of use in the labour market. This was corroborated by the 137 and 124 respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the question on whether work related activities were embedded in their curricula. Those from private universities, such as the Catholic University of Central Africa, confirmed that work-based learning activities were included into their curricula while we were on the field (primarily at the NEF). These universities accounted for the majority of the few responders (50 strongly agreeing and 96 disapproving). Additionally, we observed that the majority of these universities' graduates who attended the NEF were already underemployed and just sought more lucrative work.

In fact, some of them came with projects they had drawn and were only in search of funding, whereas, most graduates from state universities had to be trained even on basic notions of curriculum vitae presentation. Also, on the question on whether course contents reflect the needs industry and the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy, most respondents (197 and 152) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This indicates that in as much as content of curriculum can greatly influence graduate employability, these courses must be tailored to reflect the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century labour markets, so that graduate employability can be enhanced. If the courses do not reflect these market needs, graduates will leave universities devoid of market friendly skills. This may be the reason why most respondents (170 and 261) disagreed and strongly disagreed to the question that course contents enabled them to develop market friendly and self-reliant skills. On this, one of the employers we interviewed said:

There is a need for creativity and the initiative to innovate for industries to continue surviving in the labour market. I think that the university should not be flooding the streets with unskilled graduates. Some of them come here with no notion of work and cannot even handle the computer. How can a private company who must survive in the labour market employ such an individual? Universities must add work skills such as good communication skills to what they are teaching their students.

From the number of respondents (363) who said they were never exposed to internships and other work related and work-based activities, we can therefore conclude that

universities, especially state universities, should increase their efforts in terms of embedding work-based and work related activities into their curricula either through internships or other extra or co- curricular activities as detailed in the literature review of this work. This conclusion is supported by almost all our respondents who completely agreed that students need more exposure to work-based activities, professional development while at university, through seminars, workshops, and conferences, to enhance professionalization and graduate employability.

Almost all our respondents also confirmed the fact that greater partnerships between the NEF and universities, as well as other professional associations, in the designing of curricula will positively influence graduate quality and their employability. All the respondents also think that these organisations can be of help in terms of providing the urgently needed practical experience through internship provision which could help in breaching the gap between theory and practice in our universities. We therefore believe that if contents of higher education curricula were to be revamped by embedding work-based and skill-oriented activities, the unemployment and employability challenge facing graduate youths in Cameroon will be partly resolved.

The principles of experiential learning theory lend credence to the importance of work-related curricula. According to Kolb (1984), content of courses should be practice based and should reflect assertive, forward moving and proactive anticipation of future action that is based on what is being studied in the present. Therefore, content of HE curricula should anticipate what its graduates will do in the future in terms of work. This should be evidenced in the kind of work-related content embedded in their curricula and the priority given to internships. The notion of experiential learning centers on the exchange between internal traits and external conditions, as well as between context, social knowledge, and personal knowledge. The knowledge learnt from school should logically lead to a societal service function and personal development through gainful employment. What can make this easy is the introduction of opportunities for the students to develop experience in the curriculum, through internships and other work-related components.

Additionally, the research supports the statistical conclusions that were previously addressed. According to Smith (2000), a curriculum is a collection of knowledge that is intended to be imparted to students in an effort to accomplish specific goals. The demands of the students should be included in this corpus of knowledge, according to Bobbit (1928).

One of the enduring themes in the literature of employability education has been that it should be in the interest of the learners and that their needs of employment after leaving the university should be considered by curriculum planners and designers before any contents are included into their programmes. (Smith 2000, Bobbit 1928; Tyler 1994). According to (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023) It is also often argued that contents should empower learners to be able to change their social conditions through gainful employment upon graduation. Fordham (1993), explains regrettably that most curricula are 'top down' instead of 'bottom-up'. Top-down curricula do not consider the employment needs of the learners while bottom-up curricula are results of the need analyses of all stakeholders like employers and learners. In the words of Bobbit (1918:42),

The central theme of curriculum is simple. Human life however varied consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for those specific activities...this requires only that one goes out into the world of affairs and discovers the particulars of which their affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits appreciations and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite and particularized. The curriculum will then be the series of experiences which learners must have by way of obtaining those objectives (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*).

Bobbit (1918) acknowledged the importance of educational materials reflecting the needs of students from a very early stage of human civilization. In order for their curriculum to "be the series of experiences which learners must-have" in order to be prepared for the workforce upon graduation, university curriculum planners need "go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which their affairs consist" and include these into their curriculum.

Benedict.M & Peter. N 2023, opine that the attention paid to what people need to know in order to work and make their lives liveable is what links the views of Bobbit to our work, in that programmes and courses with particular tasks or jobs are analysed, broken down into their component parts and a list of competencies and skills drawn up and embedded into the curricula. The objectives here will be to develop specific skills and knowledge so that learners can be confident to transition from higher education to the world of work or become

self employed by using the skills they have learnt in productive ways. Another employer responding supported the fact that universities should find out from the world of “affairs” what they needed to add to their study programmes to make their students more employable, when he said that:

Universities ought to get the views of industries in terms of feedback in order add what is needed into their curriculum. There ought also to be more cooperation between education and the world of work in talking about what can mutually benefit us. Yet those things only exist on paper and the universities think that we should go begging them (Benedict.M & Peter.N, *ibid*)

Tyler (1949), like Bobbit also placed emphasis on the formulation of behavioural objectives which in our case should be the development of competitively employable skills in graduates of higher education. From the points of view of Bobbit and Tyler, we discover that curricula should specifically and definitely reflect the needs of the learners. If we consider the curricula of higher education, which is our particular concern here, we would expect that they reflect the skills and attributes required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. In this way, universities will be producing the right human capital in demand in the labour markets of our time.

The human capital theory ties with this. The works of Becker, Mincer, Schultz and Denison, presented in the literature review of this work, provide evidence and information on the fact that individuals acquire skills and knowledge to increase their value in labour markets. Educational content should facilitate the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that can increase productivity and free up resources to create new technologies, businesses and wealth and eventually resulting in increased economic growth. Higher education should therefore provide a varied pool of human capital, including scientists, analysts, technicians, innovators, and entrepreneurs who are constantly adding to the body of human knowledge by creating new procedures and technological advancements.

Content in higher education should provide the educational levels necessary to understand and digest new information, and be able to transmit it. For example, the case of the support programme for the insertion of Higher Education Graduates (PRAIDES). Resulting from the partnership between MINESUP and the National Employment Fund (NEF), the PRAIDES would keep informing higher education about new professions and

related skills and competencies emerging in the labour market, especially in the CEMAC zone, so that courses could be designed accordingly to produce graduates who could benefit in terms of employment upon graduation from the universities. At this level, it is left for individual universities to cut and tailor their programmes to answer to this labour market demand by producing and supplying skilled and competent human capital to fit in these new professions. This therefore confirms our second hypothesis that content of curriculum is HE can influence graduate employability.

According to SUP INFOS (2010: 7) this conclusion is confirmed by the fact that HE was called upon to position and centralise itself in the development of poverty reduction and employment strategies of Cameroon. Policy makers at MINESUP purport that this is a call for higher education to operationalise this policy by translating it into *“training and more operational curricula”*. In more details still according to SUPINFOS (2010: 7), this could be interpreted as a call for universities to be committed in implementing reforms and innovations by *“carrying out ontological changes for the acquisition of transformable authentic knowledge into know-how, proper action, good practices and adequate speed that is commensurate with the evolution of our time”*. That means that the content of HE curricula must correspond to the market needs. This aligns with the principles of the neo correspondence theory of Saunders and Machell (2000), who argue that knowledge acquired from the contents of what is taught should be able to translate into know-how, skills and attributes that can be employable and usable in industry. In this way only can HE curricula become more socio-economic, socio-professional and market friendly as prescribed by the New University Governance Policy (NUGP). It is hoped that the BMD reform in HE in Cameroon, will not only end at the level of policy, but will translate at institutional levels into curricula that can correspond to this need; employability of their end products - the graduates. Most respondents at MINESUP claimed that the NUGP (MINESUP 2009) has been operationalized into a block of broad long-term objectives as presented in our literature review and the introduction of this work, so that universities can work on, and come out with workable professionalized curricula contents to produce employable graduates.

The significance of the NUGP in HE was that it is supposed to lead to curriculum alignment towards professionalization and employability of graduates. The professionalization policy in HE in Cameroon had an ambitious agenda of attaining a 100 percent employment status for all Cameroonian HE graduates. The slogan *“one student one job”* accompanied this agenda. The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) in

Cameroon placed employment and employability of graduates and job creation top on the agenda. This was confirmed and further explained by one of our heads of department at the University of Yaoundé 1, saying:

It is only logical to carry out a needs analysis of all stakeholders of HE, especially the students before designing universities curricula. Those courses that have failed to produce employable graduates should be scrapped off or at least modified in such a way that students leave the universities with some know-how, that is to say some practical knowledge that can help them to find jobs. What is the use teaching what does not bear fruits? But the problem is who will carry out the need assessment?

Universities are expected to gather input from industry in this regard so that they can include the necessary elements in their curricula. There ought to be greater connections between industry and education when talking about shared interests. Yet as good as this can sound, the problem becomes more challenging when considering who is supposed to carry out the task. This head of department also taught that even when such needs were analysed and assessed, implementation especially at institutional levels could still be slowed down by complicated administrative bottle necks. Never the less, the views of this respondent are supported by the stance of the Human capital theory that a degree is no longer enough to guarantee a graduate with a satisfying future career but that in market sectors, recruiters are looking for 'work-ready' graduates with clear evidence of job skills in addition to high level graduate attributes. (Harvey & Knight 2003). This stance supposes that higher education curricula should be aligned professionally to the needs of the labour market. For example, the value that a university curriculum attaches to creativity and critical thinking no matter the department will already signal the positive graduate destinations of their graduates in terms of first transitions from university to the world of work as well as their subsequent employability development in career. So, governments should not just rush to invest in HE because they have heard that HE has become a driver of economic development. Investments should be calculative to target employability education, if it is to serve its purpose – that of reducing unemployment and provoking economic growth.

The correspondence theory underscores the fact that there should be a correspondence between the curriculum of a university and the expected destinations of their

graduates. The neo correspondence dimensions of Saunders and Machell (2000) can be used to substantiate this stance, in the sense that their concept of neo-correspondence was developed to compare the contemporary relationship between higher education curricula and work. They proposed that the correspondence to labor has now become a component of the explicit curriculum in higher education, in contrast to the type of labor market preparation that a university maintains in a hidden curriculum (as stated by Bowles and Gintis). Higher level skills acquired via education have always been related to the labor market, according to Saunders and Machell, but the development of general skills rather than specialized or technical skills is what has altered the higher education environment.

In order to serve the requirements of labour markets, higher education curricula must be regularly revamped, redefined to principally focus on these generic skills from a curriculum stand point because having these skills will cause graduates to become competitively employable in the world of work. It is from this reasoning platform that higher education curriculum designers should embed work related and work-based learning activities or programmes into their curriculum. The literature review of this work, abound in ways of doing this, ranging from embedding through the whole curriculum to extracurricular activities which enable students to gain practical work experience with related market relevant skills which can be very useful upon graduation. The HEINEN Project, which examined how several different kinds of universities enabled students to "rehearse" future labor market roles through the integration of enterprise programs, key skills teaching, and work experience in their curricula, is an example of best practices that can be adopted by any university, among others. Therefore, one can comfortably admit that for higher education to successfully fulfil their mission of graduating competitively employable graduates, they must be in serious collaboration with industry to be able to know their needs and embed them into their curricula.

Travelling from another route, but arriving at almost the same conclusions, the boundaryless career and employability theory through one of its proponents, (Arthur, 1994) argues that for higher education to serve the function of producing and releasing competitively employable graduates into the labour market, they must be able to help students develop boundary less employability skills. These generic skills could be embedded to cut across all faculties and disciplines so that students who graduate will be able to face the labour market without having the feelings of powerlessness before employers. Skills such as critical thinking and creativity as well as the ability of communicating well and working in

teams should be embedded whether explicitly or implicitly in all HE curricula because apart from having discipline specific knowledge, students need to learn how to sell themselves and function in the world of work and the above generic skills can be of help. One graduate job seeker at the NEF, who accepted to be interviewed after feeling the questionnaire, had this to say:

I think that one of the greatest embarrassments I have had since I started looking for work is the fact that as a geography graduate, I found that I could not even write a marketable curriculum vitae. It was only after I was taught and trained here at the National Employment Fund that I understood what it takes to present a good CV. Things like this and many more should be taught in all departments and to all students before they graduate from the university

This clearly shows that a degree does not mean that the holder is able to find work. This equally calls for the application of the principles of the boundaryless career and employability training in HE. Skills like those of being able to draw up and present a CV as well as communication skills and the use of ICTs should be taught across all departments and all faculties. These skills are needed in the labour market. They will not only help graduates to find work, but will serve them throughout their career development as they grow in employability.

Also, some of the employers interviewed supported the view of this almost confused graduate. These employers suggested that students should be exposed to interviews as well because they will need to be interviewed everywhere they go in search of jobs. Additionally, they associate a lack of confidence with poor communication skills, which affects how graduates conduct themselves in job interviews: to them, “*graduates are not trained how to conduct themselves during interviews*”. They also suggested and commented that “*Courses should include a subject on this before graduation. Graduates should be trained to speak and write better English*”. Graduates with English proficiency, which is related to communication abilities generally, will feel more confidence in themselves, particularly during an interview, for instance. These employers' perspectives are highly relevant to this thesis because they align with McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) holistic employability framework. Employers appeared to be implying that being able to write and speak English well may be a powerful assurance for a graduate to land and keep a job. This is because as they noted, graduates

come to them speaking a kind of mixture of English and French. So according to employers, every department of any university or university institute should consider the teaching of language a top priority.

This point was belaboured in our literature review with many examples of best practices where employability skills could be embedded into higher education curricula taking employability to mean the development of skills and adaptable attributes and attitudes, knowledge and technology to be able enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (HM Treasury, 1997). Accordingly, this could be done by embedding work-based skills into HE curricula. Knight and York (2004) put forth four ways by which this could be done; by embedding employability through the whole curriculum, in core curriculum, by incorporating employability-related modules within the curriculum and work-based or work-related learning within or in parallel with the curriculum. Without going back to unnecessary details that have already been provided in the literature review, we can say here that whatever way a university chooses to embed employability skills into the curriculum is not a point of contention but remains the safest route for escaping the unemployment trap for graduates. Therefore, not integrating work experiences into HE curricula could have far reaching implications, which could range from difficulty to finding one's first graduate employment to difficulties in growing one's employability once employed and may be throughout career. On the relationship between employability and higher education, most of the employers contacted said higher education institutions in the country focus on the academic but ignore the practical aspects of work. One of them said:

Universities ought to get the views of industries in terms of feedback in order to include what is needed into the curriculum, to make their curriculum more practical, with work related activities that can give the students a glimpse of what obtains in the world of work before they come looking for work. There ought also to be more cooperation between education and the world of work in talking about what can mutually benefit both parties (Benedict. M& Peter.N,2023)

They believe that Cameroonian education is mostly exam-oriented, with a repeated focus and a predominant chalk-and-talk teaching style that conveys the necessary factual knowledge for students to use while answering tests and achieving high scores. Students cannot be critical or creative in this kind of learning environment, much less improve real-world skills. Here, the issue of whose duty it is to teach students this useful information

arises. Traditionally, universities have been used to teach knowledge rather than skills relevant to the workplace, as this work's literature discusses. But according to their answers, companies believe that colleges and universities have a duty to impart skills relevant to the workplace:

Graduates graduate almost without any working knowledge of ICTs. Universities are supposed to train learners on more practical things like ICTs which are basic necessities in the work milieu. Hands on training in terms of work-related activities should form part of the university training programmes.

Eliciting to understand how this was done in the University of Yaoundé I, one head of department said it was being implemented generally in the university through the institutionalization of transversal courses that cut-across all departments. For example, “*courses are given to final year students on how to create their own enterprises step by step, as well as how to use ICTs in research*”. This view falls in line with the boundaryless career and employability theory in this work which argues that in recent times; contemporary careers are increasingly becoming boundaryless in nature because of the changing nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. (Little, Wiesner and Dunford, 2003). According to proponents of this theory, the increasing unpredictability of employment and the volatility of the labour market environment as well as the changing views of career success and employability in the knowledge economy with an unprecedented explosion of knowledge are some of the factors that have conspired to bring about the boundaryless career and employability in HE. Because of these changes, boundaryless career and employability theorists argue that boundaryless skills should be embedded in HE curricula so that graduates should be work ready in spite of their academic degrees. De Vos and De Hauw, (2010), purport that three distinct career competencies should be integrated into curricula known as: “*ways of knowing*” to provide graduates with better job contracts and opportunities. “*Knowing why,*” to produce competencies relating to work and life balance, professional identification, career progression and the search for challenge.

Universities could also train boundaryless career graduates by setting up more practical curricula where theory is combined with practice. Here the boundaryless theory overlaps with the experiential learning theory. When the curricula are too inclined towards theory graduates face the labour market almost ignorant and confused hardly able to find their

way and function in the labour market. They are loaded with discipline specific knowledge without any practical knowledge. They should develop more practical multi-value curricula which combine theory with on-the-field education; such as: laboratory experiments, internships and more if they must end up with boundary less graduates who are more employable. During the researcher's internship at the National Employment Fund, it was noticed that most graduates especially from more classical departments like history and literature were highly lacking in these boundaryless employability skills. These single-minded graduates find it very difficult in the labour market. This therefore calls for more integration of employability skills into HE curriculum. Even in more classical disciplines, skills could be incorporated into their syllabuses. On this, a content lecturer in the department of English, had this to say:

Yes, we have noticed that most of our graduates who do not enter into the teacher training colleges to become teachers of English, find it very difficult in gaining other kinds of employment. We therefore decided that we should add other professional skill training into the content of curriculum. Now our students can become creative writers, editors, developers of syllabuses of English for specific purposes, journalists and many more. By so doing if our graduates cannot find work, they can create work for themselves.

This lecturer's views are corroborated in literature by Mihyo, (2011) who posits that more classical departments in universities could be professionalised by strengthening their entrepreneurship dimensions so that their graduates become job creators instead of remaining at the level of job seekers.

A further argument that supports the influence of content of HE curricula on the employability of graduates in Cameroon was the recent curriculum reforms in relation to the labour market in the country, revolving around professionalization along different paths and itineraries. From brand-new professional and direct development programs to more established professional vocational, business, and market-friendly programs to more traditional and non-market-friendly programs, this was meant to cover it all. The contents of these programmes were to contain related skills development and entrepreneurial components. In this way higher education courses will be adapted to reflect market needs. The SPD (2010) had as one of its main focuses, the professionalization of all programmes. In

this light, even the most classical programmes were to receive some professional components internally or externally from other disciplines to ease the students' transitions from the universities to the world of work. (Respondent from MINESUP). According to these respondents, the professionalization agenda in the Cameroonian context was aimed at adapting curriculum and its related technologies (teaching and learning) to market needs. For example, the creation of the Tourism and Hotel Management Programme in the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Science (FALSH) of the University of Yaounde I, which was dominated by classical liberal programmes, was a way of giving the opportunity to arts students to do something professional, directly relating to the labour market. At the universities of Buea and Soa examples of the professional programmes introduced in the University include, Women and gender studies, accountancy, Banking and finance, nursing, medical laboratory sciences, chemical processes technology, materials science and journalism and Mass communication. (Njeuma 1993). Also, the creation of the technological and professional components of higher education; applied programmes through professional schools; creation of regionally-applied schools; globalisation and service-sector orientation programme and new applied universities in the form of University Institutes of Technology all over the universities in the country was a response to creating content relevant programmes that answer to market needs in terms of graduate employability (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023). To arrive at this, Njeume (1993), said that universities were to define in consultation with other stakeholders, the local market needs, involve professionals in the conception of programmes. This is because in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are living more and more in a global economy with new and ever evolving technologies. Educational curricula in terms of content, need to reflect these changes and challenges. The introductory lines The OECD Report put this in clearer perspectives in that:

Education systems face ongoing pressure on two fronts. First, they must adjust to societal changes, which, as a learning society, have raised educational standards. Second, the school as a "house of knowledge" is increasingly competing with other knowledge sources, such as information, entertainment, and businesses that position themselves as knowledge producers and mediators. (OECD Report).

Education and HE in particular as the examples listed previously in the Cameroonian, HE arena, must adapt and continue to adapt contents of curriculum to reflect market needs from which they emanate. In this way, HE will be confident of producing competitively

employable graduates. Thus, contents in HE curriculum have a high and positive influence on graduate destinations in terms of employment and employability development. Employability education through relevant contents must therefore be woven and embedded into the fabric of HE curriculum in Cameroon and at institutional levels if HE must accomplish its purpose; that of producing and supplying productive and competitively employable graduates into the Cameroonian labour market to meet the increasing demand of graduate workers with skills and competencies that match labour market needs.

According to a related study was conducted by Abumalloh, (2018 as quoted by (Fossimock.M,2017), graduate employability is a critical issue in Higher Education. Employers expect students to have not only the subject knowledge necessary to compete with contemporary industrial needs, but also the additional abilities required to tackle corporate struggles and problems. The goal of this research is to identify the abilities required by businesses and include them into the learning outcomes of higher education. The purpose of this study is to review and analyze all publications published between 2010 and the present on graduate student evaluation from the perspective of employers. This problem has received little attention in the literature, despite its importance to both educational institutions and employers. The writers collected papers from several databases and meticulously evaluated them. Different classification methods were used. The results were analyzed.

The results indicate that there is a gap between the learning outcome and the employability skills. According to Papadopoulos (2013) evaluation of an ICT skills program enhanced graduate capabilities and employability.

This study examines how integrated business learning (IBL) affects and enhances student learning in vocational information and communication technology (ICT) courses. Through employability models and experiential learning theories, the responses of students to learning experiences that are situated in workplaces and those that simulate work practices are investigated. Surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups are used to gather student opinions, which are then cross-checked with assessments of students' employability and skills made by educators and business professionals. The results demonstrated that students greatly appreciate and gain from the IBL program's relevant linkages to the working world. Students are driven by organized, customized experiences that offer chances for both professional and personal growth and a strong connection between the curriculum and professional practice.

Pieto (2020) verified if a broad programmes evaluation enhances the employability of graduates. This study examines the degree to which involvement in study abroad programs during university studies influences the likelihood of finding employment later on, using data from a sizable sample of recent Italian graduates. The researcher combined fixed effects and instrumental variable estimation, with the instrumental variable being exposed to international student exchange programs, in order to address the issue of indigeneity associated to study abroad program participation. According to the findings of these estimations, the likelihood of finding employment three years after graduation is significantly and statistically significantly impacted by the evaluation of an overseas program. The impact that study abroad programs have on the career prospects of graduates from underprivileged (but not particularly underprivileged) backgrounds is the primary driver of this effect, however graduates from privileged backgrounds also have favorable but ambiguous benefits.

Radhwa et al. (2016), evaluated the internship programme in improving graduate's skills and marketability among Arabic language students in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from the perspective of Malaysian job market. This study looked into the effectiveness of an internship training program in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at IIUM. Methodologically, this study aimed to gather perspectives and experiences about internship programs among Arabic language and literature students. The participants were purposefully selected among 57 students who finished their three months' internship in the public or private sector from June to September 2015 utilizing an online survey and open-ended questionnaires.

General findings from this study showed that internship training programmes had essentially improved their soft skills and increased their work-place literacy and well-being (Fossimock.B,2017).

According to another study by Somalrot, (2009) titled an evaluation of the curriculum of a graduate programme in Clinical Psychology Abstract Introduction. The purpose of this study was to assess the Master's Degree program in Clinical Psychology provided by the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital, Graduate Study, Mahidol University. He uses the CIPP Model to assess the programme. The sample included 44 lecturers, 36 current students, 56 graduates, and their employers. Data was acquired through questionnaires and an informal interview. Content analysis and descriptive statistics were employed in the analysis. The results show that study findings in the context evaluation

showed that the curriculum objectives were clearly defined, practice-oriented, and relevant to societal demands. The educational framework was well-designed. The instructional and evaluation activities aligned with the program objectives. The input evaluation revealed that the students who attended the program thought the selection criteria were adequate. The grads' preparedness level was determined to be high. The results suggest that the working committee and lecturers were able to successfully run the course. Educational resources were accessible to support the teaching and learning processes. However, not all of the resources were adequate. Regarding the process evaluation, the operating instructions and evaluation methodology were extremely good. Product evaluation suggests that graduates have achieved the general and specific competencies as mentioned in the programme objectives (Fossimock.B,2017).

### Hypothesis 3 (Ha1): Pedagogic Processes and graduate employability

Pedagogic processes used under the BMD system in higher education in Cameroon can influence graduate employability.

Data collected on this third hypothesis was also tested using the Spearman rank correlation and multiple regression. It was found that pedagogic processes such as teaching methods in HE can significantly influence the employability of graduates. The statistical spearman rank correlation index of 0.931, was a positive coefficient revealing that the relationship between these processes in HE and graduate employability is high and positively significant. Based on the level of significance of 0.00 we can therefore conclude that there will be no error in admitting that teaching methods in HE can positively affect graduate employability.

Most of the respondents (259), strongly disagreed with the statement that their lecturers were well informed on the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. So even though teaching methods in HE can positively affect graduate employability, if the lecturers are unaware of the needs of this knowledge economy, their teaching methods will be seriously inadequate to meet these needs, there by impairing the process of skill development in the graduates. Also, 162 respondents disagreed and 99 strongly disagreed to the fact that their lecturers use varied student-centred methods in teaching. In fact, 298 and 114 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively on the fact that the teaching methods involved the use of ICTs and other communication gadgets. This could imply that most students could leave the university without being exposed to ICTs and other modern technologies that are hall marks

of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge market economy. Majority of the respondents (366) regretted the absence of quality control measures in terms of inspections from the Ministry of Higher Education, to ensure the effectiveness of teaching methods in the universities. If lecturers know that they could be inspected from time to time, they will sit up and not do what they like.

Furthermore, eliciting to know whether research centres were well furnished, most respondents (140 and 135) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that one of the foremost objectives of the university which is to carry out innovative research and produce knowledge could be seriously obstructed due to the lack of well-furnished research centres and laboratories. While on the field in the University of Yaoundé1, we regrettably found out that most of the professional programmes recently created to help students graduate as professionals ready for the labour market, lacked the necessary laboratories. For example, the professional programme for training translators and interpreters does not have a corresponding language laboratory to accompany the lectures by providing the practical component needed to professionalize the programme. So, for teaching methods to effectively and positively influence graduate employability, universities must reconsider in service retraining of lecturers to equip and keep updating them on the needs of the knowledge economy and the use of modern technologies such as ICTs, implement quality control measures in HE, furnish labs and libraries as well as other research centres. At the time of this research, the university of Yaoundé 1 library was being digitalized to modernize it so that it could respond to challenges of research and innovation characteristic of the knowledge society.

According to Tambo (2003), teaching methods and style are the pedagogic processes by which learning experiences are selected and organized in order to communicate content to the learners. From the statistical conclusions drawn from this third, hypothesis, we realize that teaching methods constitute key factors in influencing graduate employability. The way in which knowledge and learners are brought together must in itself be an experience that builds and reinforces motivation for the learners to assume responsibility. Teachers and students then become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.

In their definition of employability skills, Stoner and Milner (2010) said that these are skills needed for lifelong learning which are teachable in schools (universities). So, universities could set goals and objectives for teaching employability skills. Nayan (2010), concurring with Stoner and Milner (2010) underscores the fact that for these skills to be

easily taught, they have to be identified and categorized into teachable competency area groups such as: personal value, problem solving and decision-making skills, relations with others, communication skills, task-related skills, maturity skills and job committed skills. In accordance with this, Wilton (2011) identified and developed the following employability skills which should be taught to business and management graduates. Research skills, research abilities, research writing, spoken communication, basic computer skills, numeracy, problem solving, management and leadership, creativity, and advanced IT or software abilities. It is only when these skills are identified and grouped like this that the right teaching methods can be adopted. For example, for working in teams skills to be developed by students, the teacher could divide the class into working groups and assign tasks for each group to work and present their findings at given times or periods of the school year. Following the example of the business and management course presented by Wilton (2011), any lecturer could also identify and group the skills needed by their students and then select the appropriate teaching methods. Students in a literature class for example, could be asked to write at least one sample play in the format of the ones they have been treating, before the end of his final year. During teaching sessions students could be organized to act the play they are treating in order to gain performing and acting skills that could help them in the future in finding jobs in film industries after graduation.

The boundaryless career and employability theory aligns with this kind of teaching methods which can lead to skills development. But this theory also stretches its perspectives to include not only subject specific skills but boundaryless skills that can enable graduates from any discipline and subject department to be able to function in many different roles in the labour market. These boundaryless skills according to Overtoom (2000) are “*transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge skills and attitudes required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century work place, necessary for the career success at all levels of employment and levels of education*”.

Teaching strategies at universities should be student-centered and help students develop employability and career skills that transcend boundaries, like communication, organization, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, decision-making, customer relations, self-directed learning, and continuous learning. Also, according to Overtoom (2000) Universities should teach cross-section core skills such as project management task management and skills of assertiveness. One major Cameroonian example in Consonance with this kind of teaching was the creation of the national incubator project at the National

Advanced School of Engineering University of Yaoundé I called technipol. Here, courses highlight the drawing of business plans and project writing for students who are about to graduate. The Support Programme for Income Generating Activities in Cameroonian Higher Education (abbreviated AGIR in French) includes this national incubator as part of its policy execution. The goal of this initiative is to equip young people in Cameroon with the skills they need to combat poverty and unemployment.

Graduates could take their business projects to the technipol where they are trained and taught skills on how to create their own business projects and draw plans while seeking ways of collaborating with the business world and in fund raising. According to the director of the National Advanced School of Engineering,

even though this project was initially created for engineering students, over the years it was observed that other university graduates could also benefit from this project especially students from other less market friendly programmes as a means of supporting the professionalization policy

It is in this light that other students from departments like literature, history and sociology with traditionally less market friendly programmes could benefit from this programme by gaining multidisciplinary and professional skills to qualify them for the labour market. Otherwise, this programme could be replicated by other departments of this university to make their students feel comfortable with it while claiming ownership of the programme and maximizing it.

In addition to projects and programmes like the national incubator project, other student-centred methods of teaching that could lead to skills acquisition could include: coaching students for professional life. The use of teaching and research with application and socio-professional insertion in mind is another way of using pedagogy which is designed in such a way that it combines theory and practice and involving professionals to take part in pedagogic activities. This perspective of teaching was seen to be in consonance with the Experiential Learning Theory with a related perspective suggesting that even though employability through work-based learning and market friendly components should be embedded into the HE curricula, teaching activities should practically allow the students to practice what they have learnt.

This practice could take place in laboratories like the examples of chemistry students being thought practically with demonstrations in the laboratory given in our literature review. Alternatively, students could actually go on internships to the industry to practice what they have done theoretically in class. At the end of internships, students should write reports or do presentations while back in school. This would be a more sustainable way of student-centred teaching which targets skill acquisition. In this way students develop new tools and skills to face the continuously evolving labour market. According to, a lecturer in the Theatre Arts department of the University of Yaoundé I,

Courses like literature and theatre arts, which were considered as less market friendly are now being professionalized in such a way that graduates from this department are now creating theatre arts companies, film companies and are able to convince employers that they can use the combination of their literary and creative skills to write films and plays. Examples abound on the CRTV with our graduates' plays and films. We hope that our students will develop the film industry in this country as it obtains in other countries, so that they can contribute in solving the unemployment challenge we are facing. Our students will soon not only be creating work for themselves but will become employers of other youths to work in the growing film industry they are gradually building.

This respondent was trying to make the researcher understand that their teaching methods are no longer those that required the regurgitating of knowledge during examinations but have transcended to creative and problem solving dimensions that will result in fighting the unemployment trap. Their graduates are now producing and marketing films. This is consistent with the theoretical stance of the sectorial policy Document (SPD) in HE that all programmes should be professionalized and lead to some form of employment or application. Teaching methods in HE should therefore facilitate students' insertion into employment and the socio-professional world by ensuring that there is a mesh of theory and practice. This is consistent with the Experiential Learning Theory which views experience through practice as the only means of actualizing knowledge. Still in alignment with this theory, this kind of practical teaching methods will lead to continuous lifelong learning which is increasingly becoming one of the most crucial process in knowledge-based development because of the likelihood of new knowledge displacing and rendering products and services obsolete (Lundvall 2002). Knowledge economies call for fast and practical learning.

Universities should therefore train students to learn how to learn using student-centred methods. This could be achieved by:

- Providing continuing education for lecturers especially on the use of new technologies needed for teaching such as ICTs.
- Notions of the knowledge economies
- Practical ways of making students to become innovators, initiating their own learning.
- Training lecturers to be facilitators using student-centred methods.

In Cameroon, the labour market is increasingly dominated by services in recent years. Where there is great use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), with digitalization dominating the markets. Higher education must therefore take note of this and also digitalize their teaching methods to reflect what obtains in knowledge economies. This means that lecturers must be trained to use ICTs to teach because ICTs are needed for the industrialization of the country and also for the efficiency of the production system. This was underscored by one of our respondents, a lecturer at the department of computer sciences, saying that *“When we look at the system of production across the world, we observe that a majority, especially the most successful ones, are highly digitalised”*. Higher education, like the educational sector as a whole, is a (social) service sector, according to this responder, in addition to the fact that ICT can increase service delivery efficiency. Therefore, ICT and HE work together to generate higher education services that are most needed by the service sector of the economy; this is done efficiently.

The training of university lecturers on the use of ICTs in teaching is therefore an urgent necessity which can help them to improve on their teaching methods and align them to the needs of the times.

The creation of two major virtual universities and telemedicine centres in the country and at sub-regional levels as well as various open and distance learning was therefore very timely, of which were created as system-wide programmes or by respective universities. Various ICT infrastructures for tele or virtual teaching were also created and these fall under a national structure called “National Institute for Digital Governance in Higher Education” (l’Institut de Gouvernance Numérique Universitaire) (SUP INFOS 2010c). The significance of training university lectures and other HE frontline staff in using ICTs in teaching for employability education becomes clearer and acquires depth when examined in the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century labour market and emerging concepts of graduate employability.

In alignment with the human capital theory, the government of Cameroon could invest in higher education by equipping its universities with infrastructures in the domain of ICTs, so that teachers and students can benefit, for quality education, as was emphasized in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper in Cameroon, to “popularize” the use of ICTs with all citizens encouraged and trained to use them (GESP, 2009:63). According to this strategy paper, higher education would be the principal agency providing training, manpower and capacity building in the use of these ICTs. The creation of some specialized training centres in this domain like the case of the Advanced Technical Teachers’ Training College, Bambili was in response to this need where secondary school teachers will be trained in ICTs, so that before students reach universities, they are already familiar with ICTs. To conclude, this respondent said that the New University Governance Policy in Cameroonian higher education can hardly be successful without the effective use of ICTs. According to this respondent, ICTs stand at the pivot of the professionalization agenda in higher education and should begin with the training of university lectures on how to teach using ICTs. According to the (Sectoral Policy Document 2010; SUP INFOS 2010b:9), it is of utmost importance that all graduates are capable of using ICTs in all their academic and professional projects and this can mostly be achieved by aligning teaching methods with ICTs.

Another dimension of teaching in HE that could influence graduate employability is by incorporating work-based learning or work-related learning activities and methods in HE teaching and learning process. From our literature review, the most influential work-related learning strategies where those described in the Pedagogy for Employability (2012) were universities are required to create work-based programmes that bring together universities and organizations to provide new learning opportunities in work places. This kind of learning makes graduates to acquire work ready skills that can facilitate a smooth transition from universities to industry. According to Hills et al, (2003) in (Pedagogy for employability, 2012: 35) Examples of teaching methods that are work based include the use of podcasts, field trips, ‘live’ case studies, consultancy type assignments and projects and employer involvement in teaching.

This research initially set out to find out the extent to which the professionalization of HE could influence employability of graduates and one of the ways professionalization could be operationalized was through pedagogic processes or teaching methods which should be able to commensurately impart work related or work-based curricula to the students. The value that the professionalization policy in Cameroon attaches to teaching methods as an

attribute of employability education is rooted in the experiential learning theory which views the teaching process as a “*process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*” (Kolb 1984:34). Kolb (1984) believes that experience shapes the way learners grasp knowledge. Practical examples and activities should therefore be given to students so that through their experience, they can reflect and grasp knowledge and skills. This is because Kolb believes that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed as it interacts with external contents and contexts. As students are given the opportunity to interact with and observe real life situations, theory is blended with practice to produce skills they will use in their future actions (in their future jobs). Examples of this kind of teaching abound in our literature review. The case of medical students comes alive where a hospital consultation scene is acted or simulated life in class between a doctor and a patient. Also, practical experiments carried out in a chemical laboratory after a theoretical class would be more practical methods of teaching in consonance with and the application of the experiential learning theory that validates this variable.

Podcasts could potentially be used as a teaching tool to help students increase their employability. An example in our literature is the Open University, where five podcast interviews with OU Psychology graduates are available online as activities to encourage self-reflection in students and provide interactive links to additional information and support, and are strategically scheduled to connect the teaching of subject specialization and generic skills to employment opportunities.

Here, the graduate interviewees talk about the skills they developed during their studies and how they are using these skills to develop their careers and employability and the routes they took to get to their current employment (Pegg et al,2012). In these podcasts, ways of developing boundaryless career and employability skills could also be discussed to encourage students not only to develop their knowledge specific skills but also to develop cross-sectional and generic skills that will be required of them in the world of work.

These podcasts are placed on generic websites available to all OU psychology students. Experiential approaches in teaching and learning are well aligned with this process because they encourage students to develop employability skills through exploration, reflection and feedback. Other teaching methods similar to the use of podcasts that align with the experiential learning theory principles as well as the boundaryless career and employability theory are field trips/observations, games, modelling, role plays, simulations and surveys. In *Pedagogy for Employability* (2012) the benefits of these kinds of teaching

methods are enormous because they involve active learning by doing which is what results in the acquisition of marketable skills. Yet according to World Bank (2013),

Despite high unemployment among well-educated youths, firms in newly emerging economic sectors have difficulty finding qualified personnel, indicating that the skills taught by the education system are not adequately aligned with efforts to promote new economic activities (World Bank 2012d, 2013).

HE lecturers should therefore recognize this and adopt workable teaching methods that align with their particular subjects and begin to use them in order to produce work ready graduates. Sometimes, gaps in knowledge and lack of employability and work skills might not really be the only obstacles to development of employable graduates. Most frequently the hard kernel to crack might be at the level of lecturers' resistance to change their old and archaic lecture methods and take the risk of trying new ones. An assessment of the traditional teaching styles in Cameroon led us to the conclusion that major changes would need to be made before employability teaching could become a reality in most Cameroonian state universities. Trying to find out from a lecturer in the department of Chemistry in the faculty of sciences who accepted to be interviewed, he said:

How on earth do you expect that lecturers should teach using all those beautifully coloured methods you are talking about especially considering the number of students one lecturer has to deal with at a time? In addition to that, there must be additional infrastructural support for that kind of teaching to be successful. Have you seen the state of our laboratories? I personally think that these methods are good. We are trying our best, but a lot still has to be done in terms of equipment, infrastructure and class size for us to be able to give our maximum.

The views of this respondent underscore the fact that in as much as good teaching methods can enhance employability development in students; major changes at institutional levels must be done especially in terms of equipment and infrastructural renewal for this to become a reality. Yet this does not overshadow the fact that teaching methods can influence graduate employability positively especially when they are student-centred.

#### Hypothesis 4 (Ha<sub>4</sub>): Evaluation Processes and graduate employability

Evaluation processes in higher education have an influence over employability of graduates.

Multiple regression analysis and the spearman rank correlation were used to assess the data gathered on this last hypothesis. The findings showed that evaluation procedures in higher education have a big impact on how employable graduates are. Evaluation procedures and graduate employability have a strong and positive link, as evidenced by the statistically significant spearman rank correlation index of 0.983. As an alternative, we can easily infer that there is no mistake in acknowledging that evaluation procedures can have a highly favorable impact on graduate employment when considering the level of relevance of 0.00.

We concluded from our field statistics that evaluation procedures can have a positive impact on the employability of graduates most of our respondents (102 and 187) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they were evaluated using student centred methods such as report writing, presentations after group work, posters and portfolios. These evaluation methods can help students develop market friendly skills which could positively influence their employability after graduation. 276 respondents also strongly agreed and agreed that test items often recaptured taught corpus. Even though quite a good number of them (138) claimed to be uncertain about formative assignments given to groups and individuals, 300 however agreed that formative assignments were given to groups and individuals on regular basis. The only aspect of evaluation according to our field statistics that needed to be improved upon were cognitive and projective tests that evaluate what students could do in the future. 274 respondents did not agree to have seen such tests. This testifies to the fact that most of them do not or will not know what to do in the future.

According to knight et al. 2003:4, in pedagogy for employability (2012), good assessment projects develop practices that help students make good, well-founded claims on employability. They argue that “*unless students experience such... assessment approaches, it is hard to see how higher education contributes to the achievements valued by employers*”. York (2010:10) corroborates this when he says:

If institutions are serious about fostering graduate characteristics or employability (with their consequences for student interactions), the issues provided by evaluation must be addressed.

A commitment to the development of graduate attributes or employability implies, for many subject disciplines, a preparedness to rethink curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Pegg et al,2012).

Here, York underscores the point that assessment can be used strategically to motivate student learning and create employability attributes in them when the assessments tasks are carefully chosen. In *Pedagogy for Employability* (2012), the fact that assessment could be used positively to create and develop employability skills in students are highlighted but a parallel argument is also raised that traditional assessment systems might frustrate the development of personal skills. For example, one of the conclusions of the project was that:

The fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are usually assessed by assignments, multiple choice tests and oral Examinations. Research confirmed that these skills are viewed by providers as competency based and lend themselves to Traditional methods of assessment(*Pedagogy for Employability*, 2012, p. 33).

One of the examples in our literature review which testifies to the fact that evaluation or assessment can be used to develop employability in students is the case of the institute of Geography and earth sciences, Aberystwyth University in a project named “Pitched Assessment”. Here students competitively pitch for real world project grants at a staged end-of- module conference. During stage performances, employers and organizations could be invited to see and even employ some of the students whom they judge could be a plus to them. These simulations of real-life situations give students the opportunity to develop real life skills and roles which they could assume later in life while working. Through the simulations, they develop work-based competency skills such as team skills, presentation skills, attention to details, budgeting, time and project management, public speaking and organization. According to knight and York (2003), these are formative assessments and they have the potential of promoting attributes required to develop employability skills.

The experiential learning theory supports this, purporting that the use of role play reflection and feedback are means of evaluating knowledge acquisition. Giving the example of medical students, Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, in their *Handbook for Teaching in Higher education*, suggest practical examples of using the experiential learning theory in evaluating student learning in patient-centred communication skills, through role play, reflection and

feedback where after each role play students are encouraged to reflect and complete boxes in response to questions like:

- Which communication techniques did you effectively employ?
- Which communication techniques did you employ less effectively?
- How will you build on your shortcomings and preserve your strengths?

According to Kolb (1984), reflection and feedback after role plays develop students' skills not only when they are studying but throughout their professional lives. Experiential learning therefore supports the fact that practical assessment processes can increase students' employability skills.

Evaluation in employability education should directly flow from content and teaching methods. If content emphasizes the acquisition of employability skills, then teaching methods will reflect that content and evaluation will be used to concretize this. For example, if the emphasis was on team work, then evaluation will be on group work and group presentations. If content emphasizes communicative skills, then student evaluations should reflect that. Oral testing will be more convenient in this case. Evaluation will therefore become the procedures by which the success of the content and method selection is judged. It is therefore part of the curriculum design. It not only judges students' success in required competencies, but also the lecturer and his/her efficiency. Curriculum objectives therefore translate to evaluation. Similarly, the relative importance of data, theories and methodologies of inquiry in the objectives should be preserved in the evaluation so that evaluation becomes consistent with aims and content of curriculum.

Evaluation could be continuous, where formative techniques are used such as seminars, quizzes; term papers are used to train students in different competences. Evaluation could be periodic such as at the end of the term or year to test students on subject specific knowledge. But whatever form evaluations take, they should serve as feedback that leads to adaptation and sometimes change of the needs of all stake holders: learners and employers. Yet, according to the Cameroon Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), the education system lacks a "real dashboard or statistical information system to evade foggy steering of the system" (ESSP 2006:77). Additionally, the state will conduct periodic evaluations of higher education with the following goals: i) building a culture and practice of evaluation and ii) improving quality, relevance, and efficiency, according to article 32 of the 2001 law on the orientation of higher education in Cameroon (LOHE). Yet practically, this evaluation is

hardly consistent. For example, there are hardly any clear and practical modalities available for auto and external evaluations. (ESSP 2006:78).

In the words of Ekane(2000:213), “*an approach to rendering the outdated curricula of the university in general and the classical faculties in particular to the needs and aspirations of society should be the creation of a Centre called the Centre for Institutional Development CID*”, which to him should among other things review all course level processes as a necessary first step towards the acquisition of useful knowledge for the improvement of the quality of undergraduates, graduates and professional education for the development of programmes for the retraining of unemployed graduates who are now roaming the streets (Benedict.M & Peter.N,2023)

Today, the employment market is more competitive in an entirely new way. Employers are now searching for employability skills in addition to subject matter expertise when hiring new staff. Employability abilities in this century are mostly transferable skills that an individual must possess in order to become employed. Employability refers to your knowledge, talents, and attitudes, as well as how you use and show those assets to employers in today's environment.

These sets of job-readiness skills are, in essence, behaviors that are required for every job and essential attitudes that enable you to grow in your career and efficiently help you: connect with coworkers, solve problems, be a part of and understand your role within the team, make responsible choices for your job and career, be independent, and take charge of your career. The relevance of these skills needs a succinct analysis of the calibre, especially in a university where the young populace looks up to and trusts for transformation.

Therefore, this study is verily indispensable as it looks at pressing issues concerning graduates (Fossimock.B, 2017)

Moreover, in a crises-sensitive period like the period that characterise the world since the outbreak of covid-19, there is a need for the training institutions to replan with consideration of the changes in imposed on the learners and teachers by the crises.

This study is essential because it identifies the numerous planning techniques that all educational institutions are supposed to implement during times of crisis to ensure that teaching and learning continue and that graduates acquire the necessary skills. Employers place a high value on these employability skills since they have always been required for a

productive and smoothly operating workforce. Some businesses used to invest a significant amount of time and money training these basic and job-readiness abilities. However, in today's environment, where work opportunities are scarce, companies have more options and prefer to select a technical specialist who also demonstrates well-rounded employability abilities. As a result, it is critical that the University of Yaounde I educates and equips students with the essential skills.

The fact that this study examines the current context one that is crisis-sensitive and characterized by rapid changes makes it contextually imperative as well. It examines the ways in which academic institutions prepare for these novel developments to provide the greatest benefit to their alumni. Notwithstanding the obstacles that the crises have placed in the community, all educational planners must pay attention to the latest advancements in curriculum, teaching methods, infrastructure, and evaluation techniques in order to modify the systems and support students in acquiring knowledge and skills.

Additionally, the educational approach must shift to an online format (virtual learning). This study aims to examine how the institution prepared for the online switch and how it upheld the training protocol, allowing graduates to gain the same employability skills that employers need.

Due to the unprecedented COVID-19 epidemic, methods aimed at maintaining responsiveness and involvement at all levels of the educational system had to be strengthened and expanded upon in the immediate response. The provision of education is still the responsibility of the governments, through their Ministries of Education, even if many African nations need foreign assistance. In order to ensure more resilient education systems, crisis-sensitive planning can assist these ministries in institutionalizing risk reduction as well as improving the planning and delivery of education prior to, during, and following the crisis. Since many jobs would require certain abilities even after a crisis, this study is significant since it presents the choices for crisis-sensitive planning to ensure that learning continues. Therefore, regardless of the crises, the institution must continue to train the learners.

Graduates from developing nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are more likely to be unprepared for the workforce or lack the employability skills necessary to succeed in the rapidly changing labor market. In the meantime, these nations' young populations are expanding quickly, and in order to promote development, there is a great need for human capital. Graduates in Cameroon who lack the necessary abilities for creating or placing jobs

are rapidly making the nation into a desolate place. It is impossible to deny the role that unemployed graduates have had in the development of the current sociopolitical upheaval in Cameroon. Beginning with the loss of life, property, economic resources, and overall peace and integrity, this upheaval has cost our nation and its citizens incalculable suffering. This makes the study essential as well. Prior to this, young Cameroonian graduates do nothing except wander the city. Frustration and disappointment lure some into smoking, drunkenness, drug abuse, scamming, gay, theft, poverty, misery and pain. Indeed, in Cameroon, the undulating unemployment rate which stood at 5.6% in 2010, 3.80% in 2011, 3.80% in 2012, 4% in 2013, 4.3% in 2014 (National Institute for Statistics -NIS), too high for a developing nation endowed with natural resources. This study is conducted at a period when Cameroon is facing numerous socioeconomic difficulties, including a high prevalence of youth unemployment and poverty.

Furthermore, in his June 2, 2016 report, the Director of NIS revealed that the country's 23.34 million people have an unemployment rate of 9.3%, with youths aged 20 to 29 being the most impacted, followed by women and recent graduates at 36.5%. On June 3, 2016, the Cameroon Tribune reported that the Minister of State Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) regretted that "the University degree is no longer a passport for getting employment." This is a disappointing situation for graduates and students in the system. This study analyzes instructional strategies to provide a feasible alternative to current programs. It is also frustrating to the government in their quest to fulfill goal 4 (excellent education) and goal 8 (good work and economic growth) of the sustainable development goals. If caution is not taken. Studying this caliber is intentional since it concentrates on the main causes of the unemployment problems. To determine what is and is not working for Cameroon's realities, it looks at the problem from the educational system to the labor market.

According to the literature, employability has long been a major concern for higher education institutions. It is general knowledge that the longer each graduate waited to find a career, the more costly the missed possibilities are.

International Monetary Fund (2020) reported the cost of joblessness (Cainy Coy et al,2021). In this regard, "unemployment imposes high costs on individuals, society, and country." Its worth is more than just money. When persistent, it may cause cynicism.

Eventually, the value of education and training would lose among unemployed individuals (Simpson, 2020). When the current administration started in power, the

unemployment rate was consistently down from 7.70 percent to 6.19 percent in 2019 (Macrotrends, 2021). However, the covid19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, caused widespread disruptions in practically every facet of life and business. Many industries struggle to thrive, particularly the labor. In April 2020, the country's employment rate dropped from a record-high to 82.4 percent, while it bounce-backed in July and October 2020 with 90 and 91.3 percent, respectively (Cainy Coy et al. *ibid*). But still, this is far behind from previous year's employment rate of 95.4 percent (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). In January 2021, the data shows a bit lower rate of 91.25 percent than the last quarter of 2020, which was 91.27 percent (Trading Economics, 2021).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) cannot afford to happen what the scholars have postulated that Filipinos have limited economic opportunities, overwhelming underemployment, and low salaries and benefits as primary reasons for migration (Absuelo & Hancock, 2015). To respond, some academic institutions intend to develop holistic graduates who possessed relevant knowledge, skills, and values (Cainy Coy, 2021). Higher education institutions had been anxious with the development of the whole person who possessed knowledge, attributes, and skills who can be considered educated person by the time of graduation (Abas et al., 2016). Other HEIs targeted the competencies necessary for future work. Scholars argued on the importance of 21st-century skills (Neal, 2017; Ross, 2017), while others underlined the significance of socioemotional skills in the workplace (Acosta et al., 2017a; Acosta et al., 2017b). However, there have been changes in the demand for student skills in the workplace brought about by globalization (Schleicher, 2012). Research suggests that the rising unemployment caused by pandemic had pressured HEIs to equip students with in-demand skills (Coursera for Campus, n.d.).

According to (Cainy Coy, *ibid* 2021), 21st-century skills are broad and encompassing. The assessment and instruction of the 21st-century skills project bring together 250 scholars from 60 organizations globally. These experts have classified these abilities into four categories. The first cluster consists of thinking styles, which include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and learning. The second category is modes of working, which include communication and collaboration. The third cluster includes information and communication technologies, as well as information literacy. Finally, the fourth cluster is the talent of living in the world, sometimes known as life skills. This cluster includes citizenship, life, career, personal, and social responsibility (Schleicher, 2012).

In the Cameroon context, employers reported low satisfaction on workers' interpersonal and communication skill, or work ethics (Acosta & Igarashi, 2017). Nowadays, learning to collaborate with others and connecting through technology are essential skills in a knowledge-based economy (Schleicher, 2012). A study acknowledged the need for sufficient attention on increasing competency and employable abilities. Doing so can help address the problems on job performance (Abas et al., 2016) and work behaviours other than unemployment and underemployment.

Previous research concluded that competencies acquired in college could predict the employability of graduates (Ballon, 2007). This argument requires considering the graduates' viewpoints on whether the degree programs produced persons with the competencies required in the job. An investigation into graduates' job experiences and allowing them to assess the sufficiency or inadequacy of their acquired competencies is required. However, there was no tracer in the past conducted by BukSU on this trajectory. (Cainy Coy, et all,2021).

The survey asked participants about the knowledge and abilities they gained from their degree programs that they found valuable in previous, present, and future job. This question took job experience into account because they couldn't tell the value of their competencies unless they could put them into practice. Table 1 demonstrates these competencies. Competencies that have been cited at least five times are taken into consideration. Both attitudes and values were not stated in the question, yet they were in the responses. After years of study, nearly 40% believed they had adequate communication abilities. These folks may have improved their speaking, listening, and writing skills. Communication and collaboration are ways of working among the new generation workforce (Schleicher, 2012). On the contrary, employers reported low satisfaction on workers' interpersonal and communication skills (Acosta & Igarashi, 2017).

More over a fifth reported that they had adequately developed pedagogical skills. This result implies that they had honed their talents in applying teaching approaches, strategies, and procedures. This was followed by ICT skills, with 25% having sufficiently acquired them. This information merely implies that these graduates can use ICT for both professional and personal goals. Thus, they can include ICT into the teaching and learning processes. Information and communication technology and information literacy are known as tools for working (Schleicher, 2012).

A related study was conducted by Meyer et al. (2016). This study found that the impact of educational interventions on the transition experiences of new graduates of Prelicensure programs are ambiguous. The purpose of this study was to look at how curriculum change affected nursing graduates' transition into practice. The nursing curriculum can have a favorable impact on professional and work satisfaction for the first three months after graduation, but the practice environment takes over after that. Graduates who displayed poorer transition to practice at 3 months were more likely to abandon their initial positions after 12 months.

Another related study was conducted by Jamil, et al (2020). According to this study, a country's ability to facilitate the transition of all economic sectors to a knowledge-driven one, attract foreign investment, and increase worker productivity is dependent on its access to skilled labor. However, there is now insufficient talent supply, and workforce demand does not meet talent supply due to low graduate employability caused by Malaysia's low quality of higher education. To address this issue, this study proposed a conceptual framework to illustrate the perception of graduates towards the impact of curriculum design, the curriculum vision, the operationalization of the curriculum vision, the curriculum delivery, and curriculum evaluation, on employability competency (Fossimock et al, 2017).

This study included 299 graduates who were now employed. The survey's hypotheses were evaluated using Smart Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) version 3 software. The findings of this study show that curriculum design has a favorable and significant impact on employability competency. As a result, this study provides valuable insights into the implementation of good curriculum design at private and public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), finding a balance between practical and theoretical foundations.

Another related study, was conducted by Ngulube in (2020). According to him, graduates with employability skills are valued by companies since they are dynamic and adapt easily to today's work climate. As a result, higher education around the world is under pressure to produce graduates who are employable and capable of continuing their education while working. This study looked at how well South Africa's undergraduate economics curriculum prepares graduates for employment. This was accomplished through a qualitative method utilizing a content analysis design. Data from four consecutive years' worth of advertising from the Sunday Times, as well as data from six college economics study guides, revealed a gap between student economics skills and those required by industry. The

analyzed study guides only cover around 29.4% of the abilities required in the labor market. Higher education institutions must generate employable graduates since research shows that employers no longer hire employees exclusively primarily on academic qualifications. Recommendations include aligning the employability skills necessary in the work market with those taught by academic institutions. Curriculum and pedagogy should also be modified to improve graduate skill results

Another related study was conducted by Bridget and Smut, (2012). According to this study, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) changed its medical curriculum in 2003 from a traditional, six-year curriculum to an integrated, problem-based, four-year Graduate Entry Medical Programme (GEMP), preceded by two years of basic and medical sciences at university level or a suitable undergraduate degree.

The goal was to compare the internship readiness of Wits graduates from the old and new curriculum based on fifty-seven criteria divided into nine categories developed during the creation and validation of the Competent South African Intern Model. A stratified random sample of interns was taken from the last graduates of the old curriculum, followed by a matching sample of interns from the first graduates of the GEMP. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilized. Convenience sampling was used to select a supervisor, colleague, and patient for each intern. Interns, supervisors, and coworkers completed a questionnaire, followed by an interview, to qualify comments at the extremes of the Likert scale and connect them to curriculum learning opportunities. A semi-structured interview was done with patients, and a global score was assigned. The Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Statistic was used to analyze ordinal data. Interns, supervisors, coworkers, and patients provided feedback on the competence of graduates from standard and GEMP curricula. Data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques.

A study was conducted by Jane and Tabi (2013) wherein measuring the impacts of pedagogy on employability (2012) on employability policy and practice in higher education institutes was examined. The goal of this impact study was to assess whether (and how) Pedagogy for Employability (2012) changed employability policy and practice in higher education institutions, and if so, at what level: individual, departmental, or institute. This impact study was carried out using a combination of desk research, consultations (face to face, telephone, and email), and an online survey. The consultations took place in February and March 2013, and the online survey was 'live' from March 3 to March 28, 2013. The desk study comprised data on Pedagogy for Employability (2012) downloads from the HEA

website, requests for hard copies of *Pedagogy for Employability* (2012), and online research to see where *Pedagogy for Employability* (2012) has been cited and/or referenced. The study's findings revealed that the majority of survey respondents stated that pedagogy for employability (2012) had influenced or impacted their institution's employability policy or framework. Furthermore, pedagogy influenced curriculum design in most institutions, resulting in the incorporation of employability development within curricula. Furthermore, studies verified that pedagogy for employability is an important source of information for crucial ideas regarding employability development within the higher education sector.

Moreover, Erik (2014) conducted an innovative perspective on teaching and learning in higher education in the 21st Century. The present view of our society as a learning society indicates that education must place a greater emphasis on developing students' adaptive competence, which is the ability to use meaningfully obtained knowledge and skills flexibly in a range of circumstances. Based on the existing research, this article first addresses the following question: What should students learn in order to develop adaptive competence in a domain? It is argued that developing adaptive competence necessitates the acquisition of several cognitive, affective, and motivational components, including a well-developed domain-specific knowledge base, heuristic methods, met knowledge of one's cognitive functioning, motivation, and emotions, self-regulation skills for regulating one's cognitive, motivational, and emotional processes, and positive beliefs about oneself as a learner and about learning in various domains. Next, the questions are addressed. What are the hallmarks of effective learning processes for developing adaptive skills? In this regard, the concept of learning is presented as a Constructive, Self-regulated, Situated, and Collaborative (CSSC) process of knowledge and skill development. From a teaching standpoint, this raises the question.

According to the National Association of College and Employers (NACE) (2017), career readiness is the acquisition and demonstration of necessary competences that widely prepare university graduates for a successful transition into the labor market. Furthermore, American College Testing (ACT) (2006) defines career-ready as the ability to enter a job after completing a training program that is expected to provide both an income sufficient to support a modest family and the opportunity for career progression. Graduates career readiness in this study is seen as the state at which students who successfully graduate from particular programmes in university institutions possess the employability skills that enable them to be employed, maintain and grow in their career, or create jobs for themselves in the

society. The institutions train students in different departments with a focus on different career fields. These institutions are faced with the challenge to effectively and efficiently transform these students to make a difference or improve the society in their respective careers. Employers in the twenty-first century seek out graduates and college students who understand how to use their interests, talents, and capabilities in addition to job creation and the auto-employability skills that graduates require.

Education is the key that opens the doors for development, modernization, civilization and industrialization of any nation. According to Akpan (2018), It is the means, through which a nation can harness her numerous resources, develop her manpower and improve the quality of the life of her citizens

Education is the foundation of scientific and technological development in every country on the planet. It promotes individual and national self-reliance. A self-sufficient nation does not rely on foreign goods for survival, and self-sufficient citizens do not rely on the government to provide jobs. The person can work for a living and meet his or her own basic requirements. In this approach, education lowers the level of poverty in a nation. Thus, quality functional education helps to drive national growth in this way. Education liberates individuals from ignorance and supports the socioeconomic and political development of a country. Nigeria has adopted education as an excellent tool for national development. Education is extremely important in human existence and society growth. It accelerates development and raises people's living standards. A well-educated person gains knowledge for critical thinking and may apply the knowledge and skills gained via education to create wealth, especially in today's knowledge-driven economy. Education allows a person to better comprehend society, contribute positively to its progress, and become more helpful to the community in which he lives. Education can accomplish the mission of transforming human resources into well-trained human capital, which is required in any country in the globe.

Education, therefore, is an investment in the development of human capital. According to Omolewa (2006), the best investment a country can make, particularly for national growth, is a commitment to citizen training through education. This means that education is the foundation of a country's growth and advancement, as well as an effective tool for achieving the required economic change. Education assists inhabitants of a country in understanding the cultures of various tribes or ethnic groups inside that country. This understanding encourages peaceful coexistence and the knowledge of national integration. Education has a significant impact on the social structure of a community.

Education is the surest path to a country's long-term economic success. The world of today is technology-driven, particularly information technology. As a result, education in this area is critical to developing countries' long-term economic success. Similarly, education promotes national interests. A good educational system generates individuals who possess critical intelligence and knowledge. These people can work independently, producing autonomous outcomes and conclusions based on supplied facts. Such conclusions benefit both the nation and the people. Education promotes global citizenship that benefits humanity. Such educated people demonstrate humility, moral integrity, wisdom, and tolerance. They work for the greater good of mankind. Thus, the development of the national economy as a whole is dependent on workforce development through education. This is why educational planning is so important.

### **Conclusion**

This research initially set out to find out the extent to which professionalization in higher educational could influence graduate employability in Cameroon. Employability was mostly viewed in terms of skill development where universities and institutes of higher learning prepare new entrants to the workforce (Stasz, 2001), or developing competency skills in university students during their pursuit of higher education degrees. Graduate employability was also acknowledged as an increasingly essential factor in curriculum development. This trend must have been influenced in part by current economic developments, as well as a growing recognition that graduates should be equipped with skills that will make them more employable.

In this thesis, various ways through which graduate employability activities could be embedded in He curricula in Cameroon were discussed. Professionalization was also variously operationalized as government policy in HE, content of the curriculum, pedagogic processes and evaluation strategies in HE and their effects on graduate employability (Benedict M& Peter.N, 2023).

This research was initially motivated by the observation of the enormous opening of access to higher education in the country with consequent rise in enrolment which has led to an increased number of graduate youths with higher education certificates and diplomas without corresponding graduate jobs to assimilate them. The level of unemployment, especially graduate unemployment has remained considerably high and might keep rising until other action is taken. The research was also motivated by the fact that even though

universal primary education has been attained in Cameroon, with an equally high level of secondary education, unemployment was still on the rise as graduates from primary and secondary schools kept swelling the ranks of universities in terms of enrolment. This brought a lot of pressure to bear on the then one state university and pushed government to create seven other state universities in addition to the one state university which existed before 1993, with an array of private higher education institutes seeing the light of day. The result of this government action has been the continuous rise of graduate numbers without commensurate creation of graduate jobs to absorb these graduates, resulting in the aggravation of already existing challenges of unemployment, underemployment and employability of graduates in the country. We therefore thought that professionalisation in HE could be of help in equipping HE students with employability skills, capacities and attributes so that if they cannot find gainful employment after graduation with the government or with the private sector, they can at least be self-employed by creating employment for themselves. From the findings, all null hypotheses were rejected and all alternative hypotheses retained.

From our field statistics, supported by literature and theory, one of the major conclusions that could be drawn is that; youths and especially graduate youths are the most affected in terms of unemployment, compounded by the mostly theoretical nature of their higher education which is not well adapted to working in this 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. Perhaps the proposal of Ekane (2000:213) could be considered here as the best concluding note. According to Ekane an *“approach to rendering the outdated curricula of the university in general classical faculties in particular to the needs and aspirations of society should be the creation of a centre called the Centr for Institutional Development, CID”*, which to him should amongst other things should: systematically review all course-level processes as a necessary first step towards the acquisition of useable knowledge for the improvement of the quality of undergraduates and professional education and for the development of programmes for the retraining of unemployed graduates on the streets.

Another general conclusion reached by this research is that embedding employability skills in the HE curricula with commensurate teaching methods and evaluation strategies that foster employability education are some of the safest ways of solving the unemployment and employability challenges, by preparing graduates to transition smoothly to the world of work. These processes together with good government policy and the right implementation networks could be used as empowering tools to foster entrepreneurial self-reliance among

graduates, leading to gainful employment and employability. As a result, higher education in Cameroon will continue to be a key agency in the production and supply of a skilled labor force. Meanwhile, employers have increasingly expressed unhappiness with graduates' employability, claiming that fresh graduates lack specific qualities and abilities, resulting in a mismatch between supply and demand. As an urgent response, we believe that by working with industry, we can establish an agreement on what the country requires, which is a cohesive graduate employability framework of skills and traits to address this challenge in a more sustainable and responsive

Furthermore, another concluding note is the stress that means of reducing unemployment and solving the employment challenge among graduate youths to provoke economic growth and development are not equally applicable in all cases and situations. Policy makers and curriculum designers could use bottom-up instead of top-down approaches in formulating HE curricula. Needs analyses of all stakeholders such as employers, students and institutional adaptability (such as infrastructure) should be carried out before designing and implementing policy and curricula. For example, it was previously generally accepted from research (Psacharopoulos 1994; Tafa 1998; and Amin 1999) that what Cameroon needed in terms of education was more investment in primary education. This led to the attainment of universal primary in the country. But instead of solving the employment challenge, universal primary education only led to more secondary education graduates and a high demand for university education, leading to increased graduate unemployment.

Our conclusion in this research is therefore the need for more investment in professionalization of higher education courses to render them more market friendly so that graduates could become more competitively employable and self-reliant. Every country therefore requires its own specific need analyses of the kind of education that can be profitable to its citizens in terms of wage-paying jobs after graduation. A more entrepreneurial and employability higher education which is skill oriented could be more appropriate for the Cameroonian society, if it must become an emergent nation by 2035 in this 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. Finally, the issue is not only to open access and expand higher education to all, but to provide education that can lead to wage-paying jobs with a high degree of employability, which can have positive rippling effects in terms of the economic development of the country. Kerbo (2006:256) lends credence to this conclusion when he says:

A common assumption is that of course expanding education to all people will help the society and every one in it to become less poor. But this assumption is not completely accurate. There is no simple correlation between the level of education in a society and the percentage of its population living on less than \$1 per day. For example, there are some countries with low levels of education and low levels of poverty such as Tanzania.... This is not to say that education fails to help. But what it does say is that policy makers and developing countries should make rational assessments of how much education is needed as of their level of development what kind of education is needed (more general primary education, more university education, more technical education or more non-formal training programmes) and how best to implement new policies.

Kerbo (2006) further cites the case of Thailand where the ministry of education decided that what Thailand needed most for further economic development and reduction of unemployment and poverty was job training for new high-tech industries and this is working for them. Thus, rather than just providing primary, secondary and university education, Thailand undertook and upgraded its multi-campus technical junior college system. Cameroon could learn from the Thai example and begin to design and provide more practical and market friendly curricula for higher education while expanding programmes like the National Incubator Project in the Advanced School of Engineering to other universities and faculties. This, we believe will work for Cameroon and reduce the rate of graduate youth unemployment while increasing their level of employability.

A more serious concluding note emanating from this research shows that African economies are on the move and are changing. According to a McKinsey Global Institute report (2010), exploring Africa's employment landscape, the continent has been the second-fastest-growing region in the world over the past decade especially the business environment and the private sector. An example in our work was the case of the stock exchange market in the CEMAC zone. Economic growth is necessary for job creation, but it is important to note that some sectors that contribute to GDP growth may not create new jobs. For example, the natural resources sector (mining, oil, and gas) contributes significantly to GDP, government revenue, and export earnings, but employs less than 1% of Africa's workforce. Boosting employment therefore requires targeted strategies implemented by governments and business

leaders to spur growth in sectors with the greatest job creating potential. Cameroon can dramatically accelerate the rate at which it is creating stable wage-paying jobs through professionalizing HE courses and making them more market friendly in order to target the fast-growing private sector in the country through a more commensurate employability training in HE which makes skills acquisition part of its major agenda. For example, the creation of the Tourism and hospitality department in the Faculty of Arts Letters and Social Sciences (FALSH), in the university of Yaoundé will release more work-ready graduates who can gain stable wage-paying jobs in this fast-growing private sector of the country and Africa as a whole. According to another McKinsey (2012) report, tourism and hospitality are growing strongly in Africa, but there is potential for greater gains because Africa's diversified countries today attract 70 percent of international visitors. The investment by the Cameroonian government in HE to target these sectors is very timely as a measure of solving the employment and employability challenges.

Eliciting to know from employers what some of the barriers they faced in hiring graduates were, they cited a lack of technical skills as obstacles to hiring. They reported that graduates lacked soft skills such as the ability to manage time, communicate effectively and use computer programmes. This could be interpreted as an implicit call for HE courses to be improved upon to incorporate these skills. There is therefore no doubt the country could benefit from an appropriate investment in skill and employability HE through reforms to raise the quality of HE as a whole. A more skilled oriented and work-based HE, a refocusing of tertiary education on marketable skills is necessary. Our statistics also demonstrated that there is no simple way for increasing job growth. Work-training or entrepreneurship assistance programs, when implemented alone, are unlikely to have a major impact.

Employers report that concerted efforts among all stake holders coupled with targeted reform programmes, government can remove these barriers and unleash private sector growth which has a great potential of job creation to absorb graduate job seekers. To harness growth for job creation, policy makers and universities could focus on reforms and programmes that will train skilled workers who can transition smoothly into this labour-intensive sector of the country which has a fast-growing potential to create large numbers of jobs. Universities could institutionalize the policy of internships as a compulsory component of final year course work for their students so that they can gain work experience. This could have striking results in terms of increased graduate employment and employability.

This can only happen when there is a strong collaboration between, HE and the private sector (industry) as a jobs strategy to grow a sufficient pool of workers with the educational capacity and skills needed in this targeted labour-intensive sector. Failure to do so may condemn millions of Cameroonian graduates to work in subsistence occupations, increasing the risk of political and social turmoil. But based on the vision of Cameroon becoming an emergent nation by 2035 and the examples and experiences of other successful emerging economies once at the similar stages of development like Cameroon (an example of Thailand presented earlier), we conclude that the country has the potential of significantly increasing the number of stable graduate jobs through a more professionalised and specialized HE by 2020 in its Emergency Plan.

To paraphrase Victor Hugo in Teneng (2011), nothing is truer than the strength of a concept when its time has come; but, that idea must be carried by individuals with vision, leadership, and moral fortitude in order for it to be recognized and institutionalized. We therefore believe that it is time employability and skill-oriented education gained its place among the professions, especially within the profession of higher education in Cameroon. The government and other stakeholders must begin to consider how this type of education can be integrated into the fabric of higher education in our country, allowing it to play its own role of facilitating smooth transitions from university to work, whether formal employment or self-employment (Patience T. *ibid*).

As a budding researcher in the world of scientific research, we know that this work may hardly be void of some imperfections in content and form. We readily acknowledge these and are ready to make necessary amends. We hope that as we continue to bud and grow, we will continue to gain perfection.

Education remains the foundation of any economy. There are numerous stakes and problems associated with educational practice in the twenty-first century. Munazza highlights this when he discusses the complexity of education and the emergence of issues such as globalization, transnationalism, internalization, technology, and telecommunications. The purpose of education, as he argues, "is focused to prepare people to be flexible, multi-skilled, dynamic problem-solvers and creative resource explorers with the ability to interpret reality from multiple perspectives and bring harmony between knowledge, creativity, and employability skills."

From 2019, the educational system had a dangerous victory that spread over the world, killing lives and slowing down systems. The crisis affected various systems and forced the closure of many institutions, including businesses and schools. During the peak of the pandemic, 45 countries in Europe and Central Asia closed their schools, affecting 185 million pupils.

Because of the suddenness of the crisis, instructors and administrators were unprepared for the change and were compelled to create emergency remote learning solutions fairly immediately. School closures due to COVID-19 have caused substantial interruptions in education throughout Africa. Emerging research from some of the region's low-income countries suggests that the epidemic is causing learning deficits and rises in inequality. To limit and counteract the long-term negative consequences, less affluent lower-middle-income countries, which are expected to be even severely hit, must create learning recovery programs, protect educational budgets, and prepare for future shocks by "building back be

Without adequate crisis-sensitive planning in schools and classrooms, learning losses could lead to even bigger long-term issues. It has long been established that reductions in test evaluation procedures are connected with future employment drops. In contrast, gains in student achievement resulted in significant increases in future income, as did additional years of schooling, which is related with an 8-9 percent rise in lifetime earnings. In the absence of intervention, the learning deficits caused by the COVID-19 epidemic are likely to have long-term negative consequences for many students' future well-being. These learning deficits may result in less access to further education, poorer labor market involvement, and lower future incomes. This study was carried out in light of the observed emptiness in some of the graduates who were at universities when the crisis struck. The five-chapter study demonstrated that curriculum adjustment, teaching technique modification, and revamped evaluation procedures, which were anticipated to be influenced, were not implemented. These components have a favorable impact on graduates' employability abilities, but the system did not consider it important to instill them at the appropriate time. This explains why graduates are left trapped because they lack employable skills.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher encountered some difficulties while carrying out this study. These obstacles consisted mostly of time and financial constraints. Because of financial constraints, the study was limited to the university graduates that we could find at the National

Employment Fund. For the same reasons, we could not go to many universities for interviews. Most of the interviews were carried out only at the University of Yaoundé I. It was also very difficult to get the opportunity to talk with busy business people who are employers of graduates because their time is so valuable, so we had to make repeated visits before getting our chance. Other interviews were carried out in the Ministries of Higher Education and of Employment and Vocational training. Field trips had to be done almost every day to the NEF in order to meet the graduate job seekers for them to fill our questionnaire.

Movement from one library to another was also very constraining as it sometimes needed money for transportation and for registration in some of the libraries.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the results of this research, the following recommendations are made: By establishing a Higher Education Planning Team (HEPT) and implementing appropriate quality control measures, the government should strengthen the implementation of policies in higher education and work to comprehend the demands of all parties involved in the field. This team will be in charge of conducting periodic needs analyses of all stakeholders in higher education to inform curriculum designers. This team will advise the minister of higher education on curriculum reform issues by producing periodic reports on evolving trends in higher education, as well as addressing effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and responsiveness to the demands of the 21st century knowledge economy across the higher education sector. This will partly solve Cameroon's pressing need of producing more graduates of good quality to take forward all forms of social and economic development, thereby contributing sustainably to the vision of Cameroon becoming an emerging nation in 2035.

Second, the nation's government should prioritize encouraging entrepreneurship at higher education institutions in order to foster the establishment of businesses that can employ the increasing number of unemployed graduates. Also, these companies should be encouraged to allow final year students to have internships in their companies in order to develop work experience which is most of the time a required prerequisite for finding first graduate employment. This reiterates the fact that the partnerships between universities and industry should be strong and workable especially for the interest of the students in terms of internships and not just for the sake of partnerships. Last but not least, in terms of

governmental policy, we believe that more public funds should be allocated to higher education in order to modernize outdated facilities like labs and install cutting-edge technology and ICT devices. This will help to improve employability by professionalizing instruction and assessment.

Emphasis should also be put on higher education curricula. Given that its low contribution to growth in the past was due to the theoretical nature of their curricula. Emphases should be placed not only on academic but also on employability skills. These skills can be developed through entrepreneurship programmes or modules and a range of work experience opportunities. Volunteering should also be encouraged among students even when internships are difficult to get. At entry, students should be carefully oriented before they enrol, and prospectus be given to them containing the main objectives of the departments, pointing to possible graduate destinations. Curricula should be increasingly rendered work based or work related. At this level of education, entrepreneurship could be included in the study programmes such that youths who fail to join the labour market at the end of their studies or to pursue further education can conveniently create jobs for themselves. Given that one of the most important activities of the university is the development of curriculum or course outlines in consonance with national and international demands and realities, all stakeholders in higher education, such as administration, industry, curriculum specialists and designers, and students, should be involved in the construction of curriculum and co-curriculum, or at least consulted before designing HE curricula in order to embed market-friendly skills and attributes. When this is completed, there will be a clear grasp of the skills required in a certain subject before the curriculum is developed. This allows the team to determine the percentage of subject matter knowledge, professional skills, and competencies that should be included in the curriculum, as well as define objectives, goals, and outcomes.

At institutional levels, individual universities or departments would have to decide on the most appropriate ways to embed work-based activities in their curriculum, that are well adapted to their university or their departments. Secondly, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy, it is advisable for all universities and higher education institutes to seriously consider the implementation of boundaryless employability skills across all departments. Skills such as soft skills, team work skills, decision making and problem-solving skills will be very useful in the world of work no matter one's field of study.

Also, HE and industry should tighten their partnership so as to join hands to achieve the target outcomes. Both parties must work closely to establish and construct graduate employability programmes that are mutually beneficial by aligning market needs and evolving trends to university programmes. These actions are necessary if HE must achieve its objectives in ensuring that HE graduates are competitively employable both locally and internationally. Assuring graduate employability can be very challenging and difficult. Nevertheless, it is the heart of the HE enterprise to confer the qualifications with the right attributes and skills. HE must therefore develop the right intervention measures and mechanisms to address and incorporate employability skills into their programmes through the right kind of partnership with industry.

Another recommendation is for HE to provide retraining and retooling for their staff, especially the lecturers to cope with the changing market and technological demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy and modern methods of teaching and evaluating that can influence graduate employability, especially for disciplines that are consistently producing underemployed or unemployed graduates (classical faculties). This will help lecturers evaluate how their structures and methods best prepare their students with valuable knowledge and skills that they can use profitably throughout life in developing their future careers and lives.

Considering that evaluation is part of curriculum design, evaluation processes used in higher education should directly flow from content objectives. The evaluation methods used should be more student centred and should reflect the content and the pedagogic processes used to enhanced employability skills in the students. Evaluation must be consistent with aims and content of the curriculum. Evaluation must not only be more exam focus, but should also make use of more skill oriented formative methods like group projects and presentations, term papers and quizzes. Evaluation should therefore lead to adaptation and or curriculum change and continuous updating of content.

### **Suggestion for Further Research**

Since a study of this magnitude can hardly be all encompassing and conclusive, especially considering the vastness of multifaceted concepts like employability, it would be proper, considering the above-mentioned limitations, to open up and cast a glance into future research areas.

The same research topic could be carried out with a larger population and sample, covering the whole CENAC zone or other purposively selected African countries. Other research interest could focus on the comparability of private and public universities in terms of graduate employability in Cameroon. It would also be interesting to carry out a study to find out the effects of educational mobility and employability. The supply and demand for employability education as well as its impact on economic growth could be the subject of a research.

Lastly, in order to increase the degree of reliability, the aforementioned research fields could be conducted with larger sample sizes, more instances, and longer experimental durations.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

**REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN**

**Paix – Travail – Patrie**

\*\*\*\*\*

**UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I**

\*\*\*\*\*

**CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE  
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN  
SCIENCES HUMAINE, SOCIALE ET  
EDUCATIVES**

\*\*\*\*\*

**UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE  
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN  
SCIENCES DE L'EDUCATION**

\*\*\*\*\*

**DEPARTEMENT DE CURRICULA  
ET EVALUATION**



**REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

**Peace – Work – Fatherland**

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I**

\*\*\*\*\*

**POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR THE  
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE**

\*\*\*\*\*

**DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR  
SCIENCE OF EDUCATION**

\*\*\*\*\*

**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND  
EVALUATION**

Dear Respondents,

I am conducting research on the Professionalization of Courses and graduates' Employability in Cameroon. The purpose of this questionnaire is to ascertain how the professionalization of the curriculum affects graduates' employability. Feel free to be as open as you can when expressing your ideas. Because you will not be required to write your names down, you can be sure that you will never be identified by the answers provided. Your impartial contribution will be much valued.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Benedict MOKOM NDONGNYAM

## Questionnaire for Graduates

### Section A: Basic Information

1. Age range  
 21 – 25     26 – 30     31 – 35     35 – 40     40 and above
2. Gender  
 Male                       Female
3. Language  
 English     French                       Bilingual
4. University \_\_\_\_\_
5. Year of enrolment. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Year of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_
7. Specialization  
 Sciences medicine biomedical studies  
 Humanities (Arts, letters and social sciences)  
 Business, economics, law  
 Information technology and engineering
8. Employment status  
 Employed                       unemployment
9. Professional experience if you are working  
 Less than 5 years                       5 to 10 years                       10 and above.
10. How did you gain your first employment?  
 Through the National Employment Fund  
 Through a vacancy advertised on the internet, a newspaper  
 By contacting the employer on my own initiative  
 Through the career placement office of my university.  
 Through project work in cooperation with companies (internship)  
 I set up my own business

### Section B: Government Policy

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) I am aware of the Bologna process reform in Europe and of its influence on the Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate (BMD) reform in					

Central African Countries					
2) I believe my university started implementing the BMD after its adoption in 2007.					
3) I know why Cameroon adopted the BMD reform.					
4) I understand the academic, political and economic objectives of the reform					
5) I understand how the BMD credit system works					
6) I know about the mission of the National Employment Fund in Cameroon.					
7) I know about the Graduates Employment Programme (PED) and the Support Programme for the Integration of Higher Education Graduates (PRIDES), Programmes geared towards the Employment of graduates initiated in partnership between MINESUP and NEF.					
8) Cameroonian Universities work in partnership with the National Employment Fund.					
9) I am aware of the partnerships between Cameroonian Higher Education and enterprises.					
10) The partnership between Cameroonian Higher Education and entrepreneurs is very effective					
11) The partnership takes into account the outcome of the needs analysis of all stakeholders reflecting labour market needs.					
12) Because of the partnership between higher					

education and enterprises, internships have become regular and are effectively carried out in our university					
13) The implementation of the BMD and the partnership between higher education and entrepreneurs, facilitated my acquisition of labour market skills					
14) Because of the implementation of the policy of internships, my transition from school to work was easier and smoother					
15) I am aware that Growth and Employment strategy paper (GESP) in Cameroon					
16) I am also aware that this study mainstreamed higher education as an engine for economic expansion and graduate employability					
17) The implementation of the GESP mainstreaming higher education as an economic growth driver, is effectively leading to higher employability of graduates					
18) There are adequate infrastructures to facilitate the implementation of all the above policies					

### Section C: Content of Curricula

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) Syllabuses and study programmes are made available to students at the time of admission in to university					
2) I chose what to study purposefully after studying these programmes and I knew what					

I could do in terms of work after graduation					
3) I understand the curricula implications of the BMD, the GESP and the partnership between my university and the world of work					
4) Relevant work-related skills are embedded in the curricula					
5) There are enough extra-curricula activities and opportunities in my university to keep students abreast with the demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy					
6) Course contents in my university reflects the needs and demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy					
7) Course contents enable students to acquire relevant marketable skills that enable them to become more employable and self-reliant					
8) Course contents lead to effective specialization and professionalization					
9) Based on relevant course contents, my transition from university to the world of work was facilitated					
10) Course content in school helped me to develop employability skills which are now enhancing my job performance					
11) Internships were compulsory and effective on the curriculum and were arranged by the university and industry for students' placements					
12) I believe our university library has not received enough additional furnishing to help students and lecturers meet with the					

research component of the reform					
13) Students need more professional development activities such as seminars, conferences and workshops to enhance professionalization and employability					
14) Greater partnership between our university National Employment Fund and professional associations and employers (enterprises) in designing curriculum will improve quality of programmes and enhance employability of graduates					
15) I think that in the higher education curricula in Cameroon, there is a need for more practical application in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice					
16) I think that there is a need for more dialogue and interaction between universities and the business world, in order to increase students' exposure to the working environment					
17) I also feel that more professional extra-curricular projects need to exist in the universities to help students gain practical work experience and develop new skills – including project management and soft skills and communication skills					

#### Section D: The Teaching and Learning Process

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) I think the Lectures in our university are well trained and qualify to meet the most urgent demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century					

knowledge economy					
2) Teaching methods are varied (including, lectures, tutorials, seminars online deliveries, workshops, directed activities and group projects)					
3) Teacher – student ratios are good enough to facilitate effective follow-up of students especially in research projects					
4) There exist effective quality control measures such as teacher inspection, to ensure effective teaching and learning					
5) Teachers constantly undergo in service training to keep them abreast with the ever increasing demands of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy					
6) There is effective and proper use of modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and gadgets in the teaching learning process					
7) Research centers are well furnished to facilitate research for students and lecturers					

### Section E: Evaluation Process

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) Varieties of tests such as cognitive and projective tests are administered to students in order to test their knowledge of the discipline and what they can do in the future					
2) Test items reflect the taught corpus					
3) Formative assignments are varied and					

regular, from individual to group work					
4) Group projects trained students in doing presentations, writing reports, posters and portfolios					

### Section F: Employability

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1) There is a high incidence of graduate unemployment in Cameroon.					
2) I had difficulties with the acceptance of my degree in the labour market					
3) The time between my universities studies and my first employment was too long					
4) My work experience gained during internship facilitated my transition from school to the world of work					
5) Based on my academic background and the skills acquired, I am able to sustain my employability					
6) None of my university skills are applicable in my work now					
7) My employability is mostly enhanced by my present work experience and in-service training					
8) I am not afraid of losing my job because I am sure to pick up another one in a very short time because I am a multi skilled worker					
9) There are opportunities for me to develop my employability in my present work and					

stay in it for a very long time					
10) There is a need for greater and more innovative responses from higher education in providing students with opportunities to improve their skills portfolios and over all employability					
11) Opportunities for student mobility and exposure to other cultures is very relevant in graduate employability					

## APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

**REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN**  
**Paix – Travail – Patrie**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE**  
**FORMATION DOCTORALE EN**  
**SCIENCES HUMAINE, SOCIALE ET**  
**EDUCATIVES**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE**  
**FORMATION DOCTORALE EN**  
**SCIENCES DE L'EDUCATION**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**DEPARTEMENT DE CURRICULA**  
**ET EVALUATION**



**REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**  
**Peace – Work – Fatherland**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR THE**  
**SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR**  
**SCIENCE OF EDUCATION**  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND**  
**EVALUATION**

### QUESTIONNAIRE

J'm'appelle Benedict MOKOM NDONGNYAM. Je suis étudiant doctorant à l'université de Yaoundé I. Je suis entrains de collecter les données pour ma thèse intitulé Professionnalisation des Cours et l'Employabilité des Diplômés. Sentez-vous libre d'exprimer vos opinions franches le plus possible. Cet exercice est purement académique. Vos contributions objectives sont hautement appréciées.

Merci pour votre collaboration

Benedict MOKOM NDONGNYAM

### Section A: Information De Base

1. Tranche d'âge  
 21 – 25       26 – 30     31 – 35     35 – 40     >40 ans
2. Sexe  
 Male     femelle
3. Langue  
 Anglais     français     bilingue
4. Université \_\_\_\_\_
5. Annéed'inscription \_\_\_\_\_
6. Année de graduation \_\_\_\_\_
7. Spécialisation ?  
 Sciences, médecine, étudesbiomédicales  
 Sciences humaines (Histoire, géographie, lettres et sciences sociales)  
 Commerce, économie, droit  
 Science de l'éducation  
 Technologie de l'information et communication (TIC)
8. Statutd'emploi  
 Employé     sans emploi
9. Expériencemotionnellesvous travaillez  
 <5 ans     ≤ 10ans     > 10ans
10. Comment avez-vous obtenu votre premier emploi ?  
 Par le Fond National de l'Emploi  
 Par publicité d'un poste vacant à l'internet dans un ou journal etc.  
 J'ai contacté l'employeur moi-même  
 Par une agence d'emploi  
 Par le bureau de placement ou de carrière de mon université.  
 Par un projet de travail en coopération avec une entreprise (stage)  
 Auto emploi (je suis auto-employé)

### Section B : Politique Gouvernementale

	Très d'accord	Accord	Incertain	Désaccord	Trèsendésaccord
1) Je suis conscient de la réforme du processus de Bologne en Europe et de son influence sur la réforme du Licence, Master et Doctorat (LMD) dans les pays d'Afrique centrale					
2) Je pense que mon université a commencé à utiliser le LMD après son approbation en 2007.					
3) Je connais la raison d'être de la réforme de la LMB au Cameroun.					
4) Je connais les objectifs intellectuels, politiques et économiques de la réforme.					
5) Je connais le fonctionnement du système de crédit du LMD.					
6) Je connais les objectifs du Fonds National de l'Emploi au Cameroun.					
7) Je connais le Programme d'Emploi des Diplômés (PED) et le Programme d'Appui à l'Insertion des					

<p>Diplômés de l'Enseignement Supérieur (PRIDES), deux initiatives développées en collaboration entre le MINESUP et le NEF dans le but d'aider les diplômés à trouver un emploi.</p>					
<p>8) Les universités camerounaises collaborent avec le Fonds National de l'Emploi.</p>					
<p>9) Je suis au courant des partenariats entre l'enseignement supérieur camerounais et les entreprises.</p>					
<p>10) La collaboration entre les entrepreneurs et l'enseignement supérieur au Cameroun est assez réussie</p>					
<p>11) Le partenariat prend en compte les résultats des analyses des besoins de toutes les parties prenantes qui représentent les besoins du marché du travail.</p>					
<p>12) Les stages sont devenus courants et sont menés avec succès dans notre université grâce à la relation entre l'enseignement supérieur et</p>					

les entreprises.					
13) Ma capacité à acquérir des compétences pour le marché du travail a été rendue possible par l'exécution du BMD et la collaboration entre l'enseignement supérieur et les entreprises.					
14) J'ai trouvé qu'il était plus facile et plus fluide de passer de l'école au travail grâce à la mise en place de la politique de stage.					
15) Je suis au courant du Document de stratégie pour la croissance et l'emploi (DSCE) au Cameroun.					
16) Je suis également conscient que cette étude a intégré l'enseignement supérieur comme un moteur de l'expansion économique et de l'employabilité des diplômés.					
17) Les étudiants diplômés sont maintenant plus employables grâce à l'intégration par le GESP de l'enseignement supérieur comme moteur de la croissance économique.					

18) Les infrastructures nécessaires sont en place pour faciliter la mise en œuvre des politiques susmentionnées.					
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### Section C : Contenu des Programmes D'enseignement

	Très d'accord	Accord	Incertain	Désaccord	Très désaccord
1) Les étudiants ont accès aux plans d'études et aux programmes d'enseignement après leur admission à l'université.					
2) Après avoir suivi ces programmes, j'ai choisi intentionnellement ce que je voulais faire. Après avoir obtenu mon diplôme, j'étais conscient de mes options professionnelles.					
3) Je suis conscient de l'impact du GESP, du LMD et de la collaboration entre mon université et le monde du travail sur les cours.					
4) Le programme d'études fournit un contenu pertinent et en rapport avec le travail.					
5) Dans mon université, il y a suffisamment de programmes et d'activités extrascolaires pour que les étudiants restent au fait des besoins de l'économie de l'information du XXI <sup>e</sup> siècle.					
6) Les exigences de l'économie du savoir					

du XXI <sup>e</sup> siècle se reflètent dans le programme de cours de mon université.					
7) Les étudiants peuvent acquérir des compétences précieuses grâce au matériel de cours, ce qui augmente leur employabilité et leur indépendance.					
8) Une spécialisation et une professionnalisation efficaces sont les résultats du contenu des cours.					
9) Ma transition de l'université au monde du travail a été facilitée par le matériel de cours pertinent.					
10) Mon cursus universitaire a contribué au développement de capacités d'employabilité qui améliorent actuellement ma performance professionnelle.					
11) L'université et l'industrie ont collaboré pour mettre en place des stages, qui étaient obligatoires dans le cadre du programme d'études et offraient des possibilités de placement aux étudiants.					
12) Je pense qu'il doit y avoir plus de mobilier dans notre bibliothèque universitaire pour aider les étudiants et les instructeurs à respecter la composante recherche de la réforme.					
13) Pour leur croissance professionnelle et leur employabilité, les étudiants ont besoin de plus de possibilités de séminaires, de conférences et d'ateliers.					

14) La qualité des programmes augmentera, tout comme l'employabilité des diplômés, avec une plus grande collaboration entre le Fonds national pour l'emploi de notre université et les groupes professionnels et les sociétés (entreprises).					
15) Je crois qu'une plus grande application pratique est nécessaire dans les programmes d'enseignement supérieur du Cameroun afin de combler le fossé entre la théorie et la pratique.					
16) Afin de fournir aux étudiants une plus grande exposition au lieu de travail, je crois qu'il est nécessaire d'accroître la communication et les contacts entre les collègues et le monde des affaires.					
17) En outre, je pense que les universités devraient proposer davantage de projets professionnels extrascolaires afin d'aider les étudiants à acquérir une expérience professionnelle réelle et à acquérir de nouvelles compétences, telles que la gestion de projet, les compétences générales et la communication.					

#### Section D : Processus D'enseignement Et D'apprentissage

	<b>Trèsd'accord</b>	<b>Accord</b>	<b>Incertain</b>	<b>Désaccord</b>	<b>Trèsendésaccord</b>
1) Les enseignants de notre université sont, à mon avis, bien formés et capables de répondre aux besoins					

pressants de l'économie de la connaissance du XXI <sup>e</sup> siècle.					
2) Les méthodes d'enseignement sont variées (notamment les cours magistraux, les travaux dirigés, les séminaires en ligne, les ateliers, les activités dirigées et les projets de groupe).					
3) Les ratios enseignants/étudiants sont adéquats pour permettre un suivi efficace des étudiants, notamment lors des projets de recherche.					
4) Il existe des mesures efficaces de contrôle de la qualité, telles que l'inspection des enseignants, pour garantir un enseignement et un apprentissage efficaces.					
5) Les enseignants suivent constamment des formations en cours d'emploi pour se tenir au courant des exigences sans cesse croissantes de l'économie de la					

connaissance du 21e siècle.					
6) Les technologies modernes de l'information et de la communication (TIC) et les gadgets sont utilisées de manière efficace et adéquate dans le processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage.					
7) Les installations de recherche sont bien équipées pour répondre aux besoins de recherche des étudiants et des enseignants.					

### Section F: Le Processus D'évaluation

	<b>Très d'accord</b>	<b>Accord</b>	<b>Incertain</b>	<b>Désaccord</b>	<b>Très endésaccord</b>
1) Les étudiants passent une variété d'examens, y compris des évaluations cognitives et projectives, pour évaluer leur compréhension du sujet et leur potentiel.					
2) Les items des examens reflètent le corpus enseigné.					
3) Les devoirs formatifs sont variés et réguliers, allant du travail individuel au travail de groupe.					
4) Les projets de groupe entraînent les étudiants à faire des présentations,					

à rédiger des rapports, des posters et des portfolios.					
5) L'évaluation était orientée sur l'employabilité.					
6) La façon dont l'évaluation a été faite a stimulé la réflexion.					

### Section G: Employabilité

	<b>Très d'accord</b>	<b>Accord</b>	<b>Incertain</b>	<b>Désaccord</b>	<b>Très endésaccord</b>
1) Au Cameroun, le taux de chômage des diplômés est très élevé.					
2) J'ai rencontré des problèmes pour faire reconnaître mon diplôme par les employeurs.					
3) Le délai entre mes études universitaires et mon premier emploi était trop long.					
4) Ma transition des études au monde du travail a été facilitée par l'expérience professionnelle que j'ai acquise pendant le stage.					
5) Mon parcours universitaire et mes compétences acquises me permettent de conserver mon emploi.					
6) Aucune de mes compétences universitaires n'est applicable à mon travail actuel.					
7) Mes antécédents professionnels actuels et ma formation en cours d'emploi ont eu un impact positif					

important sur mon employabilité.					
8) Étant un travailleur polyvalent, je n'ai aucune raison de craindre de perdre mon emploi car je vais sans doute en trouver un autre dans un délai très court.					
9) Dans mon emploi actuel, j'ai la possibilité d'améliorer mon employabilité et de continuer à y travailler pendant une très longue période.					
10) L'enseignement supérieur doit mieux répondre à ce problème en étant plus créatif et en donnant aux étudiants plus d'occasions de développer leurs compétences et leur employabilité globale.					
11) Afin d'être employable après l'obtention du diplôme, les possibilités de mobilité des étudiants et d'exposition à d'autres cultures sont cruciales.					

### APPENDIX 3: REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

Dear Sir/Madam,

*Subject: Request for Interview*

My name is Benedict MOKOM NDONGNYAM. I am a Doctorate student from the University of Yaoundé I; researching on Professionalization of Courses and Employability of Graduates. As part of my doctoral research, I will like to discuss with you the professionalization aspect of the BMD – courses and its implementation in Cameroonian universities and its effects on the employability of graduates. My operational contexts of professionalization focuses: on Government policy, and its implementation structures in Universities, contents of curricula, teaching methods, and evaluative processes as well as the influence of partnerships between higher education and the labour market on the employability of graduates. You are free to contribute both in your capacity as an official and or as a researcher/scientist. Your experience in this domain and more could be very enriching to this study.

Yours faithful,

The Researcher.

Cher(e) Monsieur/Madame,

**Objet: Demande d'interview,**

Je m'appelle Benedict MOKOM NDONGNYAM. Je suis étudiant chercheur Camerounais de l'Enseignement Supérieure venant de l'université de Yaoundé I. Je suis en train de collecter des données dans le cadre de mes recherches doctorales. Je voudrais avoir un entretien avec vous dans le but d'avoir votre point de vue sur le sujet de la professionnalisation des programmes d'enseignements dans l'éducation supérieure et l'employabilité des diplômés dans les universités Camerounais. Vous avez le choix de répondre en votre qualité de chercheur/chercheuse ou officiellement comme responsable d'une unité de recherche. Votre expérience dans ces domaines et plus, pourra enrichir notre étude.

Cordialement

Le chercheur

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **CURRICULA OF CAMEROONIAN UNIVERSITIES**

#### **Interview Questions to Government Officials at Minesup**

1. What do you think of the government policy in higher education in terms of professionalization of courses and employability of graduates?
2. Has the BMD been effectively in cooperated into all Cameroonian Universities?
3. What is the role of the MINESUP in terms of partnerships with the business world and the higher education institutes in Cameroon?
4. How can you measure the change and effects in terms of the employability of graduates?
5. What is MINESUP doing in terms of curricula modification, and harmonization to embed employability skills in Higher Education curricula?

#### **Interview Questions for Employers**

1. How many graduate employees do you have?
2. What recruitment channels do you use?
3. What are the language requirements for job applicants?
4. Do you prefer Cameroonian higher Education degrees or those from abroad?
5. What are your perceptions of Cameroonian higher education graduates in terms of skills/fitness for work? (Are there any skills that require further development in recently hired graduates)?
6. Do you network/cooperate with higher institutes? How?
7. Have you experienced any challenges or difficulties in working with Cameroonian graduates as compared to other international graduates?
8. What do you think should be improved on behalf of higher education institutes (and policy makers) in order to facilitate the integration of employability skills in the

#### **Interview Questions for Heads of Departments**

1. What do you think of BMD reform?
2. How has it affected your work in terms of content, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures?
3. Do you think the reform was worthwhile?
4. How according to you has this reform affected professionalization of courses and how can that lead to employability of graduates?
5. What are the curricular and pedagogic implications the reform?

## APPENDIX 5

### ANTI PLAGIARISM REPORT



Similarity Report ID: oid:26975:465723763

PAPER NAME

**PROFESSIONALIZATION OF BACHELOR  
MASTER DOCTORATE (BMD) COURSES  
AND GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY IN C  
AMERO**

AUTHOR

**BENEDICT MOKOM NDONGNYAM**

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